

ISLANDS OF SUN AND ICE

Perceptions and policies in small island settings of Change Islands and Fogo Island off the coast of Newfoundland and Vis and Biševo islands in Croatian Adriatic

Text and photographs © Bojan Fürst

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ABSTRACT

Islands are a home to over 10 percent of human population and represent evolutionary and social laboratories worthy of special attention for their biodiversity, cultural, political, economic, and strategic significance. Island studies framework used in this study provides a holistic and respectful approach to study of islands allowing for a greater engagement with islanders in describing and exploring the lived island lives. This comparative study situated on Change Islands and Fogo Island in Newfoundland, Canada, and Vis and Biševo islands in Croatia, explores perceptions and policies towards small islands in these two geographic settings. Despite the geographic differences, the islanders in both areas see population decline, education and transportation and fisheries to be the crucial development issues. Tourism has emerged in both study areas as an important economic activity. There is a conflict between islanders and policy makers that stems from different perceptions, lack of communications and undervaluing of islands. The policy framework is better in Croatia where islands are considered of strategic importance to the state. Further empowering the islanders, better communications, and policy approaches that take into consideration specificity of island conditions are steps that must be taken to foster viability of small island communities in both areas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks are in order. Dr. Kelly Vodden, Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino, and Dr. Ratana Chuenpagdee were indispensable in providing guidance and suggestions that made this thesis much better than it otherwise would have been. I am very much indebted to Dr. Kelly Vodden who helped me shape a rather awkward and half-baked idea into a manageable thesis.

A special thanks goes to my family that supported this project in many, many ways.

Not a single part of this journey would have been possible without generosity and kindness of islanders from Vis, Biševo, Change Islands, Fogo Island, and Wood Island who all shared not just their knowledge and stories, but also meals, drinks and their homes. Thank you.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	4
A PRONUNCIATION GUIDE	6
LIST OF MAPS	7
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS	8
LIST OF FIGURES	9
OVERVIEW	10
<i>A brief description of what is in this thesis in order to make the further reading a more pleasurable experience.</i>	
OFF TO THE ISLANDS	13
<i>A short story that lets readers know how this thesis got to be in front of them in the first place</i>	
ISLAND DEFINITIONS	18
<i>We look at island definitions and wrestle with the question of smallness</i>	
ISLAND INQUIRIES	26
<i>On using Island Studies as a research framework and why studying islands makes sense</i>	
ISLANDS ON THEIR OWN TERMS	50
<i>Listening to island voices and comparing islands</i>	
ICE ISLANDS	71
<i>Change Islands and Fogo Island</i>	
SUN ISLANDS	90
<i>Vis archipelago</i>	
PERCEPTIONS AND POLICIES	110
CONCLUSION	145

<i>Perceptions matter</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>Valuing island communities has benefits</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Context sensitive policy matters</i>	<i>152</i>
<i>Development is a shared responsibility.....</i>	<i>154</i>
<i>Island development networks</i>	<i>154</i>
<i>Communities in decline</i>	<i>155</i>
REFERENCES	160
APPENDIX.....	170
<i>Interview process and questions.....</i>	<i>170</i>

A PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

While Croatian language uses regular Latin alphabet it does have several additional letters that have specific pronunciation.

Č = ch

Ć = ch (softer than Č. Even some Croatians have trouble with this.)

Đ = like J in Jerry

DŽ = like G in Georgia

J is always pronounced as Y in You

Š = sh

Ž = zh or French J as in jeunesse

LIST OF MAPS

1. **Grand Manan and Wood Island, New Brunswick.** *Chart #4340 courtesy of Canadian Hydrographic Service / Service hydrographique du Canada Fisheries and Oceans Canada / Pêches et Océans Canada Government of Canada | Gouvernement du Canada* (page 13)
2. **CanMatrix - Print Ready - 002E09 - Fogo, Newfoundland and Labrador.** *Open Government Licence - Canada* (<http://data.gc.ca/eng/open-government-licence-canada>) (page 71)
3. **Map of Croatia** *courtesy of UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Division* (page 90)
4. **Vis Island** *Chart #MK17 courtesy of Hrvatski hidrografski institut (Croatian Hydrographic Institute)* (page 91)

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are © Bojan Fürst

1. Seascape around Fogo Island (page 10)
2. Welcome to Wood Island (page 14)
3. At the island church (page 16)
4. Old house (page 16)
5. Back to the island (page 16)
6. Wood Island Reformed Baptist Church (page 17)
7. A stage on Fogo Island (page 18)
8. Old cemetery on Change Islands (page 26)
9. Vis riva (page 36)
10. Komiza, Vis Island, Croatia (page 50)
11. Farewell ferry terminal (page 72)
12. Stage on Change Islands (page 73)
13. Change Islands (page 75)
14. Tilting, Fogo Island (page 79)
15. Fogo, Fogo Island (page 81)
16. Joe Batt's Arm, Fogo Island (page 83)
17. Tilting, Fogo Island (page 85)
18. Tilting, Fogo Island (page 88)
19. Vis street, Vis Island (page 92)
20. Kut, Vis Island (page 93)
21. Church of St. Cyprian and Justin, Vis, Vis Island (page 97)
22. Old boat in a meadow, Fogo Island (page 110)
23. Making fish, Fair Island (page 145)

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Change Islands Population Pyramid (page 76)

Figure 2. Enrolment in Change Islands/Fogo Island schools (page 86)

Figure 3. Croatian Islands Population 1857-2011 (page 96)

Figure 4: Vis Island population from 1900 to 2011. (page 102)

Figure 5: Population trend comparison between Croatian islands and Vis Island (page 103)

Figure 6: Vis Archipelago Population Pyramid (page 105)



Seascape around Fogo Island.

OVERVIEW

A brief description of what is in this thesis in order to make the further reading a more pleasurable experience.

Dead harbour

*I know: there is a harbour of death,
And those moored there
Will in the morning hear an owl.
And see tired ships.*

*The ships made fast in that harbour dream eternally
Of how to sail,
But their anchors peacefully rest
In shallow waters.*

*And that's how it came to be that their dreams are full of happiness,
Yet they are afraid to sail.
On their masts they raise colourful flags
And then - stand still.¹*

Dobriša Cesarić

IT WAS A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO that I realized I could easily continue to do the research for this thesis for another year or two or three. Fortunately, I also realized that the time has come to stop lingering in my very own harbour of procrastination and get this thesis written once and for all.

Three years ago, I set out to answer some very specific questions. I wanted to find out what kind of policies provide useful support to small island communities; how perceptions of small

¹ Dobriša Cesarić, <http://cuspajz.com/tekstovi-pjesama/pjesma/dobrisa-cesaric/mrtva-luka.html>, Accessed on November 17, 2012. Translated by Bojan Fürst.

islands among islanders themselves and policy makers impact the kind of policies that are put in place; and whether or not different policies towards small islands actually make any difference in islanders' lives. After much reading, many interviews, and thousands of miles of travel in some truly amazing places, this thesis will indeed attempt to answer those questions.

The research was initially envisioned and carried out as a comparative study between Fogo Island and Change Islands in the Notre Dame Bay off the northeast coast of the island of Newfoundland in Canada and the islands of Vis and Biševo in Croatian Adriatic. Island studies provided a theoretical framework for the research while semi-structured interviews, photography-aided observation and primary and secondary sources analysis proved to be a methodological approach resulting in a context-rich qualitative study.

This thesis is structured in nine chapters including this one and a brief introduction. The third chapter deals with island definitions and question of smallness. Given my interest in policies towards smaller islands in particular, this is an important chapter because defining something as an island or a small island can have significant economic and political consequences. The fourth chapter is primarily concerned with island studies as a field of inquiry and the framework my own research is situated in. Of particular interest here is the notion that islands should be considered and studied on their own terms. In the next chapter, I will describe the comparative approach to the study of islands and explore why such an approach makes sense and yields rich and contextualized data. This chapter will also deal with methods used in the course of this study. Chapters six and seven will provide an overview of the study areas of Fogo Island and Change Islands in Newfoundland, Canada and Vis and Biševo islands in Croatia respectively. Next, the text will focus on the findings based on data collected from policy makers and island residents in both study areas in terms of perceptions

and policies towards small islands in each jurisdiction. The last chapter provides some concluding thoughts and possible policy directions and future research questions whose exploration may be beneficial to islanders and policy makers. And when it comes to solid public policy, as Antal et al point out "...the needs of policy making are best served by conducting solid scholarly research..."²

I have strived to make this thesis academically rigorous, but I also hope that it will be a pleasant read. While the thesis is structured in such a way as to comply with the academic format and regulations, it will become quickly apparent that I have attempted to blend academic and local knowledge together into a sort of dialogue not only on the topic of public policy towards small islands, but also on issues ranging from what it means to be an islander, to a discussion about island definitions, to whether or not a size of an island plays an important role in the formation of an island identity and the sense of islandness. Attempting to give islanders as much voice in these issues as the professional researchers appeared to me the only honest way to talk about islands.

² Ariane Berthoin Antal, Meinolf Dierkes, and Hans Weiler, "Cross-National Policy Research: Traditions, Achievements and Challenges," in *Comparing nations and cultures: reading in cross-disciplinary perspective*, ed. Alex Inkeles and Masamichi Sasaki. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1996), 11.



NEW BRUNSWICK/NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK - MAINE
BAY OF FUNDY/BAYE DE FUNDY
GRAND MANAN
Scale 1:50,000 (1:50,000) Edition
Projection: Mercator

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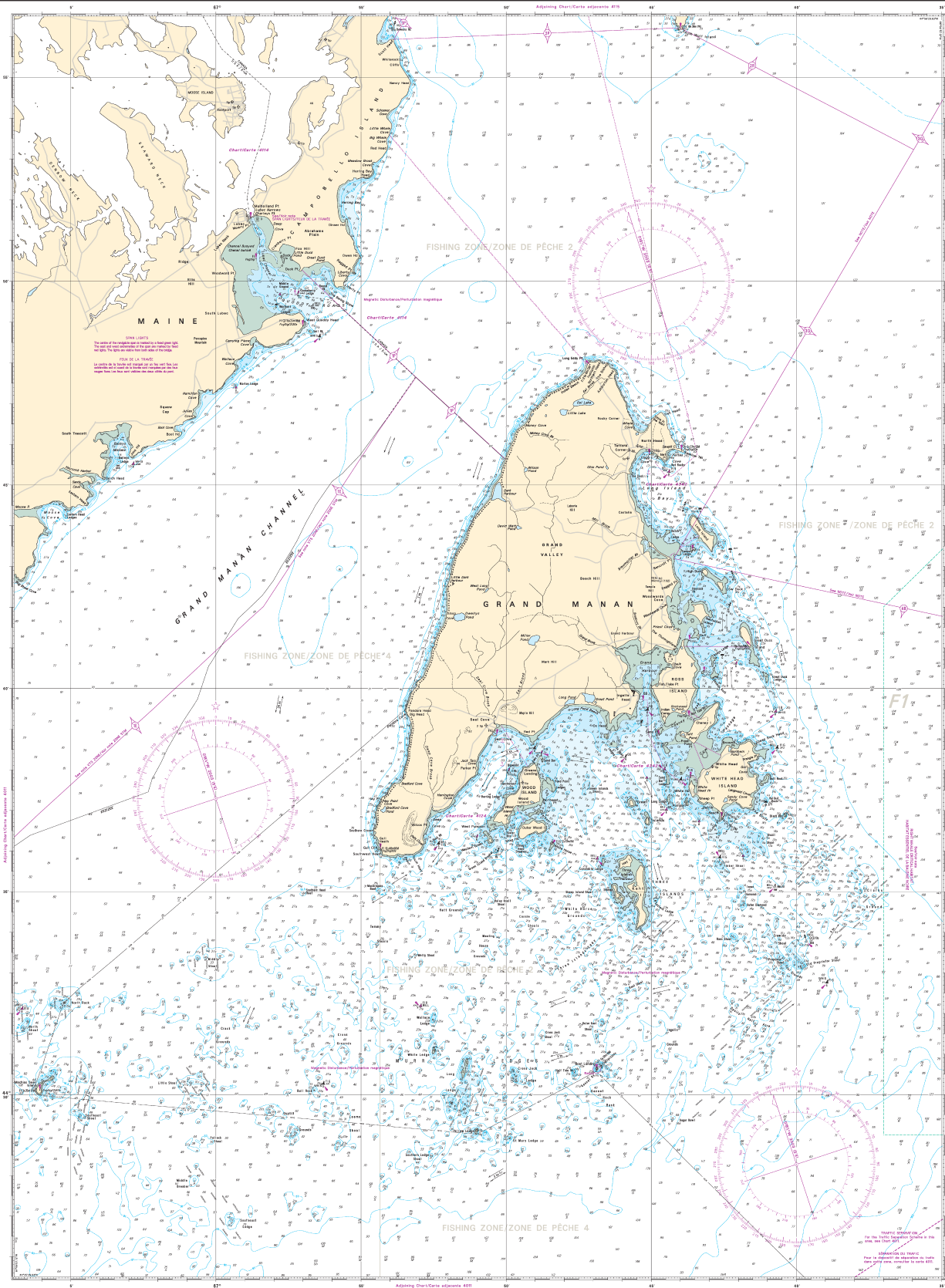
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New Brunswick/Novembre - Brunswick - Maine
Bay of Fundy/Baye de Fundy
GRAND MANAN



METRIC/MÉTRIQUE

4340

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Wood Island, New Brunswick

OFF TO THE ISLANDS

*A short story that lets readers know how this thesis
got to be in front of them in the first place*

The Old People

*"Next summer if I live..." they say,
the old people, not with dismay,
for they might add: "I'll come again
tomorrow, if it doesn't rain."³*

Alden Nowlan

Wood Island, New Brunswick

44° 38'N 066° 49'W

THE MAKESHIFT GANGWAY built from salmon farm cage tubing and particle board pallets

looked dangerously inadequate as 20 or 30 Wood Islanders made their way to the shore. A woman with a cane gripped the handrail. A boy holding two dogs on a leash was carefully watching his every step. A man in the middle of the line was holding his arms ahead of him snapping a photograph oblivious to the sloshing of water and the general wobbliness of the contraption he was standing on. It was August of 2008. It was windy and overcast with light rain. But there was not enough wind or enough rain to prevent the islanders from the customary annual visit to their ancestral home.

It takes about 10 minutes on a small boat to cross from Seal Cove on Grand Manan Island to Wood Island. There is not much left there: a whitewashed church gleaming white among the island greenery, an old schoolhouse, a cemetery, and three houses scattered around the island

³ Alden Nowlan, *Early Poems* (Fredericton, NB: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1983), 105.

that serve as summer residences. What there is left is a strong sense of attachment and identity among those who moved away from their homes in 1950s as the provincial government refused to provide any services to the island community. Hence, every year, the former islanders and their descendants board a small boat and get together for a church service and a reunion. As we cross, a man⁴ tells me that, when he was a boy growing up on the island, his initials, W. W., made him 49th on the list of Wood Island school students. He is a bit of a leader of this small group of island exiles. Excited in anticipation of once again walking on Wood Island trails and shores he tells me about the time when the islanders did not know they were poor until they left their island and others told them they were. “We thought we were great rich!” he said. “We had all we needed in life... We had a wonderful place to live. I miss it. Sometimes, I wish I was still there in all the rat race of life.”

The sadness in his voice was mirrored on the faces around me. An older couple was standing quietly in a corner looking at the deck. There was an old man in a fedora hat staring ahead lost in thought. A woman next to him looked grief stricken, but determined to keep going. There were children on board, too. From infants to teenagers, they were brought to Wood Island “to get a sense of heritage,” as one of the former islanders put it. In fact, there were three if not four generations of Wood Islanders on that boat and two of those generations had not been born on the island. Yet, this little green, tree covered island in the Bay of Fundy exerted a pull on its former residents that was hard for me to understand at the time.

It was towards the end of my stay on Wood Island that I managed to talk to one of the last teachers who had taught at the island school. She tried to explain to me just what the island

⁴ Although I originally photographed and produced the story of the 2008 Wood Island reunion for CBC's regional Maritime Noon show with all of the islanders interviewed identifying themselves by name and aware that the photographs and sounds will be published, I will not disclose their names here in order to maintain consistency with the rest of the research study which adhered to a different set of ethical guidelines.



Above: Former Wood Island residents and their descendants arrive for the annual church service. **Right:** One of the three houses still standing on the island and used as a seasonal residence. **Below:** former residents crossing from Seal Cove on Grand Manan to Wood Island.



meant to her: "In the winter, I might feel down and my husband knows - he'll drive me to Seal Cove just to look over and get a fix. It's awesome," she said quietly and defiantly. I think it was those words that set me on a path of exploring my own passion and curiosity about small islands and in many ways the rest of this text is a chronicle of that journey so far. Not that any of what follows was obvious even to me in that summer of 2008.

Wood Island Reformed Baptist Church, Wood Island, NB.





A stage on Fogo Island

ISLAND DEFINITIONS

We look at island definitions and wrestle with the question of smallness

An island, if it is big enough, is no better than a continent. It has to be really quite small, before it feels like an island.⁵

D.H. Lawrence “The Man Who Loved Islands”

THAT AUGUST OF 2008, when I started thinking about islands, there were several things I wanted to understand better. I wanted to understand islanders and the way they see themselves in the world, but I also wanted to understand how others see them – especially those who had political and economic power to make decisions that affected islanders. At that time, I lacked resources to pursue a long term documentary project; I lacked language that would allow me to think about islands beyond cliches; and I had no idea where to start. What I did have was determination that islands will somehow be a part of my own learning about the world; as a journalist, I also had very little fear of asking silly questions; I knew I

⁵ D.H. Lawrence, *The Complete Short Stories Vol. III* (New York. Viking Press, 1961), 722.

wanted to listen to island voices; and, crucially, I managed to engineer an opportunity to become an islander.

The island of Newfoundland was like no other island I'd ever seen. It is so huge that I can barely wrap my mind around the fact that we are indeed on an island and not on some vast continent. That is, of course, just my perception coloured by the fact that I come from a country that could fit almost twice in this island of Newfoundland. As Hendrick Willem Van Loon wrote in his *Geography*: "All of us, without exception, live on islands. But some of these islands on our planet are so much larger than others that we have decided to let them belong to a class of their own and have called them 'continents'."⁶

Wayne Johnston in his marvellous memoir *Baltimore's Mansion* (marvellous not because it tells the story of his own family, but because it makes one wonder just how many Newfoundland families could tell a similar story) declared that "[a]n island, until you leave it, *is* the world."⁷

The island of Newfoundland, as vast as it is to my Croatian sensibilities, is, of course, an island and far smaller than a continent. It is also an excellent place to learn about the complexities of island life, even if, to someone like me, it may not quite feel like an island.

It may be that right here, at the beginning, is the best place to dispense with the discussion about island definitions. It was somewhat comforting to know that my own confusion about what is an island is very much a common trait among those who think and write about islands, but also something that those who live on islands think and talk about as well. As

⁶ Hendrik Willem Van Loon, *Van Loon's geography; the story of the world we live in* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933), 72.

⁷ Wayne Johnston, *Baltimore's Mansion* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000), 120.

Pete Hay points out: “Even the question of what constitutes an island is not conclusively settled, and what constitutes a small island is a particularly contested issue.”⁸

Tim Robinson, who has written extensively about the years he has spent living on Aran Islands off the coast of Ireland, recounts an anecdote from his first day on the islands that gives us the most obvious and simple of definitions: “On the day of our arrival we met an old man who explained the basic geography: “The ocean,” he told us, “goes all around the island.””⁹

And while it is true that geographic islands are indeed defined by the water that surrounds them and bounds them, it is by no means clear what separates true islands from mere rocks. Christian Depaetere and Arthur Dahl used 0.1km² as the smallest possible landmass still worthy of a classification as an island – “just enough for a bird or a child to have a rest.”¹⁰ Using this definition, they ended up with a total of some 680 billion islands - a number so vast that it defies imagination¹¹. Depaetere and Dahl readily acknowledged that “[d]rawing the line between something that is too large to be an island, or too small to be an island, ultimately remains an arbitrary decision.”¹² One of the direct results of such classification is a somewhat absurd situation Stephen Royle points out almost with a glee. “Although the existence of every island is known,” he writes, “it is not clear how many islands are there in

⁸ Pete Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2006), 20.

⁹ Tim Robinson, “Timescape with signposts,” in *Stones of Aran*, (Dublin: The Lilliput Press. Kobo Digital Edition, 2012), 22.

¹⁰ Christian Depaetere and Arthur L. Dahl, “Island Locations and Classifications,” in *A world of Islands: An Island Studies Reader*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Agenda Academic, Malta, 2007), 68.

¹¹ In fact, so vast that I am almost sure it is a mistake; however the number is a direct quote.

¹² Depaetere and Dahl, “Island Locations and Classifications,” 57.

the world... The problem is not one of location, however, but one of definition, for it depends what is counted as an island.”¹³

And definitions matter. To define an island, and especially a small island, has political, social and cultural consequences. Those definitions are always socially constructed and have little to do with actual geography. For example, Royle in his book *A Geography of Islands* tells us about a Viking view of what makes an island – the waters separating it from its mainland must be navigable by a ship with a rudder in its proper place. The viking definition would surely find its followers on Fogo Island where a resident adamantly declared:

“Prince Edward Island is not an island. [laughter] This is really important. Twillingate, all of our lives, was called Twillingate, until recent years, you hear people refer to it as Twillingate Island. It’s NOT AN ISLAND! [...] That’s not what affects human heart and psychology. It’s the separation. If you can drive to it, it’s not an island.”

Royle also tells us about a 19th century Scottish definition of an island as a piece of land surrounded by sea that was not only a home to humans but also to at least one sheep¹⁴. And it’s not only the Scots who feel that islanders are a necessary precondition for a piece of land to be an island. A resident of Vis in Croatia, in what is one of the most poetic conversations about islands I had had during the past three years, said that “islands without people are just rocks in the sea.”

Jean-Didier Hache reminds us that today’s definitions of what constitutes an island, a small island or a small island state are just as politically, socially and economically motivated as they have ever been¹⁵. Royle agrees, pointing out that “the International Convention on the Law

¹³ Stephen A. Royle, *A Geography of Islands: Small island insularity* (London: Routledge, 2001), 8.

¹⁴ Royle, *A Geography of Islands*, 9.

¹⁵ Jean-Didier Hache, “Towards a political approach to the island question,” in *Competing strategies for socio-economic development for small islands*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino and Robert Greenwood (Charlottetown: The Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, 1998), 32.

of the Sea does not allow exclusive economic zones to be awarded to rocks not capable of sustaining habitation”¹⁶ clearly establishing permanent human presence as a precondition of islandness.

Croatian parliament in its *Island Act* took a different approach. They decided that the islands should be classified based on demographics and economic development thus dividing Croatian islands into two groups. The first group includes undeveloped and insufficiently developed islands as well as small, unpopulated or periodically populated islands¹⁷ and the second group includes all other islands, presumably well developed and populated.

To add to the general confusion, Croatian geographer Vera Graovac points out that islandness “...in essence is a complex idea... It is as much a state of mind as it is an objective reality.”¹⁸ Hache, very much aware that “the human notion of what is insular, and what is not, is a flexible one, in space as well as in time,”¹⁹ proposes an elegant and just solution to this particular impasse. He suggests that we may want to leave the definition of islands and insularity to the islanders themselves as “the assertion of islanders of their island condition.”²⁰ And that is probably as it should be. As Royle points out: “Identity is... another factor to consider when deciding what is or remains an island.”²¹

¹⁶ Stephen Royle, “Island definitions and typologies,” in *A world of Islands: An Island Studies Reader*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Agenda Academic, Malta, 2007), 40.

¹⁷ Republic of Croatia, *The Island Act (Refined text)*, <http://hidra.srce.hr/arhiva/263/18315/www.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeno/1999/0706.htm> (1999).

¹⁸ Vera Graovac, “Islands on the verge of extinction – the example of Zadar islands, Croatia,” *Geoadria*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2004), 185.

¹⁹ Hache, “Towards a political approach to the island question,” 48.

²⁰ Hache, “Towards a political approach to the island question,” 51.

²¹ Royle, “Island definitions and typologies,” 45.

Allowing islanders to define their own condition also brings about another notion that is important to me and this study. Island studies, a particular field of inquiry the entire next chapter is dedicated to, rest on a simple premise best articulated initially by Grant McCall and then Godfrey Baldacchino in his editorial in the the very first issue of *Island Studies Journal* in 2006. He called for “[t]he study of islands on their own terms.”²²

This study is focused on four islands. Two of them, Change Islands and Fogo Island, are located off the northeast coast of the island of Newfoundland and the other two, Vis and Biševo, off the coast of Croatian mainland. I had an opportunity to speak with dozens of islanders in both locations. Some of those conversations were more formal interviews and many others took place during less formal encounters. I spoke with fishers, doctors and nurses, policy makers, seasonal residents, artists, teachers, wine makers, business owners, mayors, bloggers, journalists and activists. Throughout this thesis, I intend to let you hear many of those voices because their perspective is not only unique and interesting, but it is also rarely heard among those with power to craft public policy that has a profound impact on islanders’ lives. It is not necessarily a perfect method, but it is as close as I can get to allowing the islanders’ to tell us about their islands on their own terms.

This brings us back to the discussion about the definition of an island and particularly of a small island. The four islands included in this study are small. Fogo Island, the largest of the four, can easily be crossed by a car in less than an hour. The notion of smallness, however, is even more wrapped up in perception and personal preference. There have been attempts to define islands as small for political, economic and cultural purposes. For example, Soenartono

²² Godfrey Baldacchino, “Editorial: Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal,” *Island Studies Journal* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2006), 7.

Adisoemarto provides Indonesian state set of rules for determining what constitutes a small island:

“Small islands are characterized by the following features:

- a) separated from the main island;*
- b) water resources are limited, with small water catchment, consequently the surface water will directly flow to the sea;*
- c) sensitive and vulnerable to the external influences, natural as well as man-made;*
- d) containing endemic species with high ecological value;*
- e) aquatic area is relatively greater than terrestrial area; relatively isolated from that of the main island or continent;*
- f) no remote hinterland.”²³*

It is probably not surprising that an archipelagic nation such as Indonesia with over 17,000 islands needs a way to classify them. Others have attempted to create a nomenclature based on size of the landmass or the size of island population and sometimes both. Josip Faričić, Vera Graovac and Anica Čuka write about a 1952 Croatian classification of islands where an island is defined “as a stretch of land surrounded by sea, whose coastline is at least 10 km long. On the other hand, an islet is a stretch of land surrounded by sea, whose coastline is between 1.5 and 10 km long, while cliffs (sic) are smaller pieces of land surrounded by sea, whose coastline is less than 1.5 km long.”²⁴ Since the 50s there were several classifications

²³ Soenartono Adisoemarto, “Small islands: protect or neglect? An Indonesian case,” *International Journal of Island Affairs* February 2004, 91.

²⁴ Josip Faričić, Vera Graovac and Anica Čuka, “Croatian Small Islands – Residential and/or Leisure Area,” *Geoadria* 15/1 (2010), 149.

NOTE: There is some discrepancy between English translation and Croatian original both of which are published side by side in what is a bilingual journal. English word ‘cliffs’ is used to translate two Croatian words – ‘grebeni’ and ‘kamici.’ I believe a more accurate translation would read “rocks and reefs are smaller pieces of land surrounded by sea, whose coastline is less than 1.5 km long.”

proposed that use land area as well as demographic data to determine whether an island is a small island. All of them have shortcomings and logical inconsistencies.²⁵

Baldacchino raises questions about the importance of the size to begin with. He writes: “Why indeed [...] should we continue to refer to *small* islands (rather than just *islands*) when they are very much the norm? *Large* size is the actual exception.”²⁶

I would tend to agree that the adjective is probably unnecessary. However, the smallness of their island often came up in conversation with the islanders in this study. One of them had this to say: “[Islands]are knowable, and if they’re knowable, then they’re lovable. And you can’t love something you don’t know... I think the smaller the island, the more deep the knowledge can be... To be knowable you have to be able to, in an ordinary day, touch all of its sides. ”

Or, as Françoise Péron offers, small islands are “those specks of land large enough to support permanent residents, but small enough to render to their inhabitants the permanent consciousness of being on an island.”²⁷

The difficulty in defining what an island is, as well as the political, economic and cultural pitfalls of classifying some islands as small compared to others, illustrates just how complex a field island studies is. As a theoretical foundation I intend to use, island studies certainly merits a detailed discussion before we become familiar with the particular research areas that are the subject of this study.

²⁵ Faričić et al, “Croatian Small Islands,” 149-152.

²⁶ Godfrey Baldacchino, “Editorial: Introducing a World of Islands,” in *A World of Islands*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino. (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Agenda Academic, Malta, 2007), 2.

²⁷ Françoise Péron, “The contemporary lure of the island,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* Vol. 95, No. 3. (2004), 328.



Old cemetery on Change Islands

ISLAND INQUIRIES

On using Island Studies as a research framework and why studying islands makes sense

Islanders' ballad

*We live off sea, by nets and lines,
We count the blisters from oars, picks.
Red are our eyes from sleepless nights and the tears,
Our blistered hands are hard as rocks.*

*And we are lashed by storms and rains,
And every day we are bent over a bit more,
And yet, more than anything and more than all other beautiful things
Our entire lives we love sea*

*Our blue sea, you know all our desires
You are strength, fortune – our life*

*We count the sails and white ships,
The days are passing with nor'easters and sou'westers.
Miserly land gives all it can,
Life on an island is a joy and sorrow.²⁸*

“WHY ISLANDS?” is the most common reaction I get when I tell people what is that I am studying. I used to feel that I had to somehow justify my choice of research interest as if islands, somehow, were not as worthy of study as cities, or algae, or early illuminated

²⁸ Text by Stjepan Benzon. Music by Ivica Bašić. Original title is Bodulska Balada. Translation by Bojan Fürst. Klapa Otok performance can be seen at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=BD2SGcudUJI

manuscripts. These days, I usually reply with “Why not?” And yet, even in a thesis attempting to use island studies as its theoretical framework, it is impossible to avoid justifying one’s interest in islands. Therefore, the following chapter is my best answer so far to that perennial question of “Why islands?”

Ask any biogeographer whether islands constitute environments that deserve special consideration and the answer will be a resounding “yes”. Since Darwin and Wallace, biologists were drawn to islands. “An island is certainly an intrinsically appealing study object,”²⁹ is a line from the opening paragraph of MacArthur’s and Wilson’s classic text *The Theory of Island Biogeography*. “In the science of biogeography,” they continue, “the island is the first unit that the mind can pick out and begin to comprehend,”³⁰ a mirror statement of an earlier sentiment expressed by a Fogo islander who declared islands knowable and, therefore, lovable.

Biogeographer David Quammen goes further and declares islands “havens and breeding grounds for the unique and anomalous. They are natural laboratories of extravagant evolutionary experimentation.”³¹

And while islands may indeed be “a universal feature of biogeography,”³² social scientists found the pull of the islands just as irresistible. “The geography is simply too gripping; the

²⁹ Robert H. MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson, *The Theory of Island Biogeography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

³⁰ MacArthur and Wilson, *The Theory of Island Biogeography*, 3.

³¹ David Quammen, *The Song of the Dodo* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 18.

³² MacArthur and Wilson, *The Theory of Island Biogeography*, 3.

island image is too powerful to discard; the opportunity to play ‘God’ on/for an island is too tantalizing to resist,” writes Baldacchino³³.

But let’s say that the reader is of a stronger character than the author of this thesis and that a more objective, a more empirical answer is needed. There are plenty of those, too. There is over half a billion of us who call islands home or about 10 percent of the total world population.³⁴ Depraetere has crunched the numbers and came up with some fascinating facts. “Islandscapes,” which is Depraetere’s term for islands and their surrounding seas, “cover about 22.4 million km² of the Earth’s surface, which is some 6.2% of total oceanic surface, comprising 361.1 million km². Islandscapes include some 86,732 islands greater than 0.1 km², and total some 7.7 million km².”³⁵ Add to those impressive numbers Fernández-Armesto’s pronouncement that “[n]o scientific law, no sociological model can predict when or exactly where the sea will turn a small island into a civilization”³⁶ and it’s not hard to see why islands may indeed be worthy of serious study.

For those who need a more practical set of reasons why islands might be worthy of scientific scrutiny, Royle reminds us that “[i]slands always had potential utility.”³⁷ Sometimes, as he points out, that utility is perceived in very insensitive terms indeed as is the case in a couple of German Members of Parliament who in 2010 suggested that Greece should sell some of its islands to pay off its national debt. I am assuming the buyers would be Germans and other

³³ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 4.

³⁴ S.A. Royle, “A Human Geography of Islands,” *Geography*, 74:2 (1989), 106.

³⁵ Christian Depraetere. “The Challenge of Nissology: A Global Outlook on the World Archipelago Part I: Scene Setting the World Archipelago,” *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2008), 6.

³⁶ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations*, (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2000), 328.

³⁷ Stephen Royle, “‘Small Places like St Helena have Big Questions to Ask’: The Inaugural Lecture of a Professor of Island Geography,” *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 5, No.1 (2010), 12.

non-Greeks, which, incidentally, is an interesting take on colonization – something islanders know a lot about. Those Members of Parliament did stop at uninhabited islands³⁸. It is no small measure of comfort to know that even in the era of austerity measures, fiscal cliffs and economic crisis, selling Greeks together with their islands is still deemed unacceptable.

Royle identifies several other ways in which islands are of great significance.

Historically, many islands had great strategic importance either as military or trade or communications outposts. This was clearly the case with Vis Island in Croatia which for most of the post World War II period was a restricted military base. You could add a long string of such island outposts including, among many others, Guam, Cuba, and Okinawa.

Isolation can often add utility to islands³⁹. An isolated island makes a great prison, a holding centre for unwanted refugees and immigrants or a testing ground for nuclear weapons.

Combine isolation and remoteness with powerful mythology surrounding islands, especially in the West⁴⁰, and you suddenly have some of the most desirable real estate properties and vacation spots on the planet. In Royle's words "a private island is, after all, the ultimate gated community."⁴¹

Islands are also often seen as repositories of place-specific cultural practices and rich linguistic heritage lost or never developed on their respective mainlands. So, just as they are perfect laboratories for some of evolution's most extravagant experiments, they are also social laboratories experimenting with new models of governance, economic and social

³⁸ Julia Finch, "Greece told to sell off islands and artwork," *The Guardian*, March 4, 2010, Accessed December 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/04/greece-greek-islands-auction>

³⁹ Royle, "Small Places," 13.

⁴⁰ John R. Gillis, *Islands of the Mind*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 1.

⁴¹ Royle, "Small Places," 13.

organization, education and cultural practices.⁴² It may be that most mainlanders choose to see “the world’s inhabited islands [as] statistically-invisible geographical units within larger countries,”⁴³ but let us not forget that those same “statistically-invisible” islands play a vital role in geo-political and economic jostling for power.

*“The political interest of states in island issues is related to the importance of islands in their national territory. For most countries, their islands are relatively insignificant in terms of area, population or economic activities, and are usually marginalized in political process. However they take added significance when they extend national sovereignty over coastal resources or undersea oil and gas reserves, or serve as strategic outposts.”*⁴⁴

So, if islands are evolutionary and social laboratories, repositories of vital linguistic, cultural and environmental knowledge, if they play crucial role in their nation’s ability to access resources and provide unique geo-political, strategic and economic benefits all the while representing some of the world’s most desirable real estate and most vulnerable environments, the question is not why study islands, but how can we possibly do it in a fashion that would do justice to these complex and fascinating aspects of Earth’s geography and human endeavour. That’s where island studies or nissology comes in.

Nissology is a term that Grant McCall adopted from Depreterre’s original French *nissologie*⁴⁵ but the roots of both words can be traced to Ancient Greek as a combination of *nisos* and *logos* - *island* and *study*⁴⁶, respectively. The word has made an appearance in Croatian as well.

⁴² Royle, “Small Places,” 13.

⁴³ Geoff Bertram and Bernard Poirine, “Island Political Economy,” in *A World of Islands*, ed. Godfrey Baldacchino. (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Agenda Academic, Malta, 2007), 326.

⁴⁴ Depreterre and Dahl, “Island Locations and Classifications,” 99.

⁴⁵ Grant McCall, “Nissology: A Proposal for Consideration,” *Journal of the Pacific Society*, Vol.17. No.63-64 (1994), 104.

⁴⁶ McCall, “Nissology”, 105.

Croatian geographer Ivo Nejašmić, for example, comfortably identifies himself as a *nisolog*.⁴⁷ Others, like Baldacchino and Stratford tend to use simpler, but quite straightforward “island studies,” while Hay uses both⁴⁸. My personal preference goes to *island studies*. I like the simplicity and unpretentiousness of it. It seems to describe a field accessible to anybody with a healthy interest and respect for islands and island lives. I am also quite willing to admit that I covet Stephen Royle’s title of *island geographer* and wonder why more passionate island geographers don’t insist on it. Lightheartedness aside, terminology here is far less important than what island studies stand for.

“The core of ‘island studies’ is the constitution of ‘islandness,’” writes Baldacchino, “and its possible or plausible influence and impact on ecology, human/species behaviour and any of the areas handled by the traditional subject uni-disciplines (such as archaeology, economics or literature), subject multi-disciplines (such as political economy or biogeography) or policy foci/issues (such as governance, social capital, waste disposal, language extinction or sustainable tourism).”⁴⁹ Islandness is not an easy term to define and Stratford probably came closest to a definitive definition when she wrote that islandness is “a complex expression of identity that attaches to places smaller than continents and surrounded entirely by water. These identifications include, but are not confined to, strong perceptions of island-self and mainland-other, as well as potent connections to island communities and environments.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Personal conversation, 2011.

⁴⁸ See for example Baldacchino’s “Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal;” Stratford et al. “Envisioning the Archipelago;” and Hay’s “A Phenomenology of Islands.”

⁴⁹ Baldacchino, “Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal,” 9.

⁵⁰ Elaine Stratford, “Islandness and struggles over development: A Tasmanian case study,” *Political Geography*, 27 (2008), 160-161.

Island studies is not so much a new discipline, but rather a new approach to islands. A geographer or a sociologist as well as an engineer or a biologist can be an island scholar as long as he or she remembers the crucial distinction between island studies and every other approach to island inquiries. McCall's concept of nissology refers to "the study of islands on their own terms; the open and free inquiry into island-ness; and the promotion of international cooperation and networking amongst islands."⁵¹ This call for study of islands on their own terms is in many ways a direct response to the political, economic and cultural treatment of islands in the past. "Continental dwellers have always sought to control and possess islands [...] Continentals covet islands,"⁵² writes McCall urging us to abandon continental preconceptions and "take islands as they are."⁵³ Baldacchino elaborates on that notion outlining the mandate of island studies as "sharing, advancing and challenging existing theorization on islands and island studies; while avoiding, delimiting or debunking false or partial interpretations of the island condition."⁵⁴

Those false and partial interpretations abound, especially in the West where islands have a mythical status. "To the person from the mainland, an island, even when quite close, is not quite of this world,"⁵⁵ writes Péron about that irresistible lure of the islands. Gillis refers to Western obsession with islands as "islomania:"

Like all master metaphors, the island is capable of representing a multitude of things. It can symbolize fragmentation and vulnerability but also wholesomeness and safety. Islands stand for loss but also recovery. They are figures for paradise and hell. Islands are where we

⁵¹ McCall, "Nissology," 105.

⁵² Grant McCall, "Clearing Confusion in a Disembedded World: The Case for Nissology," *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 84:2 (1996), 75.

⁵³ McCall, "Clearing Confusion," 78.

⁵⁴ Baldacchino, "Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal," 10.

⁵⁵ Péron, "The Contemporary Lure of the Island," 331.

*quarantine the pestilent and exile the subversive, but they are also where we welcome the immigrant and the asylum seeker. They can represent both separation and continuity, isolation and connection. Over time the island has been the West's favorite location for visions of both the past and future.*⁵⁶

These are powerful metaphors and emotions that can be traced through the history of Western literature and thought. One could start with Homer's *The Odyssey* and continue straight on through Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Dafoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Moore's *Utopia*, Verne's *Mysterious Island*, Huxley's *Brave New World* to modern instances of those stories such as the reality TV show *Survivor* with a myriad of stops in between.

With the "Age of Reconnaissance,"⁵⁷ to borrow David Livingston's expression, that obsession with islands took a rather acquisitive turn. Péron:

*A small island asks to be inventoried, and the first thing new inhabitants do – like Robinson Crusoe or Tom Hanks in the film Castaway (2001) – is to undergo a symbolic rite of ownership, measuring every contour, pacing out the distances, discovering the length of the coastline for themselves and getting to know it physically in all its twists and turns. It is as if, by measuring – and thus mastering – this microcosmic island, they are engaging vicariously in the control of the macrocosm Earth.*⁵⁸

We, in the West at least, are still deeply immersed in and possessed by the islomaniac⁵⁹ tendencies and in the firm grip of those same urges to inventory, catalog and claim possession over islands. Even those of us who strive to "study islands on their own terms"⁶⁰ cannot resist the urge to do so. Royle, for example, tells us in his inaugural lecture as an island geographer

⁵⁶ Gillis, *The Islands of the Mind*, 3.

⁵⁷ David Livingston, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1992), 32.

⁵⁸ Péron, "The Contemporary Lure of the Island," 331

⁵⁹ Gillis, *The Island of the Mind*, 3.

⁶⁰ Baldacchino, "Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal," 7.

that to that point in his life he had visited 668 islands.⁶¹ My own tally of 20 (if I count those with causeways or bridges which might be cheating) pales in comparison, but nonetheless, here I am keeping track of ‘my’ islands all the same. As Baldacchino unflinchingly points out “deep down, we are probably all guilty of imperialism.”⁶²

Hay writes that metaphorical idea of the island is “[s]o powerful [...] that it can be deployed in the absence of even the slightest reference to the reality of islands.”⁶³ I encountered a perfect example of it at a conference on rural development I attended in October 2012. While scanning the conference program for sessions of interest, I was pleasantly surprised to find a paper presentation titled: “Exploring Our Island: Connecting with Partners in Church and Community.”⁶⁴ We were in Olds, Alberta, after all, so to find a session on islands was a bit of a lucky strike. My initial expectation was that this will be a presentation by scholars or practitioners from British Columbia and I was looking forward to learning about BC islands, a part of Canada I know very little about. Imagine my shock when I discovered that the island the two lay preachers and our presenters were referring to were their churches in remote rural Alberta and not actual, real, geographic islands.

Hay is adamant that such abuse of islands as metaphors is actually offensive to those who live island lives.

Those who live real lives on islands are entitled to resent this. If the appropriation of an exotic island locale for works of literature that simply exploit that locale without genuinely

⁶¹ Royle, “Small Places,” 5

⁶² Baldacchino, “Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies,” *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 3. No. 1. (2008), 44.

⁶³ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 30

⁶⁴ Creating Rural Connections Conference program: <http://www.ardn.ca/09/images/file/ARDN%20Creating%20Rural%20Connections%202012/Programme%20Schedule%20Final%20Oct%201.pdf>, Accessed on December 10, 2012.

*engaging with it should be revealed as the persistence of a colonial cast of mind, so are islanders entitled to view all promotions of metaphorical senses of islands as acts of post-colonial appropriation. What they are being told is that the reality of their lives is of no account – or, at least, of less account than mere abstractions of the appropriatory mind. Island metaphors not only wrongly represent the politics of island identity as conservative, then; they also render irrelevant the realness of island lives. Such metaphors were not, after all, generated by islanders. They are continental, as well as colonial, constructions.*⁶⁵

And so the islands and islanders find themselves in a paradoxical situation of “occupying a central place in Western imagination,” but, as a result, they are “rarely [...] understood on their own terms.”⁶⁶

The dichotomy between island as a metaphor and the reality of a lived island life is one of the three “faultlines”⁶⁷ Hay identifies as main lines of inquiry and division within island studies. He specifically warns island scholars to “look sceptically upon literary and cultural studies perspectives that dismiss the physicality of islands whilst promoting the relevance of metaphorical abstractions.”⁶⁸ This is an important warning in a world where history has “a continental bias”⁶⁹ and small islands can casually be “condemned to poverty and insecurity.”⁷⁰ Untangling the metaphorical knot surrounding islands and focusing on “real lives” and island experiences is therefore a primary task of island scholarship.

‘Real,’ however, is a funny word and what is real depends much on one’s perception so it is not surprising that when continental dwellers – often focused on cataloguing, measuring, and

⁶⁵ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 30.

⁶⁶ Gillis, *The Island of the Mind*, 4.

⁶⁷ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 26.

⁶⁸ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 29.

⁶⁹ Gillis, *The Island of the Mind*, 4.

⁷⁰ Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations*, 326.



Riva in town of Vis on Vis Island, Croatia.

delineating land – fixate on two obvious and very ‘real’ aspects of islands: their boundedness and their isolation⁷¹. That “contested status of the edge”⁷² is the second of Hay’s faultlines.

“The notion of the edge is central to constructions of islandness, and islanders are more aware of and more confronted by the fact of boundaries than are most peoples,”⁷³ Hay writes.

While the question of land borders on an island is usually quite obvious, the edge itself and the importance of sea as opposed to land might be two most misunderstood aspects of islandness among the continental dwellers. “The boundary marked by land and water is a critical feature of islands but by no means is it definitive, for the land and sea boundary is a shifting, fractal and paradoxical one,”⁷⁴ writes Stratford.

⁷¹ Royle, *A Geography of Islands*, 11.

⁷² Hay, “A phenomenology of islands,” 21.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Stratford et al, “Envisioning the Archipelago,” *Island Studies Journal*, Vol.6 No.2 (2011), 115.

The edge, “the obstinate separateness,”⁷⁵ that bounds islands and makes them “graspable, able to be held in the mind’s eye and imagined as places of possibility and promise,”⁷⁶ also performs an orienting role. In the words of an eloquent Fogo Islander: “You only know where you are when you’re on the edge cause everything else is confusing or in the middle of something. The edge, you always know where you are. It’s a place to orient yourself.”

The island shore is also a meeting place. If there is a public event on Change Islands, it will probably take place on the government wharf. In Croatia, no island town would be complete without *riva*, a long, stone wharf with berths for ships stretching the length of a town. Along the *riva* one will find cafe’s, restaurants, benches, sometimes a market and a fish market. This is also where the ferries will dock making the shore, the edge, the most vibrant part of the community.

That the shoreline, an island edge, plays such an important part in islanders’ lives is not surprising. Indeed, Baldacchino insists that “[i]sland studies is very much about the implications of permeable borders.”⁷⁷ For non-islanders, it can be difficult to grasp just how important the edge is and what it actually means. There is a good reason for it. It’s easy to focus on land and miss the point that the surrounding sea defines the islanders more than the actual land. “The sea can shape island civilizations either by confining them or by linking them to other lands,” writes Fernández-Armesto. “Either way, proximity to the sea is such a powerful feature of any environment which includes it that it dwarfs all others.”⁷⁸ As

⁷⁵ Edmond and Smith, “Editors’ Introduction,” *Islands in History and Representation* (New York: Routledge 2003), 4.

⁷⁶ Edmond and Smith, “Editors’ Introduction,” 2.

⁷⁷ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 5.

⁷⁸ Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations*, 327.

Depraetere insists “[a]n island as a visible and functional entity does not go without the surrounding sea surface.”⁷⁹

Shifting focus from land to sea dramatically changes the way islands are perceived. Suddenly, islands and “[i]sland nations are not “tiny dots on a sea of blue,” as so often described by continental dwellers. Rather, they occupy a large proportion of the earth's surface.”⁸⁰ This shift in emphasis does not only make islands into larger entities, but it demands profound change in how we look at islanders’ lives. That change is probably the most pronounced in island nations of the South Pacific.

As European imperialism encountered Oceania, a term Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa prefers to Pacific islands, they did what imperialists do best: catalogued, declared possession over it and drew imaginary boundaries that made sense to their European minds. In the process they missed a truly remarkable achievement of peoples they never tried to understand, but instead slotted them and the islands in their own colonial, Western and imperial frameworks.

Fernández-Armesto gives a succinct summary:

*“Yet these romantic and condescending images missed the point. They were based on evaluations of the material culture of the islanders’ landward life, where almost nothing was made to dwarf man or defy time, where no pottery was used and where – on most islands – large polities with institutions recognizable to European scrutineers did not exist. The achievements of South Sea island civilization could only be fully appreciated at sea, where the islanders’ technology and architecture as shipwrights approached practical perfection; where their science as navigators was unsurpassed anywhere in the world; and where their ability to record information on reed maps was as good, for its purpose, as any more conventional writing system.”*⁸¹

⁷⁹ Depraetere, “The Challenge of Nissology,” 4.

⁸⁰ McCall, “Nissology”, 106.

⁸¹ Fernández-Armesto, *Civilizations*, 332.

Once you make that mental leap out of Eurocentric view of the sea as “a great mystery”⁸² and abandon “landlubberly fantasies of monsters and mermaids,”⁸³ the sea becomes not just a barrier, but a great connector. Hau’ofa makes that argument beautifully when he writes that “[t]here is a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as ‘islands in a far sea’ and as ‘a sea of islands’.”⁸⁴ There is also a gulf of difference between seeing the islanders as inhabitants of insignificant specks of land scattered across the sea and seeing them as capable navigators, immensely knowledgeable about the environment they work and live in. It is a difference between a prison and a world of endless possibilities. As Hau’ofa points out “...the idea of smallness is relative; it depends on what is included and excluded in any calculation of size.”⁸⁵

This notion of “sea of islands” is not unique to South Pacific, although it is best articulated by South Pacific scholars such as Hau’ofa. As one of many proofs of Royle’s law-like statement that “[t]he effects of insularity are universal,”⁸⁶ I am reminded of Vis islanders in Croatia and Change Islanders in Newfoundland who have their own unique relationship with their surrounding waters. In 2009, I was a part of a kitchen table mapping project On Change Islands led by geographer Derek Smith from Carleton, Maureen Woodrow from University of Ottawa and Kelly Vodden from Memorial University of Newfoundland. It was a remarkable exercise in allowing the islanders to map and name their own islands. The project started with a government-issued map with some 20 names on it, and ended with the final map that was eventually presented to the town and that had over 250 names on it – names

⁸² John Gillis, *The Island of the Mind*, 8.

⁸³ John Gillis, *The Island of the Mind*, 9.

⁸⁴ Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our sea of islands,” in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*. (Suva, Fiji: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1993), 7.

⁸⁵ Hau’ofa, *Our sea of islands*, 6.

⁸⁶ Royle, *A Geography of Islands*, 1

that were meaningful to the islanders and that demonstrated the detailed environmental knowledge they collectively possessed⁸⁷. What was truly remarkable was the fact that the map contained the names for specific bodies of water the islanders considered their fishing grounds. They could distinguish between dozens of them including the descriptions of sea bottom where that was of importance or interest. Similarly, the town of Komiža on island of Vis includes within its municipal border 10 or so uninhabited islands known as Palagruža. Historically, the fishers of Komiža claimed the islands as their fishing grounds and the inclusion of the islands within the municipal borders is a modern recognition of that fact. What is fascinating about Palagruža is that it is some 40 nautical miles away from the island of Vis and at no point can it be seen on the horizon. It is yet again a reminder that “the sea was open to anyone who could navigate his way through,”⁸⁸ and a testament to the navigational skills of the islanders.

If we accept that, for most islanders, the sea is not just a barrier but also a tissue holding their world together, then we can look at the last of Hay’s fault-lines in a new light. The third fault-line Hay identifies as a major preoccupation of island studies is the tension between constant mobility among islanders and the tenacious identities that differentiate one island from another in an increasingly globalized world.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Derek A. Smith and Maureen Woodrow. “Local Geographic Knowledge Among Residents of Change Islands, Newfoundland” (paper presented at annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG) Carleton University, Ottawa, May 27, 2009).

⁸⁸ Hau’ofa, “Our sea of islands,” 9.

⁸⁹ Hay, “A Phenomenology of islands,” 23-24.

Baldacchino reminds us that there is a major difference between island geographies and their histories. “Island geography tends towards isolation,” he writes, “island history, on the other hand, tends towards contact.”⁹⁰

This is a crucial observation because it tell us that island emigration, as necessary as it may be due to economic and political reasons, is also a part of that historical tradition of islanders expanding their networks in ways that are appropriate for the times. Writing about Oceania, Hau’ofa describes the nineteenth century as a contraction of islanders traditional territories as a result of imperial borders that confined islanders “to their tiny places, isolated from each other. No longer could they travel freely to do what they had done for centuries. They were cut off from their relatives abroad, from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment.”⁹¹ The late twentieth century and these first two decades of the twenty-first century have opened up possibilities, argues Hau’ofa, allowing islanders to again engage in the exploration of their worlds across unprecedented distances:

*The new economic reality made nonsense of artificial boundaries, enabling the people to shake off their confinement and they have since moved, by the tens of thousands, doing what their ancestors had done before them: enlarging their world as they go, but on a scale not possible before. Everywhere they go, to Australia, New Zealand, Hawai’i, mainland USA, Canada and even Europe, they strike roots in new resource areas, securing employment and overseas family property, expanding kinship networks through which they circulate themselves, their relatives, their material goods, and their stories all across their ocean, and the ocean is theirs because it has always been their home.”*⁹²

The island of Newfoundland and especially the smaller islands in its archipelago have for a long time experienced large numbers of people leaving their communities and that trend is not about to stop. Economic forces at work are too strong to resist. In fact, there is a

⁹⁰ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 5.

⁹¹ Hau’ofa, “Our sea of islands,” 10.

⁹² Hau’ofa, “Our sea of islands,” 10.

mythology built around those diaspora communities and I have been told repeatedly that there are more people from Komiža on Vis island in San Pedro, California, than on Vis itself and that Fort McMurray is the second largest Newfoundland city in Canada. However, if those who left are a part of a vast network that can be enticed to remain engaged with its island homeland, then that large immigrant population is not necessarily only an economic, cultural and social drain. Hay, writing about the island of Tasmania, points out that “the tragedy is not that the young and the talented leave but that they may never find a reason to come back, or to make the sort of constructive contribution to island life from afar.”⁹³

While “[i]t’s nicer to see a light coming into the harbour than one leaving,” as a Fogo islander put it, another person on Vis island in Croatia had this to say as a warning to those who want to keep islanders, especially young islanders, confined to their isles:

You have to be careful with the island. There is a trap here. If you prevent a young person from leaving, the island turns into a curse. They must go and get to know the world and it has to be their own decision to return and to love the island. If you tell them: “Don’t go there. That’s not for you,” then there is going to be resentment. It’s our job to push them out into the world. We have to give them the love for the island, we have to teach them about life here, but it has to be their decision. If you don’t do that, then they have no reason to come back. It’s only love that works... That is what happened to me. I had a grandma who passed that love on to me and I left to see the world, but I also felt that I can affirm myself the best here, that here I am myself and that here I can make the greatest contribution. But if I had not learned that love, if I had not had that contact with the island, I would have left and would be contented somewhere else and I would not feel that I belong to this island. It’s all about where you belong.

That sense of belonging is where all of the Hay’s faultlines eventually lead. “Is it too simple to observe,” he asks, “that, the longer a community of people lives on an island, and the smaller the island, the stronger the sense of island identity, and of identification with the island?”

That sense of place and identity should not be underestimated. While it serves as the source

⁹³ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 24.

of strength and a resource for the islanders, it also provides us with an opportunity to refine “our theoretical grasp of the mechanisms and processes involved in globalisation.”⁹⁴

Author Tim Robinson calls the changes brought on by forces of globalisation “the material destructiveness of modern life.”⁹⁵ This increased ability to reduce the time it takes to communicate and traverse across space while at the same time creating a uniformity of places is what David Harvey calls “time-space compression.”⁹⁶ Doreen Massey expanded on Harvey’s work wondering whether it is possible in such rapidly changing world “to retain any sense of a local place and its particularity?”⁹⁷ She points out that the effect is not equally distributed and that “different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections.”⁹⁸ The significance of this to the islands is two fold. First, islanders, just like everybody else, have access to air travel, modern communications and so on, making leaving the island and/or the expansion of their own networks of kinship and trade that much easier. Second, as Depraetere and Dahl point out, despite these rapid changes: “... the special conditions that created island cultures remain, and many island cultural characteristics demonstrate surprising resilience.”⁹⁹ In essence, while most of the world is morphing into a globalized, seamless mass under economic and political

⁹⁴ Eric Clark, “The ballad dance of the Faroese: Island biocultural geography in an age of globalisation,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (2004), 285.

⁹⁵ Robinson, “Timescape with signposts,” 9.

⁹⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), 261.

⁹⁷ Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 146.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Depraetere and Dahl, “Island Locations and Classifications,” 94-95.

systems that “institutionalize placelessness,”¹⁰⁰ islanders manage to hang on to the authenticity of their island communities and places.

Arturo Escobar in his 2001 article “Culture Sits in Places” has issued an eloquent call to arms for those interested in places and identities when he wrote:

*“Place has dropped out of sight in the “globalization craze” of recent years, and this erasure of place has profound consequences for our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy. It is perhaps time to reverse some of this asymmetry by focusing anew — and from the perspective afforded by the critiques of place themselves — on the continued vitality of place and place-making for culture, nature, and economy.”*¹⁰¹

Place and identity are closely interwoven in a sort of tapestry where the space itself acts as a base for layering of multigenerational experiences and knowledge forming a place with its own distinct character – what architect Christian Norberg-Schulz calls “genius loci, or spirit of place... the concrete reality a man has to face in his daily life.”¹⁰² A Fogo Islander said that the island itself “holds time in such a big way.” It is a place, in Jasper Coppes’ words, “a qualitative, total phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its parts or properties without losing its concrete character.”¹⁰³ And out of that place and because of it come strong identities that islanders tend to carry with them wherever they go making a “significant contribution towards global cultural diversity.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Erik Ghenoïu, “Charles W. Moore and the Idea of Place,” *Fabrications: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (2008), 91.

¹⁰¹ Arturo Escobar, “Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization.” *Political Geography*, 20 (2001.) 141.

¹⁰² Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 5.

¹⁰³ Jasper Coppes, “Revisiting the Invisible Hiding Place.” *Architecture and Phenomenology*. (Autumn 2008.) 25.

¹⁰⁴ Depraetere and Dahl, “Island Locations and Classifications,” 94-95.

Interestingly enough, small islands with strong sense of identity seem to confer some of that authenticity to their respective mainlands. So in Croatia and in Newfoundland I heard policy makers, marketing experts and islanders themselves declaring that “Croatia without islands would not be Croatia,” or the Newfoundland equivalent: “People who come here don’t come to see big cities. They come here to see the outports and scenery, people going out in the boats to fish. That’s what public perception of Newfoundland is and these communities fulfill that to a huge degree.”

The identity and authenticity of a place are now highly sought commodities. Hay’s concern over mobility has to do as much with who is leaving as with who is arriving and, sometimes, staying. With an increasing number of people who can afford to access previously remote areas such as islands purely for leisure, the temptation to commodify the painstakingly built identities is growing as well. “More often than not, those who seek the promise of islandness... are more interested in a romanticized idea of island living than the actual reality of lived island existence.”¹⁰⁵ These new encounters are not necessarily damaging to islanders’ identities. Hay reminds us that islands have always been subject to change: “In the mix of the old and the new, island identities shift – they are endlessly remade, but enough remains constant for the island to persist.”¹⁰⁶ In fact islanders and their respective mainlands quite consciously play the tourism game of attracting either the wealthiest or the largest possible numbers of tourists as means of ensuring economic survival, often under threat by those same globalizing forces that allow large numbers of people to easily travel in search of their own island paradises. Bertram and Poirine insist that’s just the way things are: “International

¹⁰⁵ Bojan Fürst, “Newcomers at the gates: place and space in small island context,” *Place Peripheral: The Promise and Challenge of Place-Based Development in Rural and Remote Regions*, (St. John’s, NL: ISER, 2014), 4 (Accepted for publication)

¹⁰⁶ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 24.

mobility of professionals and the business elite is an established reality of the modern world in which islanders participate along with their peers.”¹⁰⁷

Islanders often tend to be aware of the potential toll commodification and “leisuring”¹⁰⁸ of their landscape could take. A Vis islander expressed those tensions succinctly when he said: “To us, this is a place we live in. To others, it is a place for a vacation and the two are not always compatible.” In order for islands to remain authentic places, they will have to adapt to the current changes in the world around them while at the same time holding on to life “which is attuned to the rhythms of nature, to see one’s life as anchored in human history and directed toward a future, to build a home which is the everyday symbol of a dialogue with one’s ecological and social milieu.”¹⁰⁹ That kind of rooted living takes an enormous effort which eventually results in what folklorist Gerald Pocius calls an “experiential series of familiar places... a series of emotionally based meaningful spaces”¹¹⁰. Escobar describes such places as “constituted by sedimented social structures and cultural practices.”¹¹¹

The seduction of the globalized uniformity may yet prove too strong to resist. “I think we have to be careful,” a Fogo Islander said, “I think that if we cut ourselves off from the fuel, we are going to be lost, just like everybody else is lost.” But is it fair to paint islands as some sort of a bulwark against the evils of globalisation? Is that too heavy a burden to carry for people who, for most part, just want to be left alone so they can go on with their lives? Hay, at least,

¹⁰⁷ Bertram and Poirine, “Island Political Economy,” 366.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Bunce, “The ‘leisuring’ of rural landscape in Barbados: New spatialities and the implications for sustainability in small island states.” *Geoforum*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (2008), 969.

¹⁰⁹ Anne Buttner, “Grasping the Dynamism of Lifeworld.” *Annals of Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 66, No. 2, (1976), 277.

¹¹⁰ Gerald L. Pocius, *A place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*. (Montreal QC: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 7.

¹¹¹ Escobar, “Culture Sits in Places,” 143.

would see island identities of utmost importance to island studies and with much broader social implications:

*Identity politics within islands, then, opposes the persistence of colonial structures (under the guise of globalization) and takes the side of autonomy and cultural diversity. To emphasise communal ties of identity is to set in place a progressive case for defending or promoting conditions in which autonomy, justice and dignity are possible.*¹¹²

Stratford et al wrote that “no two islands are ever alike,”¹¹³ and in that authenticity lies their opportunity to forge their own development path, but also the danger of being commoditized and leisured into a globalized sameness or, worse, into some sort of a Disneyland-like playground for the long-weekend vacationeers.

Whether because of their invaluable contribution to biodiversity and cultural diversity, or because of their relative boundedness and precisely defined geography and the implications island identities have for the study of global phenomena, or because they are perfect laboratories to test new ideas and explore new ways of social and economic organization, islands are worthy of serious, engaged and respectful study. “Islands call for recognition, and celebration, as experimental sites,” writes Baldacchino, “In fulfilling this designation, human action, human imagination and nature are in solid agreement.”¹¹⁴ There are now several journals, associations, government and supranational bodies as well as academic institutions and networks that examine and concern themselves with various aspects of islands and island lives. A strong group of scholars such as Baldacchino, Royle, Hay, Stratford, and McCall have

¹¹² Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 28.

¹¹³ Stratford et al, “Envisioning the Archipelago,” 117.

¹¹⁴ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 8.

laid out a solid foundation on which to build island studies “as the critical, inter- and pluri-disciplinary study of islands on their own terms.”¹¹⁵

Hay has identified the lines of tension that will keep island scholars preoccupied for the foreseeable future. To his three faultlines, I would suggest adding a fourth – a line of tension between those who see islands only as a drain on the resources of their respective mainlands and those who see policy alternatives and unique economic and social development possibilities. I intend to spend much of the eighth chapter wrestling with the ideas within that particular island dichotomy.

Before we move on, I would also like to propose that geography as a discipline is well suited to embrace island studies as one of its many theoretical frameworks. Geography is a discipline concerned with “spaces and places at different scales, about relationships between the global and the local, and about spatial relations and connectivities.”¹¹⁶ The complexity of island studies and island condition open themselves to “an inter-, or even trans-, disciplinary focus of critical inquiry and scholarship,”¹¹⁷ precisely the kind of perspective Patricia Gober called for in her address to the Association of American Geographers when she envisioned geography as a discipline that responds “effectively to the growing demand in science and society for a more synthetic perspective, one that identifies creative linkages between the human and natural systems that govern our world.”¹¹⁸ Geographers, of course, are not the only ones with the interest in islands, nor do they hold answers to all or even the most of the

¹¹⁵ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 16

¹¹⁶ Russell King, “Geography, Islands and Migration in an Era of Global Mobility,” *Islands Studies Journal*. Vol. 4. No.1. (2009), 55.

¹¹⁷ Baldacchino, “Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal,” 9.

¹¹⁸ Patricia Gober, Presidential Address: In Search of Synthesis,” *Annals of Association of American Geographers*, Vol.90 No.1. (2000), 2.

puzzles and questions island studies and islands pose. They are, however, in a uniquely privileged position to pursue island investigations which “concern [themselves] with the reality of islands and how it is for islands and islanders in the times that are here and that are emerging.”¹¹⁹ These are the tasks that fit nicely with geography that is “seen and valued as a “bridge discipline” – one that can connect the study of human and natural systems and one that is capable of intellectual synthesis.”¹²⁰ I do believe that geographers who adopt island studies’ credo of studying islands on their own terms and work with the broad range of tools and concepts within their own discipline will find willing partners in islanders themselves and colleagues from across the academic spectrum who share their passion for islands.

For now, this will have to suffice as an answer to the ‘why’ question when it comes to islands and island studies. The following chapter is all about the ‘how’ of island studies and this particular research project.

¹¹⁹Hay, “The Phenomenology of Islands,” 31.

¹²⁰ Gober, “In Search of Synthesis,” 5.



Komiža, Vis Island, Croatia

ISLANDS ON THEIR OWN TERMS

Listening to island voices and comparing islands

“The way is suspicious –the result uncertain...”¹²¹

Walt Whitman

IF WE ARE TO STUDY ISLANDS ON THEIR OWN TERMS as Baldacchino and McCall urge us to do, if we are to listen to Hay and deal with island realities rather than myths and metaphors, and if we accept Stratford et al’s assertion that every island is unique, how can we possibly begin to make sense of thousands of islands and millions of island lives? This is not a trivial question. As Castles points out “methods are not neutral: the choice of research methods is based on specific conceptual frameworks and objectives, and may lead to widely varying findings.”¹²² Given the island studies focus on studying islands on their own terms, rich social, cultural, and economic context as well as demographic and ecological data are of

¹²¹ Walt Whitman, “Fit Audience.” *Poems by Walt Whitman*. (A public domain book, Kindle edition downloaded 2013): 232.

¹²² Stephen Castles, “Studying Social Transformation.” *International Political Science Review/ Revue internationale de science politique* .Vol. 22, No. 1. (2001), 25.

crucial importance if we are to begin understanding the realities of island lives. How we obtain that data matters.

Given the uniqueness of each island, the case study approach is often the preferred investigative method. Yin writes in *Case Study Research Design and Methods* that “case studies are the preferred method when (a) “how” or “why” questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.”¹²³ Many island inquiries tend to meet all three of those criteria. The research presented here, for example, is largely driven by “why” and “how” questions: why some jurisdictions have specific island polices and others don’t; how do islanders see themselves; how those not of the islands see them; is there a connection between policy and perception; what kind of policies actually support island development; how can we craft island-centric policy? Yin also points out that another rationale for using a case study approach “is where the case represents an extreme case or a unique case,”¹²⁴ which corresponds with the notion of each island’s singularity.

As discussed earlier, there is a significant historical baggage island scholars have to contend with. In order to avoid those colonial and continental constructions of islands that Hay warns us about,¹²⁵ island scholars should pay particular attention to island voices and the context of the social and geographic environment they work in. Again, case study, as a “richly descriptive [approach], grounded in deep and varied sources of information,”¹²⁶ that “allows

¹²³ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods (Fourth Edition)*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009, Kindle edition), 7% Loc 307 of 4690.

¹²⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 25% Loc 1178 of 4690

¹²⁵ Hay, “A Phenomenology of Islands,” 30.

¹²⁶ Dawson R. Hanckock and Bob Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers.* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 16.

investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events,”¹²⁷ presents itself as a logical approach to island inquiries.

This does not necessarily mean that every island inquiry needs to be a qualitative case study. For example, biogeographers, demographers, or epidemiologists may rely on quantitative data and quantitative data analysis methods. Case studies do not have to be limited exclusively to qualitative only or quantitative only methodologies either. In fact, Yin argues for freely mixing various research approaches. “Mixed methods research,” he writes, “can permit investigators to address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished by any single method alone.”¹²⁸

There is another aspect to island studies that is not stated specifically, but rather implied through the credo of studying islands on their own terms and the concern for lived island realities. That implied aspect is that the islanders themselves are more partners than participants in a research project where their knowledge and their willingness to share it is valued and respected. Island studies are decidedly not about academic researchers imparting the right kind of knowledge to islanders or simply extracting it from them, but rather about arriving at knowledge through exchange of ideas, experiences and listening to island voices. It was indeed an islander and a scholar Epeli Hau’ofa who implored us to “focus our attention [...] on what ordinary people are actually doing rather than on what they should be doing, [so that we can] see the broader picture of reality.”¹²⁹ It is within that island reality that Baldacchino envisions island studies as a rigorous research endeavour and an opportunity "to

¹²⁷ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 7% Loc 344 of 4690.

¹²⁸ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 31% Loc 1474 of 4690.

¹²⁹ Hau’ofa, “Our sea of islands,” 12.

bring together researchers, policy makers and civil society spokespersons from/to islands.”¹³⁰

This desire to create a network of researchers, policy and development practitioners, and islanders who can build on each other’s knowledge of islands is another fundamental tenet of island studies. These dual foci of taking islands as they are and as free from continental notions as possible¹³¹ and the desire to base the knowledge of islands on exchange of ideas, research and experiences while building a network of island scholars in the broadest possible sense of the word, tells us that nissologists tend to base their inquiries on the assumption that knowledge is multi-faceted and accessible to all. This too, has an implication on the methodology as well as on how and which particular methods one chooses to use. Morgan and Smircich write that:

*...the choice and adequacy of a method embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of root assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated.*¹³²

Keeping all that in mind, I decided to conduct this particular research as a largely qualitative, multi-site case study. I believe such approach was the most appropriate given the research questions and the context in which the project were to take place. As Morgan and Smircich point out “[q]ualitative research stands for an approach rather than a particular set of techniques, and its appropriateness—like that of quantitative research—is contingent on the nature of the phenomena to be studied.”¹³³ The mixed methods I used – semi-structured interviews, observation aided by photography, primary and secondary data analysis – also resulted in some quantitative data which provided important contextual information for each of the study areas in this research project.

¹³⁰ Baldacchino, “Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies journal,” 6.

¹³¹ McCall, “Clearing Confusion,” 78.

¹³² Morgan and Smircich, “The Case for Qualitative Research,” 491.

¹³³ Morgan and Smircich, “The Case for Qualitative Research,” 499.

I think it is important to acknowledge that selection of the most appropriate research methods for a given project is at least partially influenced by the personality and past experiences of the researcher. Given my previous journalistic background, for example, I feel very comfortable in the world of semi-structured interviews and secondary sources analysis. Yin writes that “the demands of a case study on your intellect, ego, and emotions are far greater than those of any other research method. This is because the data collection procedures are not routinized.”¹³⁴ Personally, I find the somewhat unstructured nature of qualitative case studies stimulating and the demand to engage with islanders in a more or less open discussions liberating and instructive. This by no means implies that one should attempt to conduct a qualitative case study without a careful consideration of research protocols, ethical implications, and a sound plan on how to approach a particular project. In fact, given a looser structure of the case study approach, careful planning is all the more important. Yin emphasizes that “the complete research design will provide surprisingly strong guidance in determining what data to collect and the strategies for analyzing the data.”¹³⁵

The interview protocol used in this study was developed and then revised in accordance with the suggestions from Memorial University’s Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. Given that the primary data collection method in this study was a semi-structured interview, instead of a preset questionnaire, a list of possible discussion topics and questions was developed. The aim of the topics and questions developed was to help provide insights into your overall research questions around policies and perceptions affecting life on small islands. That list was used as a conversation guide with all of the participants with more or less emphasis put on certain questions depending on the role a participant had in his or

¹³⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 33% Loc 1541 of 4690.

¹³⁵ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 21% Loc 966 of 4690.

her community or within appropriate administrative bodies. For example, permanent and seasonal residents in island communities would be asked to describe their community, while that question was not necessarily asked of provincial or national government employees working in provincial or national capitals. The appendix contains the full list of question and topics and a brief note on how that list evolved.

Interview as a method has a long history, but recently it has been going through a sort of rethinking brought about with the advancement of a postmodernist outlook on science and research in general. Holstein and Gubrium offer a simple and effective definition of an interview as a process that “... provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are a special form of conversation.”¹³⁶ There are degrees of formality an interviewer and an interviewee may agree on. From a very structured, almost survey-like questionnaires to loose, informal conversations, interviews can take many forms. As a rule, interviews in qualitative studies tend to be “open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight.”¹³⁷

Whatever the format and however comfortable the parties may be with it, Edward Ives warns us that we should never lose sight of what is that we are engaged in. He writes: “...the fact is that we are talking about an interview, not a conversation. You are gathering, and the

¹³⁶ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Active Interviewing,” In *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., (2003), 67.

¹³⁷ Kathy Charmaz, “Qualitative Interviewing and Grounded Theory Analysis,” In *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concerns*, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc. (2003): 312.

interviewee providing, information to be processed and stored, and while you should certainly work to keep things relaxed and friendly you are *not* simply “having a nice chat.”¹³⁸

Another important thing to remember, no matter how uncomfortable the researcher may feel about it, is that there is an inherent imbalance of power in an interview process that favors the interviewer. After all, it is us, the researchers, asking the questions and expecting the answers. That power imbalance as well as questions around representation and the right to interpret somebody’s worldview are two issues Andrea Fontana identifies as major preoccupations of researchers when it comes to interview methods in postmodernist times.¹³⁹

One of the goals of the postmodernist interview is to extend the agency to the interviewee.

Fontana writes:

“...one path from traditional to postmodern-informed interviewing is that the so-called detached researcher and interviewer are recast as active agents in the interview process and attempts are made to deprive their agency. Another path is that the interviewee’s agency is privileged and, in the name of the interviewee, all manner of experimentation is undertaken to make evident his or her sense of identity or representational practices.”¹⁴⁰

This focus on empowering of the interviewee is a welcome change with the potential to result in much better data given that the researcher-participant relationship is likely to be more collaborative. Recognizing that “[a]ny interview situation – no matter how formalized, restricted, or standardized – relies upon the interaction between participants,”¹⁴¹ is certainly a step in the right direction. This kind of more engaged interviewing process where the

¹³⁸ Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview*, 40.

¹³⁹ Andrea Fontana, “Postmodern Trends in Interviewing” in *Postmodern Interviewing*, ed. Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Inc. (2003): 52.

¹⁴⁰ Fontana, “Postmodern Trends in Interviewing,” 55.

¹⁴¹ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Active Interviewing,” 78.

interview itself is seen as a “meaning-making occasion” resulting in “collaborative”¹⁴² data is what Holstein and Gubrium call active interview:

*“Conceiving of the interview as active means attending more to the ways in which knowledge is assembled than is usually the case in traditional approaches. In other words, understanding how the meaning-making process unfolds in the interview is as critical as apprehending what is substantially asked and conveyed.”*¹⁴³

Theoretically, this sounds right, but it might be quite difficult to implement. If simply recording and repeating the words of an interview participant creates ethical ambiguities around representation, trying to understand and represent something as complex as meaning-making process is bound to be fraught with difficulties. There are analytical approaches that have potential to reconcile the old school interviews-as-interrogations process and the postmodernist, more collaborative interview techniques. In fact, we have to reconcile those strands if we are to conduct any research at all. A good beginning is to remind ourselves that the interviewees are truly the resident experts. They are “practitioners of everyday life, constantly working to discern and designate recognizable and orderly features of experience.”¹⁴⁴ Given the underlying principles of island studies, islanders-as-experts on their own islands are the ideal starting point. Not only are they experts on their island condition, but once assured that they are seen as such, they, at least in the case of this study, become willing collaborators providing potential contacts, historical records and resources and, more often than not, a great meal.

In my own approach to interviews I adapted the general technique to suit the particular island communities I worked in. For example, throughout the data collection process on

¹⁴² James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Active Interviewing,” 68.

¹⁴³ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Active Interviewing,” 68.

¹⁴⁴ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Active Interviewing,” 73.

islands in Croatia and in Newfoundland a significant time was spent during every interview on answering rather than asking questions. Knowing that the island identities tend to be deeply embedded in place and layered over time, this was expected. As a researcher, I did not see myself as somebody with an inherent right to question and examine island realities. A typical interview would start with me describing the project and ethical considerations as they were conceived and outlined in the consent forms, but once that was out of the way, the tables would immediately turn and I would find myself on the other side of the interview equation. My hosts would have a slew of questions: Where am I from? What is a Croatian doing on a far-flung Newfoundland isle? What do islanders in Croatia fish? Am I planning to stay in Newfoundland? Am I coming back? Do I have kids? Is my wife from Croatia as well? What is my connection to Vis island? Did I grow up in Croatia? Do my children speak Croatian? How cold does it get in Newfoundland? This could, sometimes, go on for an hour in both research areas. These are perfectly legitimate questions and I eventually saw them for what they were - a way for the islanders to establish my place in the island social narrative. Sometimes, I would pull out the photographs of Croatian or Newfoundland islands to help the islanders visualize some of the things I would try to explain. For example, it is difficult for someone on Vis island to imagine fishing boats locked in Fogo Island ice and Change Islanders may have trouble imagining entire fishing villages and towns built of stone - a common practice in most of Croatia and the Mediterranean. Once my 'lineage' and place has been established we would move on to a conversation guided by my research protocol. This part of the protocol also served to ease any tensions between a newcomer, an academic tourist, and an island community that is somewhat weary of what they sometime perceive as a constant stream of researchers whose research produces little in terms of tangible benefits to the community itself. That particular feeling was more pronounced in Newfoundland than in

Croatia which may be the result of somewhat lesser interest of Croatian scholars in Vis island in particular. With 50 permanently inhabited islands, researchers often chose those that are somewhat closer to and more accessible from the mainland.

Another aspect of this particular research worth mentioning is that the interviews in Croatia were conducted in Croatian and interviews in Newfoundland were conducted in English. Interestingly enough, in both study areas the dialects were quite prominent and occasionally required clarification.

It is also important to note that the interviews with the islanders were markedly different than those with the policy makers. The free-flowing conversations with the islanders were very much about exchange of information. The interviews with the policy makers were much more formal. Out of 43 (39 individual and four repeat) semi-structured interviews, 13 were held with policy makers at national, regional or provincial and municipal level or at the level of a local or international organization with a significant impact on policy environment. These interviewees were carefully targeted at those departments and officials who had direct impact on policy at their level of government. On the provincial and federal level or their Croatian equivalents, all the interviewees were senior or mid-level public servants responsible for development and implementation of various policies that impacted small island communities. The interviews with policy makers on municipal level included both, professional public servants and elected municipal officials. Those interviews tended to strictly follow the research protocol, they rarely lasted more than an hour and the roles of interviewee and the interviewer were clearly defined. Only one policy maker asked any personal questions around my interest in islands or my personal life. All of the interviews with the policy makers with the exception of three, were held in an office environment

during working hours. These interviews had a tone of structured, rather than semi-structured interviews, with me asking questions and policy makers providing answers. It is also very important to note that there were no repeat interviews with these individuals (in a couple of cases there was a subsequent email exchange to clarify a particular point) and after the interviews, I have not met any except one of the policy makers in social situations or engaged with them in an informal conversation or interview. With the residents and seasonal residents however, social contact was inevitable as I would spend a week or sometimes longer at the time in a research area.

In addition to 39 interviews with permanent and seasonal residents, there were also repeat interviews in four cases resulting in total of 43 'official' interviews. Of those interviews, I took care to maintain about equal numbers of men and women interviewed and to get a good cross-section of ages. The interviewees ranged in age from early 20s to late 70s. They came from a variety of professions from fishers to small business owners. Special care was taken to interview health professionals, educators as well as representatives from co-operative societies active in the areas. In both study areas I also interviewed members of the not-for-profit sector as well as those considered artists by their community. These interviewees were selected through a combination of targeting based on their role in the community and a snowball method where one interview led to others. In addition, there were many informal conversations at social gatherings, public events and during accidental meetings. During those informal conversations, I would sometimes take notes and, sometimes, make notes immediately after the encounter. In every single instance and encounter, I made it clear that I am conducting research as a part of a graduate degree and even if the situation was informal the people I talked to were aware of that fact.

At the end, getting rich and contextualized data proved to be relatively easy, but what is one to do with about 40 interviews, dozens of informal conversations and almost 300 pages of interview transcripts, notes and journal entries?

There are several ways to approach interview data analysis. Kathy Charmaz suggests using grounded theory as a helpful analysis framework. Adherents of this approach see interviewing as “a flexible emerging technique” with a carefully narrowed range of interview topics that allow the researcher to focus on specific data helping them to construct and support their theoretical concepts.¹⁴⁵ Grounded theorists turn the usual research approaches upside down and start with the data collection and constant reassessment of the data in order to build a theory that emerges from the interviews. The basis of the analysis is in several levels of coding of the interview data and memo writing - an intermediary step between the coding and the actual writing. Ideally, coding in grounded theory methodology would happen in at least two stages. The initial coding is intended to “begin making analytical decisions about the data, and selective or focused coding follows, in which the researcher uses the most frequently appearing initial codes to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data.”¹⁴⁶ Memo writing is intended to link the initial codes into a sort of theoretical narrative that will eventually become a full analysis. Charmaz explains that “[m]emos can range from loosely constructed “freewrites” about the codes to tightly reasoned analytical statements.”¹⁴⁷ Whatever form they take, they are considered data, rather than purely analytical interpretation. The strength of the grounded theory is that it allows for various approaches to interviewing, from single focused interviews to repeated interviews with the same

¹⁴⁵ Kathy Charmaz, “Grounded Theory Analysis,” 312.

¹⁴⁶ Charmaz, “Grounded Theory analysis,” 320.

¹⁴⁷ Charmaz, “Grounded Theory analysis,” 323.

participants. The appeal of such approach for this particular study is that “[g]rounded theory interviews are used to tell a collective story” and in that sense “move closer to a narrative style.”¹⁴⁸

This study was not conducted as a grounded theory study in a sense that there was no strict journaling and coding prescribed by the grounded theory. Island studies as a theoretical framework has been chosen well before any field work took place. However, analytical methods used to a large extent mimicked the grounded theory approaches. An initial loose coding system was kept throughout the interview process and analysis and the equivalent of memo writing was kept in a form of research journal and personal blog posts (www.bojanfurst.com) some of which were turned into non-academic essays and academic papers published in both research areas. This thesis is a final analysis and summary of all of the interview data collected, the additional research notes and observations as well as in-depth literature review in island-studies and related fields. The appeal of the grounded theory is precisely its analytical approach and the closeness to a narrative style that provides ample opportunity to engage with islanders and allow them to voice their own views on their island condition.

The analysis in this thesis is a blend of grounded theory methods and narrative discourse analysis. Given the phenomenological nature of island studies Hay calls for, this appeared to be a right mix allowing for “a cultural context and the associated knowledge and values which shape and mediate people’s experiences and interpretations of their lives”¹⁴⁹ to be acknowledged during the analysis stage and the final writing. Taylor, while writing about narrative discourse analysis, reminds us that narratives have a very specific function. The

¹⁴⁸ Charmaz, “Grounded Theory analysis,” 327.

¹⁴⁹ Stephanie Taylor, *Narratives of Identity and Place*, New York, Routledge, (2010): 129.

function of a narrative is, writes Taylor, “to talk about departures from expected norms, to explain and justify, reinterpret and hopefully achieve some kind of working consensus... narrative is a means of organizing experience and memories, including the autobiographical organization of our life experience.”¹⁵⁰ Analytical methods in the case of narrative discourse analysis focus on transcription as “part of the analytic process...” and careful re-reading and analysis of those transcripts with the purpose of [...] find[ing] patterns in the transcribed talk...”¹⁵¹

While interviews were the main data collection method in this study, the analysis of primary and secondary sources was also very important. As Yin notes “[c]ase study evidence can come from many sources.”¹⁵² The primary sources were mostly limited to historical documents such as Newfoundland resettlement policies and contemporary legislation and strategic documents such as Croatian National Development Programme for the Islands and Island Act or ferry replacement policy and fisheries strategy documents in Newfoundland. Extensive literature review as well as a rudimentary environmental scan of the local, provincial and national media yielded most of the secondary sources.

A primary and secondary sources analysis is indispensable in providing additional institutional, social and historical context to the interviews and other collected primary data. Yin points out that “[f]or case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources.”¹⁵³ He goes on to say that:

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *Narratives of Identity and Place*, 33.

¹⁵¹ Taylor, *Narratives of Identity and Place*, 53.

¹⁵² Yin, *Case Study Research*, 44% Loc 2064 of 4690.

¹⁵³ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 45% Loc 2126 of 4690.

*In fact, important in reviewing any document is to understand that it was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done. In this sense, the case study investigator is a vicarious observer, and the documentary evidence reflects a communication among other parties attempting to achieve some other objectives.*¹⁵⁴

Additionally to interviews and primary and secondary sources analysis, I have also deployed photography as aid in observation. This was a minor part of the study. The photographs are exclusively landscapes and should be seen as a visual diary or a sketchbook aiding in the writing of this thesis and as such have not been analyzed in depth.

With qualitative case study methodology in place and interviews, primary and secondary sources analysis and photography aided observation as preferred methods, it seemed prudent to go back to the island studies as a framework and draw on some other key concepts that have been preoccupying island scholars. Again, it would be amiss to say that the choice of making this study comparative rather than a single case study was purely based on the islands studies as a framework and not on personal preference as well. Given my own immigrant identity, a comparative approach is an inescapable reality of my own everyday life.

Fortunately for me, island studies as a theoretical and ontological framework not only allows, but calls for comparative research. Comparative research in island studies is an approach advocated by scholars like Baldacchino who wrote that while it is self-evident that every island is unique “in their contained difference, they invite comparison...” and “...there may be no better comparison for an island than another island.”¹⁵⁵ Methodologically, a comparative approach also made sense since Yin points out that “[a]nalytic conclusions independently

¹⁵⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 46% Loc 2160 of 4690.

¹⁵⁵ Baldacchino, “Editorial,” 14.

arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case (or single experiment) alone.”¹⁵⁶

The comparative case study approach brings its own challenges and strengths. Comparing small islands that are nested within much larger jurisdictions falls outside of the historical approach to comparative research where “the main research unit of the social sciences has been the bounded society of a specific nation-state.”¹⁵⁷ The focus on national boundaries makes perfect sense for many reasons and Castles emphasizes the most compelling one when he writes that “[o]ne reason for the persistence of national research frameworks is that data are still generally collected by national authorities for purposes of administration and policy-formation.”¹⁵⁸ In fact, as Karl Deutsch reminds us: “States, kingdoms, and principalities have been compared for approximately 2,500 years.”¹⁵⁹ While that is indisputably true, Antal et al warn that a systematic approach to comparative studies in social sciences did not develop until the second half of the 20 century.¹⁶⁰ They identified several reasons comparative research approaches became important in that time period. Some of it had to do with the academic community itself which developed an “appreciation of the analytical potential of more systematic comparisons across different social and political systems.”¹⁶¹ In fact, comparative research was eventually seen as the closest thing social scientists had to a

¹⁵⁶ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 31% Loc 1441 of 4690.

¹⁵⁷ Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 22.

¹⁵⁸ Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 23.

¹⁵⁹ Karl Deutsch, “The systems theory approach as a basis for comparative research,” in *International Social Science Journal*. Vol. 36, Nos 19-22. UNESCO. (1984), 3.

¹⁶⁰ Antal et al, “Cross-National Policy Research,” 9.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

controlled experiment.¹⁶² However, Antal et al identify non-academic interests as the other primary drivers behind comparative research:

*A second central purpose of comparative research is to contribute to the development of a relevant knowledge base for both domestic and foreign policy. Comparative research can fill important gaps in knowledge about how other countries deal with similar situations, about the background and effects of alternative strategies for solving common problems (or avoiding their emergence in the first place) [...] Identifying the differences among the various national approaches to a given policy problem can assist in the specification of the structural, institutional, and cultural constraints of the public policy, an awareness of alternative challenges the political and cultural assumptions on which a nation's policies are based. It brings to light underlying, often unquestioned premises.*¹⁶³

Such cross-national, comparative, policy-focused research, they write, “can be seen as a hybrid between academic inquiry and policy-making information.”¹⁶⁴

Some social scientists argue that nation-state as a unit of analysis is outdated and that it should be abandoned all together. “Even as the social sciences turn toward transnational studies, scholars often fail to recognize the truly systemic change represented by globalization,” writes William Robinson adding that “[t]he way out of this impasse is to shift our focus from the nation-state as the basic unit of analysis to the global system as the appropriate unit.”¹⁶⁵ Such shift may indeed better capture the increased mobility and the “decentralized and globally fragmented nature of complex production processes,”¹⁶⁶ but it does nothing to enhance our understanding of place-based, locally lived island lives. Instead of zooming out and staring at the all-encompassing global, zooming in and focusing on the

¹⁶² *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Antal et al, “Cross-National Policy Research,” 10.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ William I. Robinson, “Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies,” *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 4, (1998), 562.

¹⁶⁶ Robinson, “Beyond Nation-State Paradigms,” 577.

local provides a productive alternative approach to understanding global processes and the ways they affect real, lived lives. Additionally, as Castles points out, sounding the death-knell for nation-state might be a bit premature:

*Nation-states remain important, and will do so for the foreseeable future. They are the location of policies on public order, economic infrastructure, social welfare, health services, and so on. Nation-states also retain considerable political significance and have important symbolic and cultural functions.*¹⁶⁷

It pays to keep in mind that the local occurs within the national and the global and that cross-national comparisons are never straightforward. From environmental to cultural to economic to historic differences, the variables shaping particular policy decisions are virtually inexhaustible and they can all, even on their own, produce different responses to similar situations.¹⁶⁸ To make matters worse, “[n]ational definitions and collection methods vary, so that data are often unsuitable for international comparisons.”¹⁶⁹

Comparisons, though, do not have to be perfect. Deutsch writes that “[t]o compare two events or two things is always a process of matching...”¹⁷⁰ and reminds us that “[n]o two events are alike in everything, but we compare them in those aspects that matter for the purpose at hand, or, in those that matter for a collection of purposes. We therefore also compare things which in other aspects are not comparable.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 24-25.

¹⁶⁸ Karl Deutsch, “Prologue: Achievements and Challenges in 2000 Years of Comparative Research.” In *Comparing nations and cultures: reading in cross-disciplinary perspective*. ed. Alex Inkeles and Masamichi Sasaki. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. (1996), 4.

¹⁶⁹ Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 23.

¹⁷⁰ Deutsch, “The systems theory approach as a basis for comparative research,” 5.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

Islands, in that sense, regardless of their geographical location, lend themselves perfectly to comparisons. This is especially true when working within islands studies framework which from the start recognizes individual island's distinctiveness while emphasizing the need to create better island-to-island networks in order to learn from different island experiences. In essence, a comparison between islands becomes a social analysis – “a mutual learning process involving researchers and stakeholders” that “provides valuable instruments for understanding the local dimensions of global processes, and for analyzing the way local social and cultural factors mediate the effects of globalizing forces.”¹⁷²

Aside from rather technical difficulties of different data sets available in different jurisdictions particularly when it comes to smaller islands that often find themselves on political and economic and therefore statistical periphery, Antal et al also warn those attempting cross-national research to pay special attention to issues around policy relevance.

*The question of transferability of research results is essential in comparative policy research. One school of thought holds that, since each cultural context is unique, lessons learned in other contexts cannot be applied elsewhere. A related argument is that only when a very high level of abstraction is reached can the differences between settings be bridged, so that the resulting conclusions must necessarily be equally abstract and therefore unsuited to policy practice.*¹⁷³

This is obviously a concern, but not necessarily a reason not to compare policies and policy consequences across different political and cultural contexts. Blindly grafting a set of economic or social policies from one place to another with utter disregard for local conditions is, of course, foolishness. That does not necessarily mean that policies and experiences seemingly worlds apart do not hold lessons that can be applied in different socio-economic, political and ecological contexts. Yin, in fact, reminds us that “case studies, like experiments,

¹⁷² Stephen Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 27.

¹⁷³ Antal et al, “Cross-National Policy Research,” 1996: 15

are generalizable to theoretical propositions.”¹⁷⁴ This is where well-thought out research protocol, careful contextual analysis of rich data collected through semi-structured interviews and a dose of skepticism and common sense all become indispensable research and analysis tools.

Clearly encountering and anticipating some of these issues, scholars like Stephen Castles attempted to standardize some of the broad concepts around highly contextualized research. He suggests that there are 12 principles of social transformation research and the following four are of particular interest given the nature of this study:

6. Comparative analysis is often the appropriate approach for understanding the relationship between the global and the local. By examining how similar global factors can lead to different results in different places, we gain insights into the significance of cultural and historical factors.

7. However, a comparison can only be carried out effectively on the basis of detailed knowledge about specific cultures, communities, and societies. Analysis of local dimensions is vital to an adequate understanding of differing impacts of and responses to globalizing factors.

8. Understanding the local requires methods that encourage the participation of all social groups and all relevant stakeholders in processes of social assessment and planning. Participatory methods should be particularly designed to ensure that disempowered groups, such as the poor, ethnic minorities, and women are able to articulate their needs and interests.

*9. Culture and identity play a vital role in processes of social transformation. Identity politics is often a form of mobilization against globalizing forces which appears as threats to the livelihoods and values of marginalized groups.*¹⁷⁵

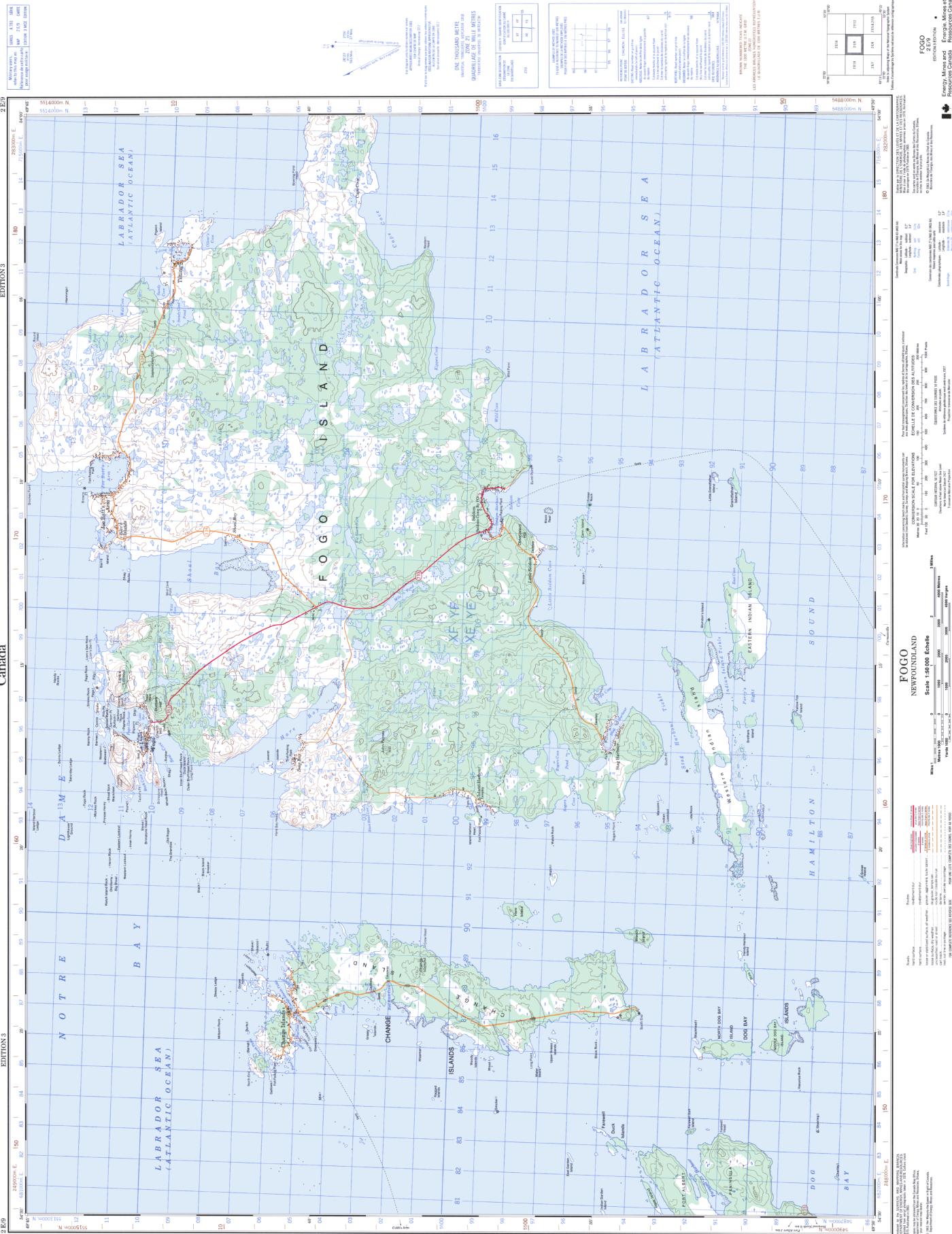
With Castles’ point above in mind, Vis and Biševo islands and Croatia and Change Islands and Fogo Island in Newfoundland seemed like particularly good comparison candidates. I was somewhat familiar with both areas; they are all places of very specific cultures and have

¹⁷⁴ Yin, *Case Study Research* 12% Loc 570 of 4690

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Castles, “Studying Social Transformation,” 29-30.

developed very specific place-based identities; I could comfortably operate in native languages of both areas; both areas share demographic and economic similarities; both have rich fishing histories that their identities are in large part based on; and both areas are looking at development paths that would allow them to keep and build upon their distinctiveness within their national and global contexts. What was particularly intriguing, was that they operate within vastly different policy and historical environments that place very different value on small islands in general.

Keeping both the theoretical framework of island studies and the comparative qualitative case study methodology in mind, the next two chapters will describe the two study areas. The rest of this thesis will attempt to describe and compare policies and attitudes towards islands and islanders in those study areas suggesting, as a conclusion, some specific ways in which policy and perception intersect and potentially determine the conditions of island lives.





Farewell ferry terminal, Newfoundland

ICE ISLANDS

Change Islands and Fogo Island

*Our children are grown
with children of their own
who will never stick their hands
inside the mouth of codfish
and hurry home surrounded by
swarms of singing flies.¹⁷⁶*

Change Islands, Newfoundland **49° 40' 18.98" N, 54° 24' 28.44" W**

THE MOST PROMINENT FEATURE OF THE CHANGE ISLANDS - FOGO ISLAND ferry terminal in

Farewell is its iconic chip truck. Calling it a terminal is somewhat of a stretch. Besides the chip truck and a cacophony of home-made signs extolling islands' attractions, the only visible structures there are a concrete wharf, a tiny wooden ticket shed and a small structure with a

¹⁷⁶ Helen Fogwill Porter, *Moratorium*. In *Wild on the Crest: Poems of the sea Newfoundland and Labrador*. Ed. Mary Dalton, Kristina Fagan, Ken Munro, and Peter Walsh. St. John's: Jeroboam Books. (1995), 38.

couple of washrooms and a waiting room. Other than that there is nothing there except miles of stunning landscapes and seascapes. In fact, if one wanted to design a road that would drive home the sense of remoteness and isolation, that road would probably look a lot like the provincial road 331. Aside from its official number, the road is also known, at least on the tourist maps, as The Road to the Isles. That part is true enough. If you follow 331 from Gander for about an hour you will eventually end up on the concrete dock of the Farewell ferry terminal and depending on whether you choose the righthand or the lefthand side



Stage on Change Islands

lineup you will, after a short ferry ride, arrive on Change Islands or Fogo Island respectively. After less than a 20 minute ride through the Notre Dame Bay off the northeast coast of the main island of Newfoundland, providing that the weather is good and the seas calm and ice free, the ferry will make its first stop.

Change Islands are a small archipelago with two main islands, smaller North Island and a long, narrow South Island making up the bulk of the geography. Today's community of Change Islands is concentrated mainly in the Main Tickle, a narrow channel between the two main islands. That was not always the case. At the height of the cod fishery, the islands were dotted with communities. People lived in almost every bay and cove along the rugged coast and the remnants of those communities can still be found around the island. On one of my visits, for example, a local resident took me and another researcher on a short boat ride and a hike to show us the site where community of Wood Island once stood. A few remaining wooden posts, a few stones, and some discarded fishing gear are all that's left today, but our host was able to tell us about Wood Island he grew up in - a community with a school and a lot of fishing activity.

Today, the North and the South islands are joined by a small bridge spanning the Main Tickle and majority of Change Islands' 255 people¹⁷⁷ live along the tickle and on the North Island. Given its rich cod fishing grounds, Change Islands used to support as many as 1,000 people at the beginning of the 20th century¹⁷⁸. Demographics remain the community's most pressing medium and long term problem. The 2011 census data shows a 15 percent

¹⁷⁷ Community Accounts profile accessed on January 12, 2013: http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgaauzXFjWQ_

¹⁷⁸ Derek A. Smith, Kelly Vodden, Maureen Woodrow, Ahmed Khan and Bojan Fürst, "*The last generation? Perspectives of inshore fish harvesters from Change Islands, Newfoundland*," Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. 2013, xx(xx): 3.



Change Islands

population decline compared to 2006 data. The age of the population is also an issue with the median age, according to 2006 data, on Change Islands was 49 compared to Newfoundland and Labrador's 42. Just how pressing an issue demographics are becomes obvious when one looks at the dropping school enrolment and the anecdotal stories islanders share. One fisherman contrasted his school experience with that of his niece who at the time attended the elementary school in the community:

She is the only Grade 5 in school this year. She just loves it. The only student in the class. I mean teacher got all the time in the world. What better education could you get, eh? Now,

there are disadvantages, too because the teacher's got the Grade 5 and Grade sixes, too and Grade sevens in the one class. But, there is only three grade sixes and two grade sevens. There is 28 in the full school now and there were 26 in my class. And we had 150 or 160 students when I was there. That was in my time and I am only 43.

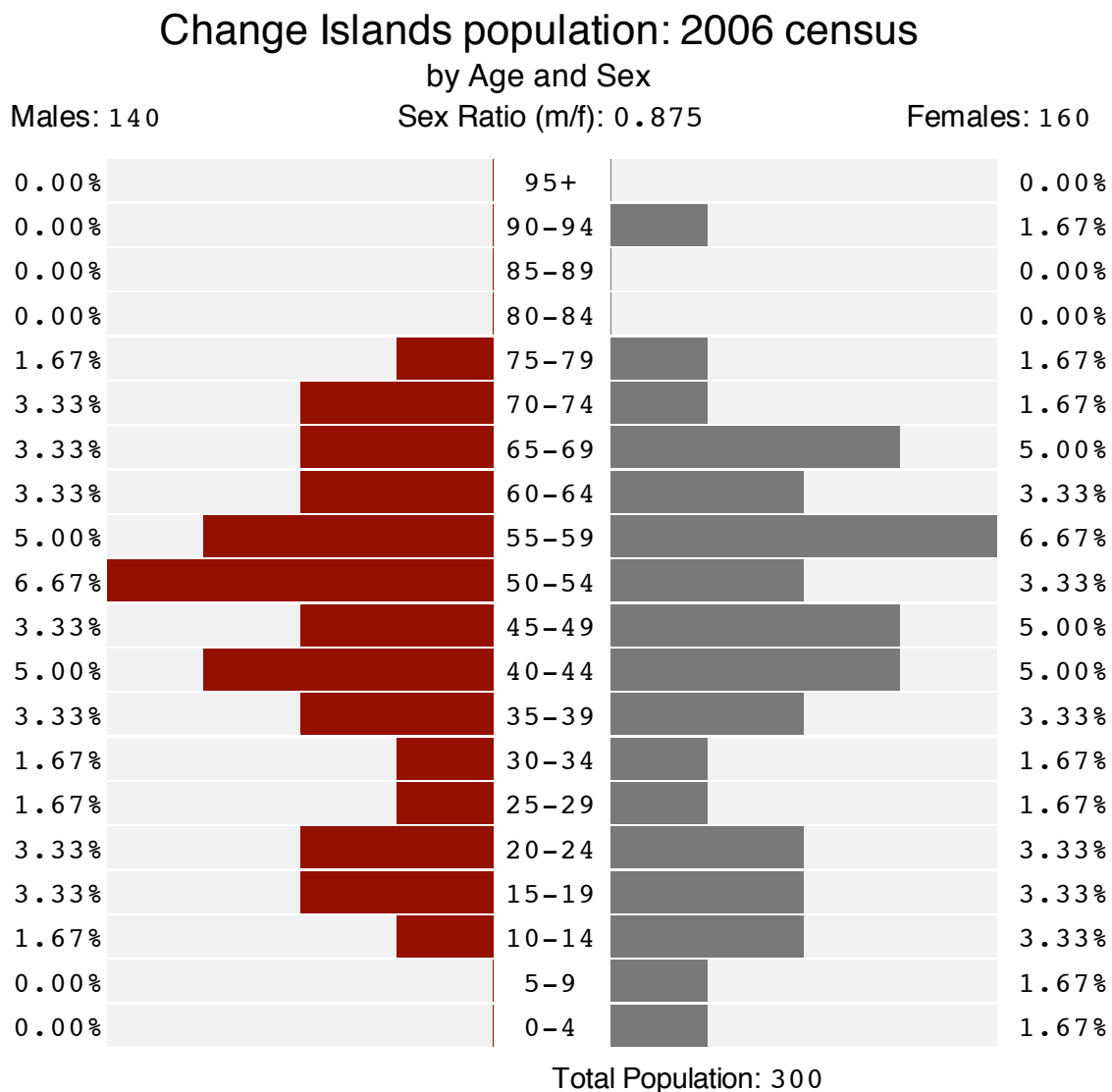


Figure 1. Change Islands Population Pyramid

It terms of economic base and economic opportunities the fisheries remain the islands primary industry. According to Smith et al., the 35 fishers still operating on the island “harvest snow crab as a key species, followed by cod, capelin, mackerel, herring, and

squid.”¹⁷⁹ In addition, there is a small inshore cod fisheries partially approved as a stock assessment project. Some islanders are seasonally employed in a local fish plant. The plant employs fewer than two dozen workers, but it remains the major employer on the island and among many islanders it is seen as inseparable from island’s identity and survival. This is how one Change Islander described it: “There maybe only 15 or 17 workers, but this is the backbone that holds the community together. I had a bit of trouble last year so I went and worked in the fish plant. I enjoyed it. It’s community... closeness is there. You get there every morning and you know everybody and it’s wonderful for a small place. First time ever I worked in the fish plant and I really enjoyed it.” The unique feature of the fish plant on Change Islands is that the processing licence is owned by the community as is the physical plant. The community leases the plant to an operator, but retains the processing licence rights.

Tourism has recently begun to play larger role on Change Islands with an increased number of visitors and seasonal residents. In fact, of all the islands that were a part of this research study, the impact of seasonal residents was most keenly felt on Change Islands. Given the small population of the permanent residents, arrival of seasonal residents significantly changes dynamics on the island during the summer and fall months when most of the seasonal residents and tourists visit the community.

Seasonal residents are drawn to the islands as a place of tranquility and peace. One of the seasonal residents described the community as follows:

Oh, it is a very charming fishing village. It’s a very safe place to be. We had other summer places where break-ins were a problem and that doesn’t seem to be that much of a problem here. The people were very friendly and welcoming and geographically it’s beautiful. It’s a

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*

lovely place to come in the summer and spend some time here. It was an ideal location for us to have a summer home.

The seasonal residents interviewed for this study spent anywhere between a few weeks to several months on the islands and some make a point of spending some time in their homes during every month or at least every season. Seasonal residents have their own perceptions of the islands and their own ideas of what direction the community should explore as a possible development path. Those ideas and perceptions sometimes clash with those of the local residents and cause suspicion about the seasonal residents' intentions. A section in the chapter on perceptions and policies will specifically look at some of the issues arising from the mix of local residents, seasonal residents and those who decided to permanently move to the islands, but do not depend on the traditional island economic activities for their income.

Fogo Island, Newfoundland
49° 40' N, 54° 11' W

East of Change Islands is Fogo Island. Much larger than Change Islands, Fogo Island has a population of nearly 2,500 people. Amalgamated into one municipality since March 2011 for administrative purposes, the island, in effect, has nine communities with those interviewed strongly identifying with the communities they were born in or have decided to live in. There is, however somewhat of a generational gap. Younger interviewees were more likely to identify the island as their community rather than the individual settlements. DeWitt writes in his 1969 study that: "Many older residents suggest that it has been only during the past few years, since the road was completed, that the idea of being a "Fogo Islander" — rather than a Tilting Harbour or Deep Bay man — really has become relevant."¹⁸⁰ Most of the communities on the island were built in the areas that provided safe harbours close to the fishing grounds and were based around religious denominations so, for

¹⁸⁰ Robert L. DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest: The Fogo Case*, St. John's: ISER, 1969: 18.



Tilting, Fogo Island

example, Tilting was a ‘Catholic’ and predominantly Irish community, while Seldom was a ‘Pentecostal’ community¹⁸¹. These divisions reflect the colonial and mercantile history of Newfoundland’s European settlers in general and Fogo Island and Change Islands in particular. Writing in 1968, Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews explain:

Almost as soon as John Cabot discovered Newfoundland in 1497 and reported on the vast quantities of fish in its coastal waters, fishermen from Europe began to cross the Atlantic to fish off its shores [...] The presence of independent fishermen in Newfoundland was

¹⁸¹ DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 8.

*regarded as a threat by the British merchants who sent fishing ships there and, to preserve their monopoly, they convinced the British Parliament to pass a law forbidding permanent residence in Newfoundland and requiring that all buildings be taken down every fall. This law did little to stop people from settling in Newfoundland as there were many places along its 6,000 mile coastline that were rarely visited by the authorities and where residents could live an independent life... The result was that from the beginning the population of Newfoundland was dispersed around its coastline...*¹⁸²

These almost 500 year-old settlement patterns proved to be resilient and far reaching and in many ways they still define Newfoundland's political, economic and cultural landscape to this day. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador today has close to 700 communities and only 276 are incorporated municipalities.

After Newfoundland joined Canadian confederation in 1949, the new provincial government decided to introduce and implement a resettlement program with two explicit goals in mind.

Iverson and Matthews write:

*In its most idealistic terms, resettlement is aimed at providing a better life and a better future for more Newfoundlanders. It is designed to move people from isolation and privation which they now experience, into larger centres where they may enjoy the advantages of twentieth century life. Its long term economic goal is to turn a peasant, subsistence-level society into a market oriented, industrial one.*¹⁸³

Michael Skolnik, writing shortly after Iverson and Matthews, observed that the program, initially created in 1953 as the Resettlement Act and later reintroduced in 1965 as the Resettlement Program¹⁸⁴, quickly became focused on the second goal and from “the program which started out to help people of Bonavista Bay islands move onto the mainland has now become one of the Province's prime engines of economic development.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Noel Iverson and D. Ralph Matthews, *Communities in Decline: And Examination of Household Resettlement In Newfoundland*, St. John's: ISER, 1968: 1.

¹⁸³ Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, 136.

¹⁸⁴ Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Michale L. Skolnik, *Viewpoints on Communities in Crisis*. St. John's: ISER, 1968: 2.



Fogo, Fogo Island

The resettlement program, sometimes also called centralization program, offered financial compensation to those families that decided to move from their communities into the designated growth centres. Parzival Copes points out that the requirements for the resettlement aid stipulated, initially, that every household in a community had to sign a petition for relocation¹⁸⁶. Eventually that requirement was somewhat relaxed and brought down first to 90 percent and then to 80 percent, although the current Community Relocation Policy requires a positive vote of 90 percent of the permanent residents in a community¹⁸⁷.

It should come as no surprise that the resettlement policies and efforts have left deep scars within the communities. Iverson and Matthews write about alienation of the resettled

¹⁸⁶ Parzival Copes, *The Resettlement of Fishing Communities in Newfoundland*. Canadian council on Rural Development, 1972: 101.

¹⁸⁷ Department of Municipal Affairs, *Community Relocation Policy*, St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013: 1

families in their new communities as well as the breakdown in social relations that held communities together prior to the resettlement as well as difficulties some fishers encountered as they lost access to their traditional fishing grounds¹⁸⁸.

The response to resettlement on Fogo Island was mixed and often divided along religious lines. DeWitt, for example, writes that Anglican communities, under the pressure of their priest at the time have favoured the resettlement, while residents of Tilting, whose Catholic priest was in favour of pursuing development projects, were more inclined to stay on the island.¹⁸⁹ In 1964, the residents with the help of a fieldworker from Memorial University Extension Services, eventually formed the Fogo Island Improvement Committee as means of solving the island-wide problems and developing better communications with the government in St. John's. An islander who at the time was involved in the process recalls the importance of making connections with the university and the government, especially through the Fogo Process - an innovative use of video for development communications pioneered on the Fogo Island by the MUN Extension Services and the National Film Board of Canada:

When I moved to Fogo Island, I was only 23, but I have already worked in the federal system. Because of that I understood that system that was so important to seasonal industry. So I brought a set of skills when I came, but also I had already had a network and had the ability to connect with government agencies and had a certain level of respect with those people as well. That was very important. There are always key community leaders who connect. Going back to Fogo Process, Don Best was a young man who was the first mayor of Fogo, the only incorporated town on the island. In 1966, he and Fred Earl went to Corner Brook to a development conference and invited MUN Extension to hold one on the island in March. There are always people who connect, who are out there and who try. You are learning all these things and connecting out there - connecting with the university and connecting with the different departments of the government.

¹⁸⁸ Iverson and Matthews, *Communities in Decline*, 56, 74.

¹⁸⁹ DeWitt, *Public Policy and Community Protest*, 32-33.

The work of the Fogo Island Improvement Committee eventually led to the establishment of Fogo Island Co-operative Society as well as the very first non-denominational school in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Both of those institutions played an enormous role in strengthening Fogo Island as a community. A resident who attended the new school remembers the changes vividly:

Luckily we had teachers who were knowledgeable enough to know that if we were sharing resources, we could avail of more resources. A gym – that was probably around the same time that health and fitness started to come into play. Having a big gymnasium meant lots of physical activity. You know, when that school opened first, there were maybe 1200 students, well, 1100-plus... That's a lot of kids. Yeah. And it just started off as a high school, like from grade 8. Because I went here from kindergarten to grade 7, down here in Tilting, in the Catholic school. And – oh my god, this is such a huge story – there was of course the Catholics and the non-Catholics. And I think that they saw that that needed to change because the Catholics were just marrying Catholics. You didn't know the person from Deep Bay or Island Harbour because you never interacted with them. By bringing everybody under the one roof, the communications link, it opened a huge patio for life here. Then, of course, the individual communities had still maintained their primary elementary



Joe Batt's Arm, Fogo Island

schools. They decided in the 80s to close all of them down. And that was when Venture Academy was built adjacent to Fogo Island Central Academy now.

Some see the recent amalgamation of the communities on the island into a single municipality as a continuation of that process of building stronger and lasting connections between all of the island communities: “I think this is exactly what was long overdue. To get that island, that real island – because otherwise it was 11 communities all kind of plunging forward for the same identity. But now we’re one. And we were one. It just needed to be wrote on a piece of paper.”

The administrative amalgamation is, however, controversial and there are those who believe that the provincial government essentially used the process to balance its own books and eliminate the municipal debt towards the province: “That’s what happened. That is not inaccurate to say. The government, they have no vision how to amalgamate municipalities, how to do this, the only way they know how to do this is to pay them off to do it. It’s a bribe. If you get down to the end of it, you are bribing them to get together... You now have the ability to get more debt. That’s all it is. Because you are debt free.”

The administrative amalgamation is not the only change currently happening on the island. In recent years, thanks to the efforts and resources of Zita Cobb, a Fogo Islander who did well in the technology sector and decided to come back to her home and heavily invest in a high end geo and art tourism venture, tourism is increasingly becoming an additional pillar of the island’s economy. The formation of Shorefast Foundation, a social enterprise under whose umbrella a wide range of art, heritage and tourism activities take place, is almost certainly a positive development in the island context. “The project aims to bring to the island a top-paying, select group of guests looking for an ‘authentic experience’ and an opportunity to learn from the islanders and resident artists about a life completely foreign to



Tilting, Fogo Island

their own. But, beyond that, it also seeks to build on the local sense of connectedness to the wider world and continue, rather than preserve, vibrant cultural expressions found on Fogo Island.”¹⁹⁰ A series of architecturally distinct artist studios and a 29 room inn in Joe Batt’s Arm represent one of the largest investments in the island’s history as well as a bold and controversial intervention in the island landscape. Part of the controversy around the project was the initial poor communication with the residents, but those issues seem to have been

¹⁹⁰ Fürst, *Newcomers at the Gates*, xxx

worked out at least to some extent: “[It’s] too early to tell. I think there hasn’t really been a connection between the Shorefast and the community and all the people who are coming through,” said one of the residents. “I think that’s because they were in a building stage. I don’t just mean physically building, but building an organization and themselves - figuring it out. Hopefully now and in the future we will see more of those connections. That is going to

Enrolment in Change Islands/Fogo Island schools

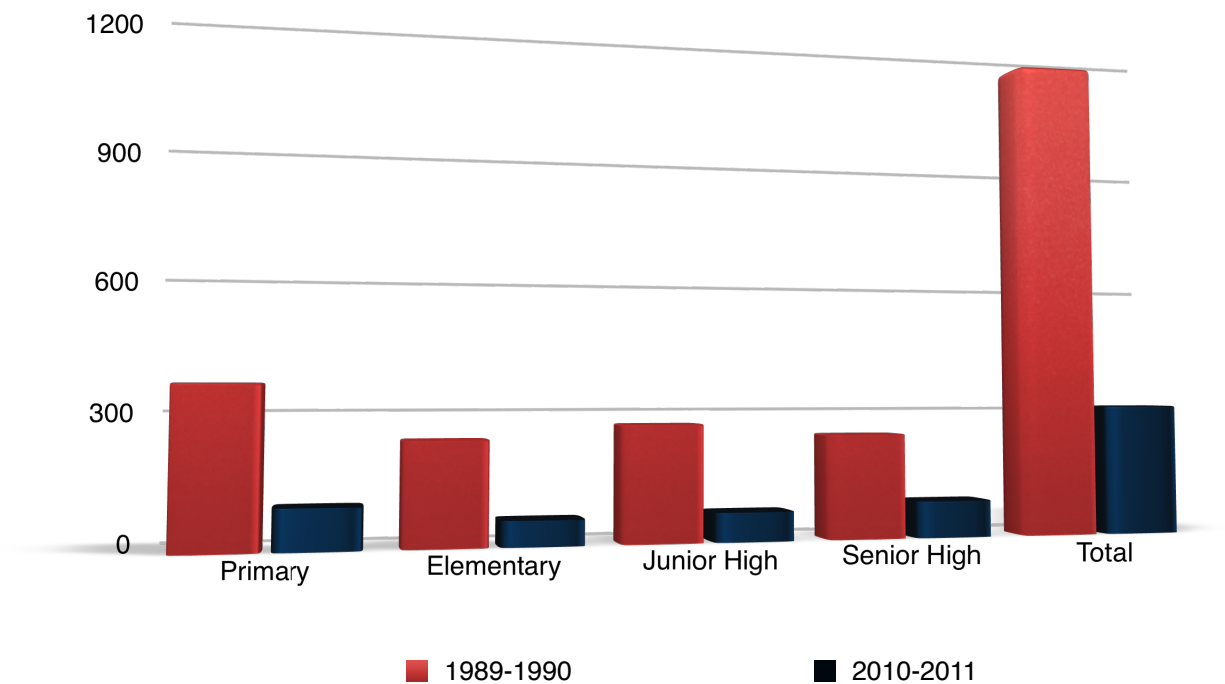


Figure 2. Enrolment in Change Islands/Fogo Island schools

be a real benefit. When that kind of thing happens.”

The residents are cautiously embracing tourism, but are very aware, that just like the fishery, it adds no more than a seasonal opportunity. One resident summed it up: “Tourism. It’s not gonna make a whole lot of a big difference. It’s seasonal like the fishing. They are so short [the seasons]. You can’t do nothing. We only get a month of fine weather.” Others are hopeful that

tourism may indeed be the part of the solution: “The timing, maybe the timing is right. Maybe this, we can call it The Fogo Island Process 2, this whole transition period. I just hope that I live long enough to see it all unfold. I wonder what I’ll be doing.”

All of the islanders, including those involved with the Shorefast and tourism ventures, recognize that the fishery remains the economic, cultural and social backbone of Fogo Island and Change Islands. The fishery, however, is a volatile resource based industry with sometimes dramatic ups and downs as the 1990s collapse of the cod fishery and the cod moratorium demonstrated in Newfoundland. A Change Islands resident described the moratorium as an event that “played the biggest effect on rural Newfoundland.” Thomas, Vodden et al. also point out that “[t]he collapse of the groundfishery in the 1990’s, coupled with the rise of snow crab and shrimp fisheries, has influenced how communities respond to changes in the fishery.”¹⁹¹ Some Fogo Islanders point out that the co-op and the fact that it allowed the islanders to exercise large degree of control over their fishery could be credited with the fact that the island’s economy is as strong as it is:

...we were very diversified, we were involved in every species, every process that large industry was involved in, but we were always forward thinking because we had to be forward thinking because if something failed. If we were involved in, for instance back in 1967 during the Fogo Process and we were involved just in cod fishery, if they weren’t forward thinking and saying: “Okay, cod fishery is failing, what are we going to do now?” We would not have survived. Everything is about survival. So once the problem arises you automatically have to go into strategic planning and adapting to whatever else is there to adapt to to be able to survive.

Just as demographics are the most pressing issue on Change Islands, they are the major concern on Fogo Island as well. The population of Fogo Island declined from 2706 people in

¹⁹¹ Emily Thomas, Kelly Vodden, Ratana Chuenpagdee and Maureen Woodrow, *Fishing Policies and Island Community Development*, St. John’s: The Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, (2014): 3.

2006 census to 2395 with the latest available data from 2011 census¹⁹². The school enrolment on Change Islands/Fogo Island schools is probably the most alarming statistic as it demonstrates the rapid aging of the communities. The total number of students in Change Islands and Fogo Island schools in 1989-90 school year stood at 1133, while in 2010-11



Tilting, Fogo Island

¹⁹² Statistics Canada. 2012. Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, and census subdivisions (municipalities), 2011 and 2006 censuses (table).

school year it has dropped to 308 students for all of the institutions in both communities¹⁹³.

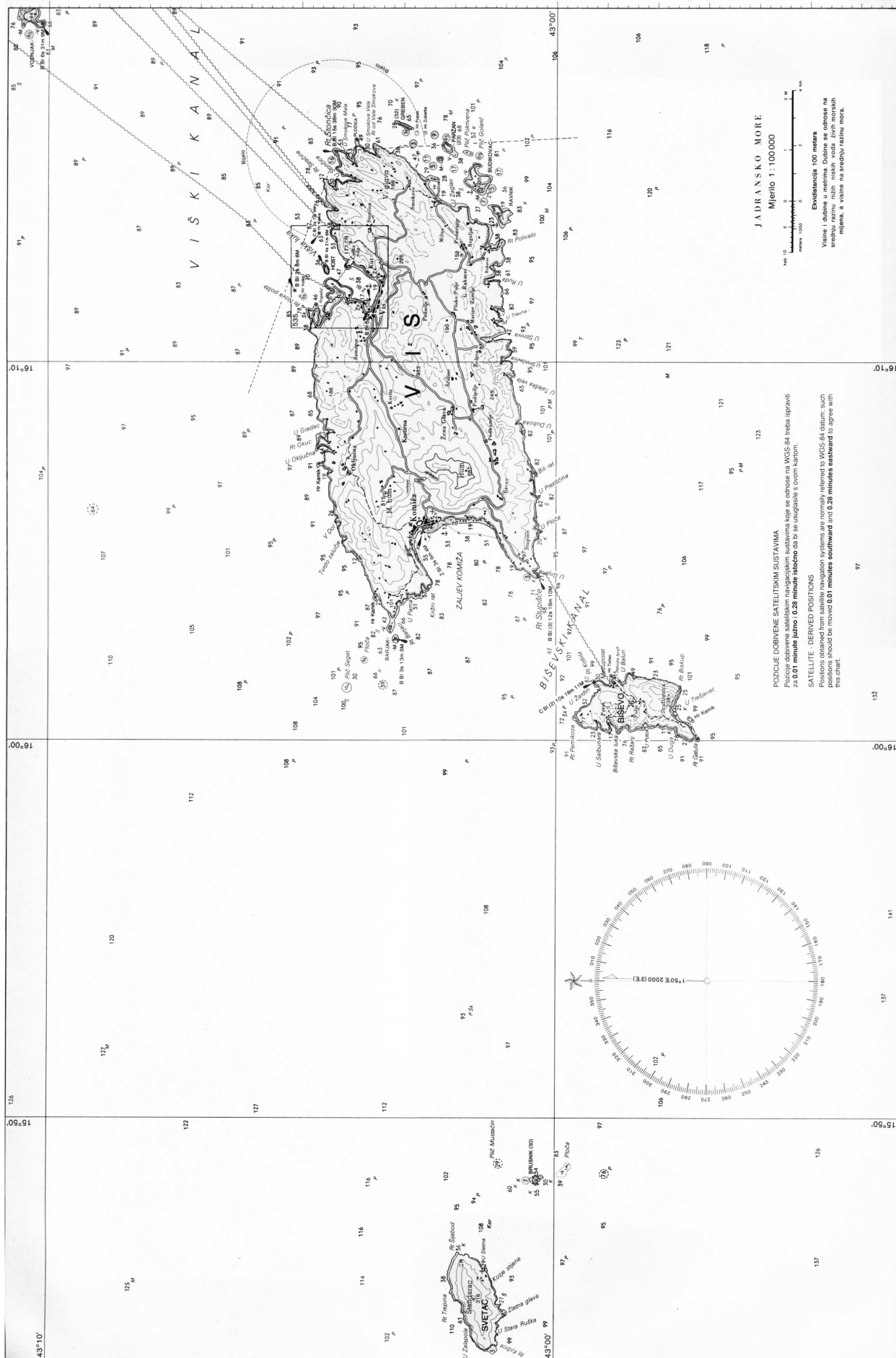
With the recent changes to the provincial Community Relocation Policy which now offers \$270,000 per household to the communities that decide to relocate, some island residents fear that the incentives and pressure from the provincial government to relocate might finally be too much for places like Change Islands and even Fogo Island. “It could affect Change Islands. I don’t know if there is a way to avoid it, to tell you the truth,” said one resident. “It’s so small. It has no young people. It has no services. I am not trying to downplay it. I think if there was an interconnect between the Fogo Island and Change Islands it could probably stay. It’s very limited. Its life is limited, I think, to this generation. I am worried about Fogo Island.” Another resident recounted a recent funeral she attended on Fogo Island:

I came to a funeral mass down here – actually two Mondays in a row now, which is scary. The first day, it was an older man who was over 80. Mr. Basil Lane. I sat in the back of the church – and I grew up here – I spent the best of my days in this community. I was sizing up, oh my god, how most of the congregation, they were over 70. And they’re over 70, so they’re gonna die, give them another 10 years even. Who is gonna keep this church going, who’ll be the ones? That’s what we have on Fogo Island. It’s the same in my community. We have an aging population and a low birth rate.

Despite the difficult economic and demographic scenarios playing themselves out on Change Islands and Fogo Island, there is also a vibrant culture, immense amount of capacity and knowledge and even optimism that the future for the islands holds possibilities that have not yet been explored and in some cases not even imagined. Before I turn to the exploration of policy and program frameworks that would make some of those development ideas possible, we will explore islands on the other side of the Atlantic just off the eastern shore of the Adriatic sea.

¹⁹³ Community accounts data.







Vis, Vis Island

SUN ISLANDS

Vis archipelago

*Navigare necesse est vivere non est necesse.*¹⁹⁴

Vis Island
43°02'N 16°09'E

AN OCEAN APART FROM FOGO ISLAND AND CHANGE ISLANDS is the island of Vis, one of the most remote inhabited islands along the Croatian Adriatic coast. There is a bias here I should declare up front because it will inevitably colour what I have to say about Vis island, and yet I can hardly explain it myself. Every time I step off the ferry ramp in the town of Vis on Vis

¹⁹⁴ "To sail is necessary; to live is not necessary." Usually attributed to Gnaeus Pompeius.

island, I feel like I have arrived to a place I belong to. I am not prone to such sentimentalism, and, as an immigrant, journalist, and a researcher, I had traveled to and lived in many places and a few islands. I felt more affinity for some of those places and less for others, but Vis stands out as the only place, including my very own hometown, where I experience that sense of belonging. That in itself is unusual since my relationship to Vis and Biševo islands is one of a tourist, and a very young one at that. I have spent some summer holidays there visited historical sites as part of a Grade 8 school trip. Granted, feeling affinity for a place with an abundance of sunshine, lemon and orange trees in the gardens and some of the best wine, olive oil and seafood on the entire Adriatic coast is not a hard task.



Kut, Vis Island

The Croatian coast, after Greece, is the most archipelagic and the sunniest coast in Europe¹⁹⁵. Geographically, almost all of the islands along the 450km of the eastern Adriatic coast are

¹⁹⁵ The outer islands of Vis, Lastovo, Biševo and Svetac can boast of more than 2,700 sunshine hours per year. Source: *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske 2011 Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia*

part of the Croatian national territory. By international standards, they are among the smaller of the world islands. They are usually classified either into three large groups based on their distance from the mainland (inner, outer, and open sea islands) or according to their relative geographic position and proximity to the main regions on the mainland (Istrian islands, Kvarner Bay islands, North Dalmatian, Middle Dalmatian, and South Dalmatian islands)¹⁹⁶. Croatian researcher Vera Graovac uses a somewhat different division based on the county boundaries and so has identified five groups of islands: Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Lika-Senj Counties' islands, Zadar islands, Šibenik-Knin County islands, Split-Dalmatia County, and Dubrovnik-Neretva County islands¹⁹⁷. She points out that the island of Pag is an anomaly since the northern part of the island belongs to a different county than the southern part of the island¹⁹⁸. This grouping of islands based on county boundaries is interesting because it corresponds to a sense of geographical boundary that some Vis islanders consider their community. For example, this is what one of them had to say about what constitutes her community: "My community - I would not limit myself to the island. My community is first and foremost my county. Certainly not [just] the island. I see myself as a part of Split-Dalmatia County." I will return to a more in depth discussion of that particular sentiment in the next chapter while looking at specific policies and policy differences between the study areas.

Croatian islands enjoy an Adriatic variant of the Mediterranean climate with long dry summers and mild winters. The Adriatic is a warm sea with winter water temperatures of over

¹⁹⁶ ¹⁹⁶ Nenad Starc, "Otoci, regije i razvojna politika," *Društvena istraživanja* 1/1 (1992), 116.

¹⁹⁷ Graovac, "Islands on the verge of extinction," 186.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

10°C and summer water temperatures of over 25°C¹⁹⁹. Pristine waters and beaches and unique ecological and cultural heritage has made the islands attractive to tourists, but also one of the more fragile natural and cultural environments in the country. Recognizing their significance, the Croatian constitution specifically states that the islands, along with other significant environments and resources, will enjoy the special protection of the Croatian state. Indeed, Grgona reminds us that three of the country's seven national parks are located on islands, in addition to a nature park, "a botanical reserve, six ornithological reserves, three protected forests, seven park forests, ten protected landscapes, three monuments of natural architecture, and so on."²⁰⁰ Cultural heritage includes both tangible and intangible components. From architecture and visual arts to language and particular customs, from food and unique traditional clothing to crafts and specific aspects of agricultural and fisheries industries, the islands are considered repositories of uniquely Croatian heritage. In the words of a Vis islander: "Without its islands, Croatia would not be Croatia."

Stephen Royle would be pleased to know that his assertion about the actual number of islands in the world remaining a bit of a mystery holds true on the Croatian scale as well. The National Development Programme for the islands counts 1185 islands, islets, and rocks²⁰¹, a number also used by Magaš²⁰² and Starc²⁰³, while Nejašmić, a declared nissologist, and

¹⁹⁹ Jadranko Grgona, "Turizam u funkciji gospodarskog razvitka hrvatskih otoka," *Ekonomski pregled*. Vol. 53. No. 7-8 (2002), 740

²⁰⁰ Grgona, "Turizam u funkciji gospodarskog razvitka hrvatskih otoka," 740.

²⁰¹ Republic of Croatia, *Nacionalni program razvitka otoka*, Ministry of development and renewal, 1997.

²⁰² Damir Magaš, "Croatian Islands – Main geographical and geopolitical characteristics," *Geoadria*, Vol 1. (1996), 5.

²⁰³ Starc, "Otoci, regije i razvojna politika," 116.

Mišetić count 1246²⁰⁴. Croatian tourism board claims there are 1244²⁰⁵. There are about 50 permanently inhabited islands. Whatever the number, it would be hard to overestimate the economic, cultural and geopolitical importance of the islands to Croatia.

Croatia boasts a coastline of almost 6,000km. Only 30.5 percent of that is the mainland coastline, some 1,777.3 km. The remaining 69.5 percent or over 4,000 km of the coastline is attributed to the islands. There are more than 122,000 people who call some 50 permanently inhabited islands²⁰⁶ home - less than three percent of the total population²⁰⁷. The islands constitute around five percent of the total Croatian landmass, but, with their surrounding

Croatian Islands Population 1857-2011

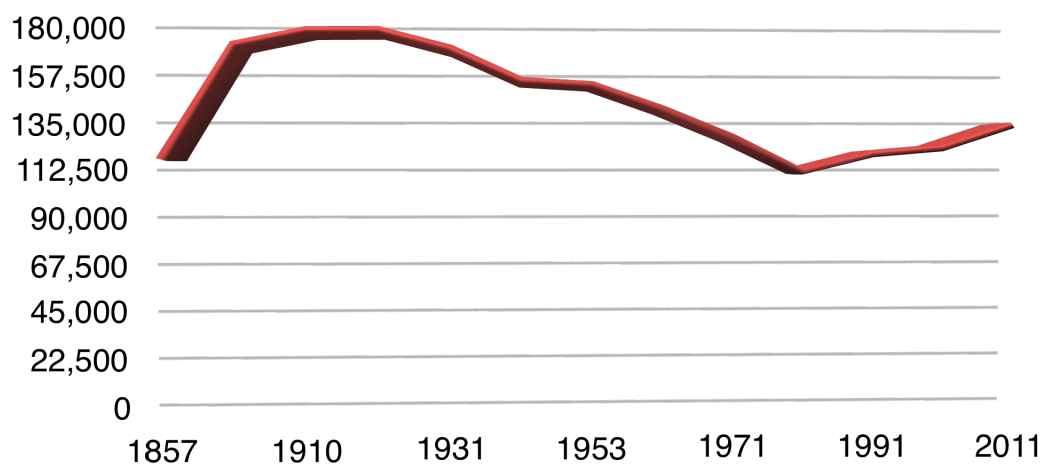


Figure 3. Croatian Islands Population 1857-2011

²⁰⁴ Ivo Nejašmić and Roko Mišetić, “Depopulation of Vis Island, Croatia,” *Geoadria*, 11/2 (2006), 283.

²⁰⁵ Hrvatska turistička zajednica, <http://croatia.hr/hr-HR/Odredista/Otoci>

²⁰⁶ Nejašmić and Mišetić, “Depopulation of Vis Island, Croatia,” 284.

²⁰⁷ Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske/Croatian Bureau of Statistics, *Statistički ljetopis Republike Hrvatske 2011 Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia*, Zagreb, (2011), 40.

NOTE: The numbers reflect 2001 census data. The complete set of the 2011 data is not yet available, however, where the incomplete numbers are available, I will indicate them as such.



Stone steps of the church of St. Cyprian and Justin in town of Vis on Vis Island.

seas, they make up 37 percent of the national territory²⁰⁸. There are no large urban centers on the islands and the average settlement has a population of 373 people²⁰⁹. Aging population and depopulation of islands, especially during the second half of the 20th century, are main demographic trends on Croatian islands.²¹⁰ In recent decades, as evident in Figure 1, the population of the islands has been slowly growing, but the growth has not been uniform

²⁰⁸ Grgona, "Turizam u funkciji gospodarskog razvitka hrvatskih otoka," 739.

²⁰⁹ Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island, Croatia," 284.

²¹⁰ *ibid*

across all of the inhabited islands²¹¹ due to a variety of reasons discussed further in this chapter.

In terms of their economic structure, the islands have changed quite dramatically over the past six decades or so. Traditionally, the islanders were engaged in small scale, complementary, economic activities that involved some combination of fisheries, agriculture and trades²¹². In fact, given the rural nature of all of the Croatian islands, the landscape was dominated and in many ways defined by stone drywalls, aimed at preserving the soil, small, contained settlements built almost entirely out of stone and well maintained olive groves and vineyards with a network of trails that connected every part of an island²¹³. Over the past century, and particularly after the Second World War, the islands experienced significant demographic and economic decline. Faričić et al. describe the transformation of the last decades in the following terms:

In the last several decades, Croatian small islands, as fragile socio-economic communities that developed on the periphery in relation to the centres of economic, political and cultural power on municipal, national and regional level, have experienced profound transformation that reflected itself through:

- *dominant role of depopulation in insular demography*
- *economic amorphism and strategic irresolution*
- *changed organization of insular area that was particularly influenced by littoralization*
- *changed function of insular area*
- *changes of insular landscape.*²¹⁴

²¹¹ Historical data in this figure is based on the table in Starc, "Otoci, regije i razvojna politika", 118. The 2001 numbers are based on 2011 Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia, 41. The 2011 census numbers are based on unofficial information reported in Zadarski List in text "Broj otočana povećali "penzići povratnici", a ne baby boom" [Islands population grows because of retirees not a baby boom].

²¹² Faričić et al, "Croatian Small Islands," 146.

²¹³ Josip Faričić and Damir Magaš, "Suvremeni socio-geografski problemi malih hrvatskih otoka – primjer otoka Žirja," *Geoadria*, Vol. 9, No. 2. (2004), 126-127.

²¹⁴ Faričić et al, "Croatian Small Islands," 146.

While migration in the past tended to be mostly skewed towards men who either moved abroad or to the mainland in search of work or to avoid military service, in the post World War II period the reasons for emigration became closely tied to rapid industrialization on the Croatian mainland and changing socio-economic conditions. The gender gap between men and women leaving islands has also closed in the post-war years²¹⁵. Graovac argues that the outmigration from the islands in the second half of the 20th century was encouraged by two simultaneous trends: rapid industrialization on the mainland with large industrial developments in need of a large labour force and the lack of any investment in island development until the 1970s²¹⁶. The damage to island economies proved to be long lasting. Babić and Lajić provide a succinct summary:

*Characteristic for island economies (keeping in mind island specific differences) is the “skipped over” secondary sector (industry). [...] Mediterranean environment with sunny climate is suitable for agricultural production of products such as figs, almonds, olives, wine grapes, carobs, tomatoes etc. Depopulation trends threaten the viability and importance of certain agricultural activities (for example vineyards) in the islanders’ lives. Ever smaller number of residents and ever older population are a barrier to maintaining the level of the current economic activity (especially those requiring intensive manual labour) without a thought given to expansion of activities.*²¹⁷

Fisheries and fish processing are a good example of the decline of the traditional industries. Babić and Lajić point out that: “at the beginning of the 20th century, there were 32 fish processing plants on the islands and at the beginning of the 21st century only five are left.”²¹⁸ That decline is particularly evident when contextualized within the Vis island itself and the town of Komiža, which used to be a fishing community. “There is this long fishing tradition

²¹⁵ Graovac, “Islands on the verge of Extinction,” 188.

²¹⁶ Graovac, “Islands on the verge of Extinction,” 192-193.

²¹⁷ Dragutin Babić and Ivan Lajić, “Obrazovne, radne i profesionalne težnje mladih otočana – primjer zadarskih otoka (Iž, Dugi otok, Ugljan),” *Migracijske i etičke teme*, Vol. 20. No. 2-3. (2004), 268.

²¹⁸ Babić and Lajić, “Obrazovne, radne i profesionalne težnje mladih otočana,” 269.

in Komiža. We used to have five fish processing plants here [and today there are none],” said one resident. “Today, there are maybe 60 fishermen here and we used to have two, if not three thousand fishermen,” she said.

Faričić et al. write that, together with the decline of the traditional economic activities and the aging population, the islands have experienced a re-evaluation as an economic space with the focus on tourism as a primary economic activity. This places disproportionate value on the geographical edge of the islands and the settlements along the narrow coastal strip with the interiors sometimes abandoned and almost always in decline²¹⁹. “Such new reevaluation of the islands is concentrated exclusively in a narrow coastal area, which has become burdened with uncoordinated and unplanned construction, and other pressures put by occasional users of insular resources,” they write. “Leisure and recreation gradually replace permanent economic activities that contribute to creating new ("additional") values, and tourists often outnumber the islanders.”²²⁰

Tourism is, without doubt, the most important aspect of island economies today. Magaš writes that, in 1989, islands and some 122,000 islanders hosted 1.6 million tourists who spent, on average nine nights on the islands for a total of 14.5 million overnight stays²²¹. Even though the numbers sound impressive, tourism on the islands remains highly seasonal with the tourism season lasting about three months from June to August. Grgona identifies lack of accommodations, inadequate and sub-standard accommodations, and inadequate ferry service (especially to smaller islands) as main reasons for the seasonal and relatively underdeveloped tourism industry. He writes:

²¹⁹ Faričić et al, “Croatian Small Islands,” 146.

²²⁰ Faričić et al, “Croatian small islands,” 146-147.

²²¹ Magaš, “Croatian Islands,” 8.

For example, on poorly connected and spatially spread out Zadar islands, tourism is almost exclusively conducted in what used to be called “private sector,” so the tourism offer in those places is reduced to complimentary accommodations. Since the majority of accommodations on Croatian islands are in the form of hotels and resorts of mid-quality without, as a rule, a heating system, they can remain open only during the summer, so the existing infrastructure enforces the seasonal character of our island tourism. It is also important to say that there is a discrepancy between the stated rating of the island accommodations and accepted Western standards.²²²

Despite the inadequate tourism infrastructure, Adriatic islands have all the attributes that could turn them into one of world’s top tourist destinations while at the same time protecting their natural and cultural heritage. Vidučić, among others, calls for a sustainable island development that incorporates local food production and cultural and social heritage in addition to the current offer of “sea, sun, and beaches.”

Several factors contributed to the renewed interest in Croatian islands in the past 15 years. Global tourism industry interest in environmentally clean and culturally authentic places made islands “one of the most valuable aspects of the national space.”²²³ With Croatian independence from Former Yugoslavia, islands received greater recognition as a natural and cultural bedrock of Croatian identity. The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, originally published in 1990, in its article 52 includes islands as one of the areas of special interest to the state:

Article 52

The sea, seashore, islands, waters, air space, mineral resources, and other natural assets, as well as land, forests, flora and fauna, other components of the natural environment, real estate and items of particular cultural, historical, economic or ecological significance which are specified by law to be of interest to the Republic of Croatia shall enjoy its special protection.

²²² Grgona, ““Turizam u funkciji gospodarskog razvitka hrvatskih otoka,” 741.

²²³ Nejašmić and Mišetić, “Depopulation of Vis Island,” 285.

The manner in which any assets of interest to the Republic of Croatia may be used and exploited by holders of rights thereto and by their owners, as well as compensation for any restrictions as may be imposed thereon, shall be regulated by law.²²⁴

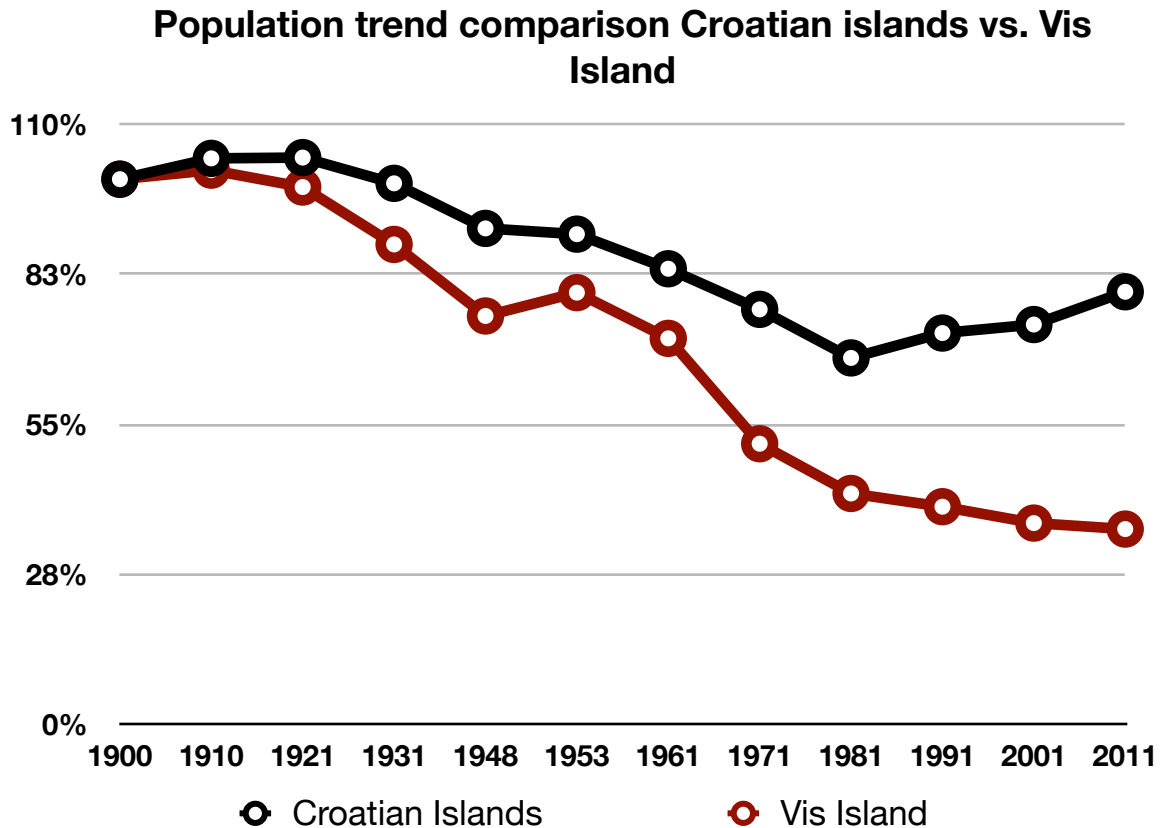


Figure 4: Population trend comparison between Croatian islands and Vis Island (1900= 100%). Sources: Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island," 291; and Croatia Bureau of Statistics "Census 2011: Because the Land is Made of People."

With this renewed commitment to the islands, research into possible development paths for Croatian islands, especially by researchers such as Nenad Starc and Ivan Lajić, resulted in the National Island Development Programme. The program was approved by the government of the day in 1997. In 1999, based on the recommendations in that document, Croatian parliament passed The Islands Act governing all aspects of the management of island

²²⁴ Republic of Croatia, *CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA (Consolidated text)*, <http://www.sabor.hr/Default.aspx?art=2408> (Accessed on July 15, 2013).

development at national, county and municipal levels²²⁵. Islands Administration was established to oversee the implementation of the Act and various government programs for small islands. The Island Administration has since been folded into the Ministry of Regional

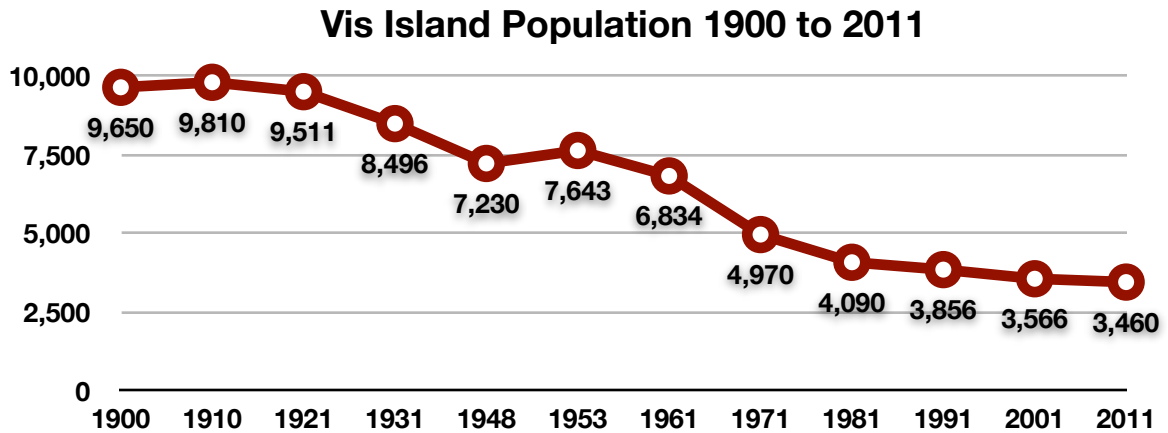


Figure 5: Vis Island population from 1900 to 2011. Sources: Nejašmić and Mišetić, “Depopulation of Vis Island,” 291; and Croatia Bureau of Statistics “Census 2011: Because the Land is Made of People.”

Development and EU Funds, with a section for islands and coastal development. The particular significance of the recent changes to the Islands Administration as well as particular policies and programs will be discussed in more detail in the last two chapters.

Where does the island of Vis fit within this historical and policy jigsaw puzzle?

Archeological records indicated that first permanent settlements on Vis Island date at least as far back at the bronze age. Nikša Petrić, writing in a popular history of the island, claims that Dionysius of Syracuse built the settlement of Issa sometime around 397 B.C.²²⁶ Through the ages, the island changed hands as the empires came and went. First records of Croatian settlements date back to 10th century A.D.²²⁷.

²²⁵ Republic of Croatia, *The Islands Act*, 1.

²²⁶ Nikša Petrić, “The first Greek colony in the Adriatic,” *The Island of Vis*. Fabra, 2004, Zagreb: 9.

²²⁷ Petrić, “The first Greek colony,” 14.

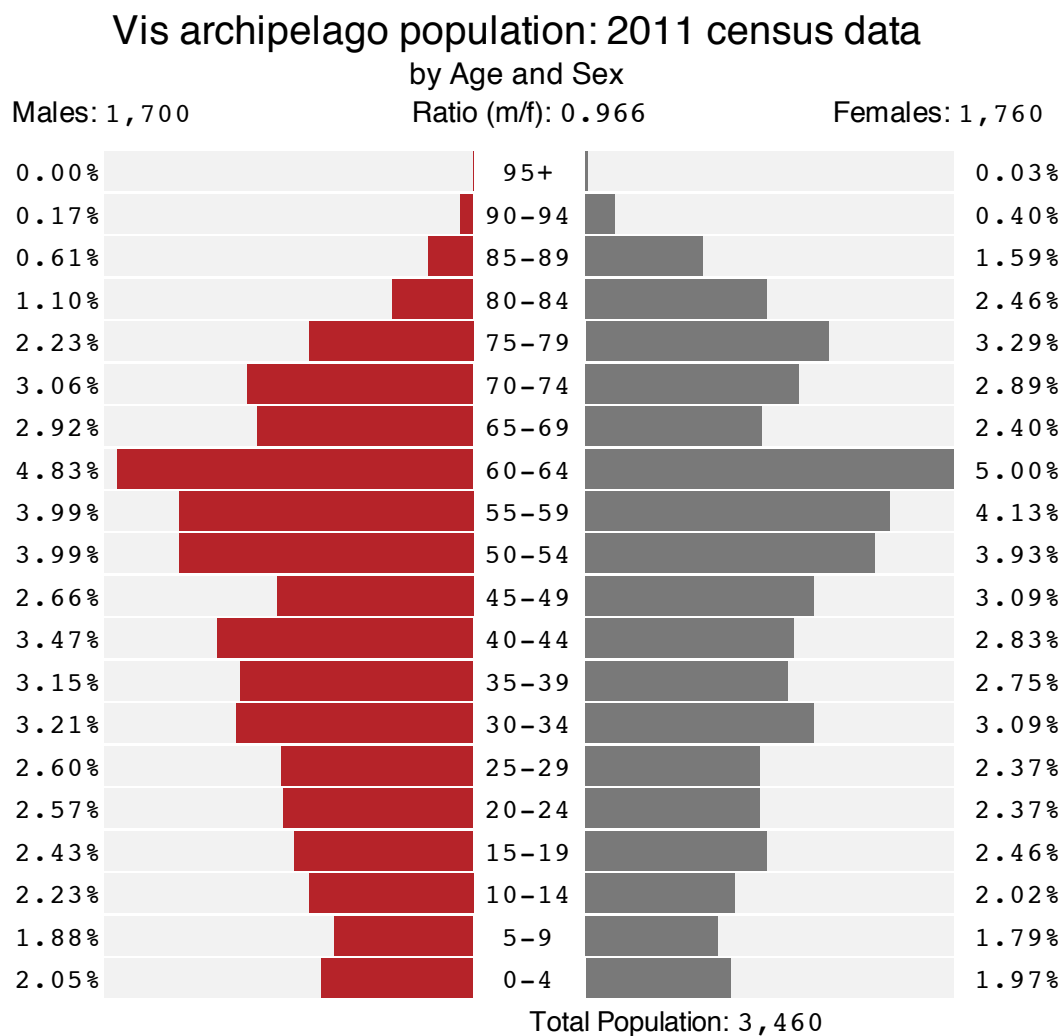
If “freedom” was the most often invoked expression to describe life on Change Islands and Fogo Island, “beauty” was the keyword all of the islanders on Vis used to describe the most important characteristic of life on their island. This is how one islander described Vis Island:

A lost piece of paradise... We have the fortune to be born on the 45th parallel and I really think that the place we live in is a paradise. I would describe this as an island with a lot of sunshine, joy, full of fragrance, full of beauty in such small space and I really think this is how paradise should look... You belong to a world that has its identity. That identity and that cultural heritage reaches back through millennia. You know your roots. You know your family. You know your friends, your friends' family, their friends. In fact, the island is networked and in a way it is one big family.

The reference to sun and fragrance is to be expected. While Vis is located 44km from the closest point on the mainland, the ferry connection between Vis and Split on the mainland is about 55km and a crossing, on calm seas, takes about 2.5 hours. There is also a daily passenger-only catamaran connection between the island and the mainland which takes considerably shorter crossing time (about an hour).

Vis Island is the largest of the islands in an archipelago that consists of Biševo, Svetac, Brusnik, Ravnik, Galiola, Budikovac and several others. Palagruža archipelago, located some 72 km south of Vis belongs to the municipality of Komiža as well for historical reasons. Palagruža is situated in the richest fishing grounds in the Adriatic that were traditionally fished by Komiža fishers. The main island of Vis has an area of about 90km².

The two largest towns Vis (pop. 1,672) and Komiža (pop. 1,397) despite their small size have an urban character with the houses built closely together, ample public space along the waterfront and several small squares and parks throughout both communities. There is a good bus service that connects various parts of the island throughout the day. The archipelago is divided into two municipalities: Komiža and Vis. Many of the services are shared between the two municipalities including the high school, childcare services and elderly care.



Source: Croatia Bureau of Statistics

Figure 6: Population pyramid for Vis Island and surrounding isles using 2011 census data. Both municipalities, Vis and Komiža, are included.

The island of Vis, regardless of its nominal rulers, always played an important strategic role. After the World War II, that role became even more significant and it has greatly contributed to the sense of periphery and remoteness. Nejašmić i Mišetić describe Vis of post-war period as the “island fortress:”

After the Second World War, former Yugoslav military strategists considered this island to be the "key of the Adriatic". Therefore, over 18,000 posts with barbed wire were erected on the island, as well as a number of different objects, including bunkers, tunnels and shelters. The island was closed for tourist visits, with the exception of a shorter period (1968-1975)

*when visits were allowed. These circumstances influenced significantly the socio-economic deterioration of the island, and ultimately it influenced the unfavorable demographic processes. Only after the independent Croatian state was established, Vis ceased to be the "island fort" and started opening to the world.*²²⁸

Interestingly, islanders and policy makers see the military presence on the island in a much more nuanced light. While some of them would say that the military has isolated the island, others would go as far as saying that the military has, de facto, “saved the island” from mass tourism and preserved its authenticity: “Because the island was a military island and it was opened to foreigners only in 1998 or 99, we have a preserved coastline and no illegal development [of seasonal residences and rental properties]. The island does not really have a tradition of tourism development.” With no legacy of mass tourism and large, substandard hotels, Vis islanders see their chance to develop ‘the right kind’ of tourism as well as pursue other development options. Today, those options include revitalizing agriculture, taking greater control over fisheries, tourism, pursuing higher education partners, developing renewable energy projects, nautical tourism and a myriad of other opportunities. The development paths in the two study areas will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Demographic decline still represents the most acute problem for Vis island development. Throughout the interviews, participants would indicate the need for larger and younger population as the one thing that would change the island’s future for the better. “What I want is 200 young people on the island, to be modest,” said one respondent and another expressed the same sentiment: “In 1910, there were 10,000 islanders here. If the island had 5,000 people - that would be amazing.”

²²⁸ Nejašmić and Mišetić, “Depopulation of Vis Island,” 287.

NOTE: Geoadria journal is published as a bilingual Croatian/English journal. I have used the original English translation which is occasionally very clumsy.

Nejašmić and Mišetić in their 2006 paper on depopulation of Vis island estimate that in the first half of the 20th century Vis (and surrounding islands) have lost more than 6,500 people. The majority of the emigrants from the 1920s and 30s moved overseas and a large number of them settled in San Pedro, California.²²⁹ In fact, that large population of Vis islanders in San Pedro has become somewhat of a lore on the island not unlike the stories around Fort McMurray, Alberta, and the large contingent of Newfoundlanders who have moved there in search of work. For the entire 20th century, Nejašmić and Mišetić estimate that some 11,500 people left the island and the majority of them moved abroad.²³⁰

Vis island and the surrounding islands are excluded from the current population growth on Croatian islands in general (see figure 3). Nejašmić and Mišetić warn that while the previous emigrant waves were primarily the result of economic and political forces, the current depopulation is very much a result of demographic trends and the very old population which may indeed result in dying out of some of the smaller communities in the island's interior.²³¹ They do point out that the island population has stabilized and with appropriate development strategies it is still possible to revitalize the island and reverse the current demographic trends.²³²

Indeed, public servants working in the Islands Administration office see stabilizing and eventually reversing demographic trends on islands as their primary goal. One of them described the reasons behind the government's efforts as follows:

²²⁹ Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island," 295.

²³⁰ Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island," 299.

²³¹ Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island," 307.

²³² Nejašmić and Mišetić, "Depopulation of Vis Island," 307.

“The basic reason, the foundation of why the state cares for the islands is depopulation... That’s why the development plan for the islands was created in the first place and its premises turned into the Islands Act with specific intervention packages whose implementation aims to encourage people to stay and to support local economic activity with sustainable development as its underlying principle.”

What does Vis archipelago look like today? Besides the main island, the island of Biševo remains permanently populated with 11 year-round residents left. Only one of them is under the age of 40.²³³ A detailed study completed in 2004 on the request of the Ministry of Sea, Tourism, Transportation and Development, which at the time had Islands Administration as one of its units, indicated pristine environment, existing infrastructure, development and compliance of and with land use plans and the port facilities as main development strengths. Tourism, agriculture and fisheries remain the cornerstones of the island economy.

One thing that becomes clear, even after a relatively short stay on the island, is that the residents are highly active and invested in social and cultural life of the island. There are numerous cultural organizations from theatre to *a cappella* singing groups that organize varied and rich cultural life on the island throughout the year. Even though younger islanders I interviewed indicated lack of better social and cultural outlets as a negative aspect of living on an island, there is a strong sense of vibrancy and even optimism among most of the islanders I interviewed. One young islander said: “Life on the island is a joy and a sorrow... I don’t see myself in a city. I am used to the island and having everything so close. You know everything here about everybody. Him [pointing at a passerby], I know what his astrological sign is and I know when he fell off a motorbike. It’s in the summer when you see everybody happy, because everybody is working.”

²³³ Croatian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Populations, Households and Dwellings 2011: 1441 Statistical Reports*, 2001: Zagreb, 132.

The next chapter will look at the development potential and choices made in both study areas, look at how islanders perceive the development process and support they have and analyse the existing policies, supports and legal frameworks that in many ways limit or make possible the implementation of development projects and programs.



Joe Batt's Arm, Fogo Island

PERCEPTIONS AND POLICIES

*My name it don't matter, I'm not young anymore,
But in all of my days I'd never been poor;
I'd lived the right good life and not felt no shame,
Till they made me take part in the government game.²³⁴*

SOMETIMES, DURING AN INTERVIEW ON Change Islands and Fogo Island and with Vis and Biševo islanders, I would pull out a couple of photographs to help the interviewees envision this other island so far removed from the kitchen tables of their own homes. After the initial reaction to fishing boats locked in ice and palm trees swaying over stone churches, I would often be asked a variant of the same question: “What are they fishing?” And even though they are an ocean apart, as the conversations turned to fish, boats, and fishing regulations these islanders would soon discover that they have much in common.

It wasn't just about the fish either. In both locations, the residents emphasized the importance of being on an island and talked about islandness as a crucial component of their identity.

²³⁴ Written by Al Pittman. This variant collected from the singing of Pat Byrne in 1978 by Mary McCarthy in St. John's and archived in MUNFLA ms.83-65,41. <http://www.wtv-zone.com/phyrst/audio/nfld/02/game.htm>

“Sometimes it can be pure isolation and those are very few moments. Those are moments when you can get in that moment of panic,” said one of the Fogo Island residents while describing what islandness means to her. “But then there are moments when it’s special. Islandness is being unique. You see yourself as being unique. Connectedness to nature and especially to ocean. The ever-presence of the ocean.” I had a similar conversation with a Vis islander who said that living on an island means that “[y]ou belong to a world that has its own identity... You know your roots. You know your family... Childhoods are wonderful on islands. There are no better childhoods than island childhoods. So much freedom, so much peace, so much nature. That mix of spontaneous play and beautiful nature is a winning combination in a person’s life.”

Interestingly, that was the only time I heard the word “freedom” used to describe life on an island in Croatia. “Freedom,” however, was a keyword almost every person I talked to on Change Islands and Fogo Island used. It was “beauty” that Vis and Biševo islanders used over and over again to describe the islands they lived on and the life that was so closely interwoven with the landscapes and seascapes around them.

In both study areas islanders saw their islands as closely knit societies where human relations were carefully tended and managed. Many acknowledged with humour that this closeness is the best and sometimes the most difficult thing about living on an island confirming Péron’s observation that “islandness engenders closeness, solidarity, scrutiny, and capacity to accommodate and be tactful... [there is] a real *art de vivre*, sharing an ethos that is both private and communal ... Island communities are also characterized by subtle internal divisions between inhabitants”²³⁵.

²³⁵ Péron, *The contemporary lure of the island*, 330.

This dichotomy of closeness and internal tension is something that policy makers with provincial and national governments as well as newcomers and seasonal residents I talked to had great difficulty grasping.

A seasonal resident described the islanders as having “...a perception of things from the island point of view and sometimes it’s not really inquiring.” Another newcomer said: “It is very, very difficult to intellectually live here. It is hard to have friends who can relate to your life experiences because their life experiences have been focused on fishery and putting food on the table.... It is a completely different way of looking at the world. I am sounding elitist and I don’t mean to be that way. It is a very insulated community.” Some of the seasonal residents and the newcomers also found that the internal social divisions within their island communities were almost incomprehensible. One seasonal resident talked about attending a dinner and being completely confused by social interactions and tensions that, from what she could make out, spanned generations.

The islanders, on the other hand, see encounters with newcomers invigorating and a reminder that the life they lead is unique and different from the increasingly globalized existence most of the world is rapidly adopting. On Vis island, a local resident said: “You know, they [newcomers] do come here because it is so beautiful, but we just take it for granted.” Those same sentiments were echoed on Change Islands and Fogo Island: “There is a lot of tourists who come here like [name] and [name] and yourselves. Something has attracted them to Change Islands. Maybe it’s the fresh air, beautiful scenery... whatever it is they just can’t get over what it’s like on Change Islands. For me, as a person who has lived here all my life, I probably overlook what they see and that’s normal.” However, the islanders are also very much aware that the push to develop tourism is rife with potential conflicts

between those who visit and those who make a living on the islands. “To us, this is a place we live in,” explained a Vis islander, “to others, it is a place for a vacation and the two are not always compatible.” Some islanders are also suspicious of the abrupt changes newcomers are bringing with them and worry that their motives are not as pure as they say they are. “Why are they here?” asked a Change Islander. “Some of them, they are okay, but others? What is their agenda? We don’t know that.” On Vis, permanent residents were also worried that the rapid privatization of tourism infrastructure and tourism development may hurt the essence of the island: “We are not thinking about the consequences of the so called development. If the capital comes here too fast, the traditional life here is finished. If we can control it and do it slowly, then we can save our traditions.”

More worrisome than the conflict among newcomers and islanders is the relationship between the islanders and policy makers, especially in Newfoundland and Labrador where animosity and frustration around a range of policies and issues is palpable on both sides. For example, this is how a policy analyst based in St. John’s vented his frustration around amalgamation process on Fogo Island: “The island is one of those weird places where they cannot agree on anything so default is let’s put it where nobody lives - in the centre of the island [...] But there is no community in the centre of the island. So they hate each other so much that they will not put things in each others’ towns or agree on something. They will rather kick and scream and put it where nobody lives, where is the most expensive place to build to because there are no hookups.” Another policy maker admitted that there are no island specific policies, in fact, not even rural policies that would take into account island conditions: “I find that more than any other communities, island communities have to make do with what they have.” Yet another explained lack of engagement with island communities as a systemic problem and blamed it on people’s understanding of how government works.

“The government can’t quite collaborate in the way people outside feel the government should,” he said. The overwhelming sense one gets from talking to policy makers at various levels in Newfoundland, is that the prevailing policy towards islands could be summed up as “out-of-sight-and-out-of-mind.”

Even though the policy environment Croatian islanders live in is almost exactly the opposite from that in Newfoundland, Croatian policy makers working out of political and economic power centres in the capital Zagreb or the coastal centre of Split still speak of difficulties when it comes to working with islanders. They tended to talk about it in terms of islanders isolating themselves from the rest of the country. “There is a chasm between Zagreb [the capital] and the islands. Islands can be traditional and closed communities,” said one policy maker in Croatia describing her experience in working with islanders. The crucial difference between Croatia and Newfoundland lies in the way that the role and value of island communities is articulated, recognized and acted upon.

It is important to emphasize that in both study areas, among islanders, newcomers, and policy makers, there is an agreement about the cultural importance of small islands to their respective mainlands. Those sentiments were repeatedly expressed in statements such as: “Croatia is the land of islands;” “Croatia would not be Croatia without its islands;” “The islands are a national treasure;” “This [Change Islands] is at the heart of what it means to be a Newfoundlander.” Some interviewees specifically referenced the cultural importance of small island communities and their role as tourism destinations:

[T]hey [small islands] contribute a huge amount in culture and the view of this place by outsiders who come here. People who come here don’t come to see big cities. They come here to see the outports and scenery, people going out in the boats to fish. That’s what public perception of Newfoundland is and these communities fulfill that to a huge degree.

Others spoke of small island lifestyles as a counterweight to rapid urbanization and globalisation:

We are not the alternative, but we are kind of the balance in some ways and I think when we lose sight of the side over here, what we have over here, what do we have to teach our children, what do they have to confront. Is it going to be just the internet? Is it going to be just sitting in front of the computer all day long for a kid? Is it going to be living in a big city? Where is nature? Where is culture? Where is the connection?

The connection was made quite explicitly by both, Croatian and Newfoundland governments, as part of the aggressive tourism marketing campaigns promoting islands as places on the edge of the world and out of time. In those advertisements Fogo Island is one of the mythical four corners of the world, “as far from Disneyland as you can possibly get,” and Vis and the rest of the Croatian islands are “a Mediterranean as it once was.” There is not a trace of contemporary world that could upset potential visitors’ perception of island paradise. I will return to a discussion of tourism later in this chapter as we look at economic development potential on the islands in both study areas.

Aside from marketing islands from a continental and national perspective, Newfoundland has no other policy specifically addressing islands as unique and important places. Three existing policies that do impact islands disproportionately are the current Community Relocation Policy, Coastal and Ocean Management Strategy and Policy Framework, and Vessel Replacement Strategy. Policies around fisheries, forestry, waste management, business practices, tourism and so on all have impact on the islands, but none of them have any specific measures that would recognized status of small island communities as different from other rural places. To be fair, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador does not even have a rural policy even though the province remains strongly rural. When asked whether or not Newfoundland has a rural policy, a government policy maker explained it as follows:

Not rural policy per se. All policies... if you think about it, policies are generally applied to the province... most of the province is arguably rural. If you are a cynic you could say NL has no rural policy at all, or you could say everything in NL is a rural policy.

What the province does have is the Rural Secretariat, a small office which is a part of Executive Council with the task of providing policy suggestions in consultations with various stakeholders that would enhance regional and rural sustainability. Today the secretariat is a part of the government's new Office of Public Engagement still within Executive Council together with several other offices and secretariats. The secretariat never had any policy making or decision making power and was always more of a consultative and research branch of the government rather than a policy making one. Another tool in the government's arsenal that potentially could provide invaluable insight in how a particular public policy affects rural regions is the Rural Lens. In theory, Rural Lens process should help provincial policy makers determine impacts of proposed policies on rural areas, but in practice, there is little evidence that the tool is used to enhance policy and regulatory environment for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Therefore, despite the token efforts on the part of the provincial government to acknowledge the realities of rural regions, the Community Relocation Policy remains the most visible and the most talked about piece of provincial policy for rural areas and especially so in island communities.

The Community Relocation Policy is implemented through the Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs. This is the same department that handles amalgamations, such as the one that took place on Fogo Island in 2011. It therefore came as no surprise when a Fogo Island resident, when talking about the amalgamation experience on the island, referred to the department as "the Department of Amalgamation and Resettlement." The Community Relocation Policy, a successor to the Resettlement Act, has strict rules stipulating that 90 percent of the permanent residents in the community have to vote for relocation

before the government provides any financial assistance and the process cannot be initiated by the government in the first place:

The Department of Municipal Affairs will only consider relocation assistance requests that are community- initiated and community-driven. The Department will not initiate any actions to encourage relocation assistance requests from communities:

The Minister of Municipal Affairs may approve community-initiated, community-driven relocation requests that meet all four of the following criteria:

- a. The Community initiates contact with the Department concerning the possibility of relocation assistance;*
- b. The total cost of relocation assistance plus residual essential services for Permanent Residents who may choose to remain in the community does not exceed the cost to Government to deliver services to the Community for a twenty-year period;*
- c. A vote on relocation demonstrates that ninety per cent or more of the voting aged Permanent Residents wish to relocate; and*
- d. Ninety per cent or more of Permanent Residential Property Owners subsequently sign Government's conditional offers to purchase.²³⁶*

In March 2014, the government has increased the relocation assistance to a maximum of \$270,000 per household from the previous maximum of \$90,000. Although several votes have been taken, no community has been resettled since the resettlement of Grand Bruit in 2010. Currently four communities, including Little Bay Islands, are somewhere along the relocation assessment process. None of these were initiated since the increase in relocation assistance funding.

In informal conversations many islanders have talked about the significant increase in relocation compensation as a government's attempt to bribe smaller communities into resettlement. Some islanders indicated that they feel disrespected and betrayed by the

²³⁶ Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs, *Community Relocation Policy*, accessed June 30, 2014: <http://www.miga.gov.nl.ca/publications/relocation/Community%20Relocation%20Policy.pdf>. 1.

government that refuses to invest in their communities:

They should be able to come up with something, but you never hears them talking about it. Just a project or something for a few weeks of work for the hours. That's not a real job. That's something to keep us quiet, eh. Just like a bandaid. A bandaid on the situation. Patch it up. Keep the people quiet so they don't say too much. It shouldn't be like that. There should be some permanent thing they could put there. They wastes money everywhere else, how come they can't waste a bit on Change Islands eh?

On Change Islands, several people said that there has been some talk about resettlement, but that the prevailing opinion on the island is that there is still hope to turn the community around.

The Vessel Replacement Strategy is another provincial government policy that will cause many islanders to shake their head in frustration and sometimes disbelief. Ferry transportation, besides education and health care, is seen as one of the most important services the government provides to small islands. On Change Islands and Fogo Island, opinions are divided on the quality of the ferry service- that division holds between the permanent and seasonal residents alike. Most residents recognize that Change Islands benefit from their proximity to Fogo Island as they share, for Newfoundland conditions, a relatively large ferry with a 60 vehicle capacity. A Change Islander describes the service:

We, Change Islands and Fogo Island, have a pretty good system. It's not perfect, I mean. If you want something perfect and you want to travel then you have to be on the mainland of Newfoundland if you want to go when you want to go and you want to come when you want to come. There is some waiting and some delays, but other than that it's pretty good. When it comes to emergencies within an hour the boat is here and you can move so it's not bad. It's pretty good.

Others point out that with the increase in the number of tourists, the summer capacity is inadequate and the ferry itself is not well suited for the occasionally difficult ice conditions which can stop the services for days on end. A Fogo Island resident said: "I know that we

already have a ferry, but I would like to see a ferry there that is not stopped all year round, that can bore through the heavy ice.” The residents have a variety of suggestions they would like to see implemented or at least explored, including a two ferry service during the summer months and a small, passenger only boat that would make it possible to easily cross from Change Islands to Fogo Island. Such service could be provided from the tickle on Change Islands into one of the larger communities on Fogo Island. Some residents in informal conversations pointed out that, coupled with ground transportation, island-to-island service might make it possible for Change Islanders to work closer with Fogo Islanders in fisheries and tourism. Fogo Island residents expressed concern that the new ferry the islands are expecting as a replacement for the aging vessel currently serving the communities has the same capacity as the existing ferry which is increasingly inadequate during the summer months.

Aside from road transportation services that were mostly seen as adequate the islanders were almost uniform in their satisfaction with the health care services. Dental care was an exception. There are no dental clinics on the islands and any dental work requires travel and often an overnight stay in Gander or Lewisporte. A Fogo islander pointed out that, ironically, his sheep have a much better dental service than the people on the islands. In fact, several islanders mentioned regional veterinarian services provided to the island on a on-call and scheduled basis as a potential model of how to deliver a variety of services that do not require a permanent presence of a professional on the islands.

Education services were in some ways the most complicated topic for many of the islanders to discuss. There is an unquestionable pride, especially on Fogo Island, when they talk about the schools and the quality of education available to the children on the island despite falling

enrolment numbers. On Fogo Island, during virtually every interview, the interviewees brought up as a point of pride and an example of social innovation the fact that the island was almost two decades ahead of the rest of the province when it introduced its non-denominational primary and elementary school - the first public school in Newfoundland and Labrador. On Change Islands, the islanders spoke positively about how well the school is equipped and the small classes that allow for individual attention and educational goal developments tailored to the needs of each child which would be impossible in a larger school setting. Some perceived that as a liability as well because of how hard it can be for students to fit into a larger high school classes on the mainland or in post-secondary institutions:

“When you have a student that is the only student in the classroom and they have to remain on Change Islands from kindergarten to level 3, they are missing something. They are missing classmates, they are missing intermingling with other children. When I went to school Grade 11 and Grade 10, I was in a class of 32 so that is one class and most of all classes consisted of that. And when I moved. I was 14 when I went to my high school. I went to Lewisporte. So then you got into, I mean I moved from a class of 32 into a class situation of 20 and I had to cope with that for a few months until I fit in. Then you bring that to a level of one or two students moving into that situation. Not only that but I think those who go off to postsecondary, university or trades, have really hard time adjusting at first. It’s too bad because that could discourage them from continuing because there are a lot of factors at play.

However, the main concern the islanders, both permanent residents and newcomers, expressed had more to do with the philosophical aims of the curriculum than the delivery and the facilities themselves. One seasonal resident described the system succinctly as a system that’s “educating the kids to leave, rather than to stay.” Statements like this were often followed with elaborate conversations about islandness, identity and cultural heritage. The islanders spoke about the education system as an excellent service, but one in which they had no input and one which guarded its physical infrastructure closely, preventing the available facilities from becoming a greater part of the community while the community itself valued a

school building often above all other assets they had or at least on par with a fish plant. One islander expressed that concern as follows:

We have to get the culture side. I don't think there has been enough emphasis placed on culture side and I really think it needs to be about community capacity. Community should become a part of the education system. When you look at community structures, at how we build a community, we really need to build community capacity in these small areas.

The islanders have shown initiative and resourcefulness, but the blanket application of the regulations designed largely for urban schools prevented them in the past from successfully introducing supplementary educational programs that would bring students closer to their island heritage. A Fogo Islander describes the attempt to bring boat building workshops into the school:

The other thing that needs to change is that the education system is impermeable to any local influences. We had a program here at the school, we wanted to, we thought, well, we have an answer, we gotta figure out how to not lose the boat-building heritage. The best way to do this – you know [name] says we're eight funerals away from never being able to build a boat on Fogo Island ever again – we've got to get the kids involved in this. So let's have a program at the school. We are willing to pay for the program so it's not a cost issue. [we] fought for two years to get it into the program. There was every reason in the world – there was a union thing, a this and a that, and on and on and on. They have a shop program where they're making, I don't know, bird houses or something. Newfoundland birds don't go into houses, that's ridiculous, we don't need bird houses. Then finally, an opportunity appeared, because there was a pilot project for a new technology and something program. Can you believe this? They sent to Fogo Island a C&C machine, a computerized milling machine. And the year of that program – a teacher was sent with it who actually knew how to operate it, a C&C machine. Because it was a new program, we actually managed to find a dent, a crack in the door, and we got the boat-building program in. We hired a master builder. He went into the school. Everything about the education system, everything from what time they were supposed to turn the lights off in the school, everything was contrived to kill that program. Kids were not allowed to go out of the school during the school day unless they were on the bus. So they couldn't go into the woods and learn how to collect the proper wood to make the boats...

Another islander described the difficulties when she attempted to introduce some supplementary programming into the school:

I wish that the Department of Education would look at us, or if we could find some loophole whereby our students could have more hands-on with programs [...] You have to pay attention to those students. I would like to see more of an interaction with artists and students in our school. I think that's vitally important. If we expect them to have the same love and passion for this place that we have, we have to let them know why, why it is so, and how they are rooted here. Well, it's like you wanting my mat, but wanting a little story behind it. If I go to the school, and I teach children how to hook a mat, I'm going to invite them to bring in a subject, an image that's important, that they just got from their great-grandmother or their mother. And we're going to talk about that story. At the end of the day we have 30 different students with 30 different images. We have 30 different stories. [...] Unfortunately I've gone to the school on several different occasions. I can't say that there's a mix-up in communications, because that's not the right word for me to use. But I can't seem to get the school to think along my terms that it's essential that these students go out into the communities and gather up the stories from their families and bring them back and write them. As part of the curriculum, to get some credit for that. I think that's vitally important. The workload of teachers today is just so demanding. They're all in the classroom, trying to have hands-on as much as they can – we have great teachers here on Fogo Island. We've always had great teachers. But I think that at 3 o'clock – I think there's so much stress in everybody's life right now, once the teacher leaves the school at 3 o'clock, or 4 o'clock, they, too, must have to go home to their families, they have things to prepare. They're obligated to be involved in some extracurricular, mostly in the sports fields. We do have a teacher, I don't know if she's doing it this year, but who has been taking children and teaching them guitar after school, like maybe half a dozen. Gerald Frake many years ago took six little girls and turned them into the Fogo Island Accordion Group. Amazing story. So I think that there needs to be more talking, probably on my part, to put emphasis on the importance of that.

Primary and secondary education was only part of the problem. On Change Islands, the fishers complained of a regulatory environment that kept the school closed and empty for most of the day instead of opening it up to the community and allowing the computer lab, which has teleconferencing facilities and distance education capabilities, to be used by adults for continuing education programs ranging from accounting to navigation. In fact, a fisherman explained that the major barrier for him to explore tourism opportunities around boat tours in the area is the requirement to obtain additional safety and navigational licences. He emphasized that he is actually quite interested in completing those courses, but they require him to move to St. John's for up to three months during the fishing season, which for him is simply impossible. He wondered why he couldn't take those classes through a distance

education program at the local school and spend a few days in St. John's for the exams and actual certification.

There are several things I would like to emphasize when it comes to the discussions I had with Change Islanders and Fogo Islanders around education. This was an issue they were very passionate about. They were adamant that transmission of culture, heritage and sense and appreciation of place is as important to them as the actual government approved curriculum and they had well thought out, clear and practical solutions to how the educational system could be easily improved to better meet their needs. They are prepared to be deeply involved in that aspect of education to the point of providing necessary materials and financial support and yet, felt disrespected, ignored and unnecessarily blocked by the provincial government, unions and regulations that made little sense in a small island setting.

They also shared similar experiences when it came to regulations around starting new businesses and operating a business in a small island setting. The frustration was especially evident when the islanders talked about the lack of understanding within the provincial government of just how multi-skilled the island labour force really is. They shared stories about building their own houses with pride of the skills that involved. However, one of the islanders explained that him and his son cannot now build a house together like him and his father did because relatively recent legislative changes requiring that specific jobs such as electrical and plumbing work, be carried out by certified electricians and plumbers. In the past, a government inspector had to certify that the work was done according to the provincial building codes and standards, but the residents themselves could do the work. That is not the case anymore and several islanders pointed it out as a meaningless change that made life more difficult than it needs to be.

Some islanders also perceived that they were prevented from starting their own businesses because they were core fisherman. One of them explained:

They got stuff like.. If you want some money to do something like start a business like me now. I can't get it because I am fishing. If I goes and ask they'll tell me "No, you're fisherman, no." You can have the best kind of an idea, and they won't even look at ya. Why can't I start a small business on the side... I've been trying to get on with the tourism and get tourists on board with me. There is that many regulations... it's regulated to pieces. You can't even look at it. And the first thing they ask you is what you do for a living. "Oh you're a fisherman..." No. Not one thing for you because you're fishing. I've been trying for a long time, but every time you comes against these barriers and I just give up. You can't bury yourself.

Whether these barriers are real or perceived is immaterial because the lack of appropriate communication and advice is sufficiently frustrating that people who are entrepreneurial and willing to take a risk of starting their own businesses are deciding to forego the opportunity or do something else on the side creating what is essentially a grey economy. This can take a form of barter of goods and services as well as providing services for payment such as minor home repair or vehicle repair for other islanders and visitors without actual business or professional licence to do so.

Federal government is perceived as even less interested in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and the island communities. Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) is perceived as the most active and helpful of federal agencies. The agency is tasked with creating opportunities for economic growth in Atlantic Canada and, aside from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it represents the most visible federal presence on the ground. While ACOA funded projects are appreciated, the islanders point out that, especially in small communities such as Change Islands, ACOA programs are difficult to access and the community often does not have a capacity to marshal its proposals through the federal system or sees the programs as too complicated and elaborate given what they perceive as the actual

community needs:

The system.. it's got to be something big. Thirty, 40 jobs. There is not going to be something like that here. Smaller things would be better if you could make it work. One or two jobs that's one or two families that's going to be here next time you comes. If there's jobs, they stays here, guarantee. Most who stays here, they are not picky over the jobs. They'll do anything. We don't look for a certain kind of a job. If there is a paycheque, it's alright. Perfect. Pays the bills. Keeps the wolf away from the door.

This need for the government policies, both provincial and federal, to meet local needs rather than provide blanket programs designed with no understanding of actual communities was brought up over and over again as a major barrier to economic development.

By far the most contentious, complicated and frustrating issue Change Islanders and Fogo Islanders identified when talking about government policies is fisheries. Everything from the system of quotas, regulations around gear, fishing season opening, closing and length, to processing, selling and enforcement was identified as a continuous source of conflict with the governments, both provincial and federal. A Change Islander expressed how he feels about it as follows: "The fishing. They've got a lot of rules and regulations.. right to death. There is a lot of stuff that you has to have which is why it's so uncertain - because of all the rules and regulations. Only for one little thing to change and then..." He proceeded to give an example:

I had trouble with me boat this summer. Let me tell you about the regulation. I had trouble with my longliner this summer. I had to give up fishing. I was on-shore for 11 days. Now, in the meanwhile I have seven days left to the quota. I was short 11 days and I had only seven left to catch 20,000 pounds of crab. I got on the phone. I got on the phone. I had to wait four days to get a yes or no answer from them "Could I get somebody else to go catch my crab for me?" I had to wait four days just for the answer. I would want government fellars here that evening when I got my answer. I had to wait four days to get a straight answer... Four days for an answer. I caught my crab in six days. I left 7,500 pounds of crab in the water because of their regulation so I could not fish that 7,500 pounds of crab. Because I had trouble, I was penalized. "Oh Mr. [Name] this and oh Mr. [Name] that..." Just tell me if I can or can't catch my crab. If I can't I have to go to the

mainland... My boat is only small, but she employs four families and that's their bread and butter that goes on their table.

It would be quite easy to write an entire book on fisheries regulations and issues facing small-scale fishers. In fact, there is incredibly rich literature reaching far back and that spans the works such as anthropologist Bonnie McCay's paper in 1978 "System Ecology, People Ecology, and the Anthropology of Fishing Communities," to recent work by Smith, Woodrow and Vodden to large, multi-year projects such as those run by Dr. Barbara Neis or the ongoing global project on small scale fisheries directed by Dr. Ratana Chuenpagdee at Memorial University of Newfoundland and hundreds of past and ongoing smaller projects. For the purposes of this thesis two things are important to emphasize. The conflict between the islanders and those making and enforcing fisheries policy is at the point where the islanders feel persecuted by their own government. While this is, to some extent, a sentiment encountered throughout Newfoundland coastal communities, in small island settings, which are already more sensitive to a variety of political, economic and environmental changes, the fishers feel particularly strongly about the lack of respect the government extended to their communities. They feel that nobody is listening to them and that the system is designed to "get them" instead of ensuring a sustainable industry. They also said that the regulatory system is full of loopholes and several fishers I talked to pointed out that if cod stock conservation is the policy goal then the federal and provincial governments have certainly chosen a strange way to go about it. Here is how one of the fisherman explained the situation from his point of view:

Normally, the food fishery is good. They open it up for a long period of time. I think the better system would be to allow everyone to go out and catch one or two or three fish as per needed for food. And that's it. And if you want to make a recreation out of it you go and do that. But to open it up? You catch 10 fish every day five weeks and then again in the fall for a week or two. And no control. So far as I understand, every person in the world can come to Newfoundland and catch the fish. That is not preserving the stock. There is no

rationale to what's going on and it's their policy. They opened it up. For us as fishermen, there is no way to get an increase in our quota because of that happening, but I can see the political side of it. You are attracting a lot of tourists. Can you imagine the dollars that are turned into provincial and federal coffers with taxes on gas and so on. [...] It is good in one way, but if you are in for abusing the system, but not only abusing the system... if you are like myself, I got a licence and I can catch 3,000 lb. Last year, I got that in one day. I got 3,000 lb on my commercial licence. My wife is handicapped so I can catch her fish and if I take somebody like you I can go out and every day catch 15 fish. Multiply that by the number of days that I can fish and I got another quota. And that is not breaking the law. But If I go early in the morning and in the evening late... so if you double that, so I have three quotas. And if I really want to abuse it, I'll go three times. That's not conservation playing in...

The fishers on both islands were aware of the various federal and provincial regulations they need to abide by, but when asked, none of them have heard of the provincial Oceans and Coastal Management Strategy and Policy Framework, a document that is supposed to be the key to the provincial relationship with the coastal and island communities and the ocean resources, but instead, it feels like a rather thin and aimless set of generalizations. Crucially, it provides no mechanism for conflict resolution even though it acknowledges that the pressures on the ocean and the coastal areas of the province are complex and always involving multiple stakeholders with conflicting interests. In their defence, provincial governments in Canada have very limited influence over fisheries policy. Federal government in Ottawa and federal minister in particular have almost incontestable power to create and enforce fisheries policy on all of Canada's oceans.

The second important thing about fisheries is that more than inadequate, confusing and limiting regulations, fishers and virtually all islanders I interviewed in Newfoundland point out that the governments, provincial and federal, have a very narrow and myopic view of the fisheries. The islanders say that the regulators, development agencies and those tasked with enforcing the laws see fisheries strictly as a business venture, an economic activity that generates incomes and profits. That is not how the islanders see it. Fisheries, especially cod,

are seen as a cultural and social foundation of the community. A fisher on Change Islands summed it up as follows: “[T]hey [the government] don’t understand that as a fisherman, you can’t run fishing as a business. Fishing is as long as there are fishermen. You can’t just turn it off and turn it on.” Aside from islandness as a defining feature on both Change Islands and Fogo Island, the residents and newcomers almost universally defined the communities as fishing communities or fishing villages. They would point out over and over again, that fisheries are the reason why these communities exist in the first place. Newcomers and seasonal residents recognize that as well as the islanders:

They want to make a living from the fisheries. That’s what they want. And in some ways, if the government put more effort in structuring the fishery to provide livelihood to these places rather than just going to big fishing companies and offshore trawlers, maybe there is a place for at least some fishery in the future, but the government always seems to be looking at big heavy capitalized enterprises rather than to people making a living here. Nowadays, to make a living with fisheries they got to go offshore to fish crab. A lot of these guys have million dollar boats - big capitalization for just enough to be clearing 60, maybe \$70,000 a year with a million dollar investment or more. I have a job with the government where I make that kind of money and I didn’t have to have that capital outlay. Nothing was laid out on the line like they have to do. It’s difficult.

Fisheries policy that does not take into account economic as well as cultural and social aspects of fishing activity is not only doomed to failure, but it will, inevitably, create a hostility towards regulators and policy makers among the local population that does not see the government as a tool to make their lives better, but rather an adversary with overwhelming power who needs to be fought against, outsmarted or kept as far from the islanders’ daily lives as possible.

One consequence of that unhealthy relationship on Change Islands and Fogo Island between the islanders and governments is a sense of being separate from a larger provincial and national and political body that is the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada.

Ask islanders what is their community, and it will be limited to the town they live in or, at best, to the island itself. So persons from former town of Fogo will see Fogo as their community, while acknowledging some sense of belonging to the island, while the main island of Newfoundland is often seen as the “mainland,” a place for shopping, kids’ hockey and largely a place that mostly trouble comes from. In many conversations, Canada was often treated as another country altogether with which the island had little in common. Whether these attitudes are worrisome or not is debatable, but there seems to be a clear correlation between policy makers in political and economic power centres making public policies and decisions that are at best irrelevant and at worst hostile to small island communities and the islanders who feel abandoned, persecuted and convinced that their provincial and national governments simply want them to go away, as one of the islanders bluntly put it.

Considering radically different geographic environments and policy supports, there are two things that are striking about the comparison between Croatian islands and the islands in the Notre Dame Bay. The issues facing both set of islanders are virtually identical. In fact, more than once, I had to go back to original transcripts to remind myself whether something was said on Change Islands or on Vis, Fogo Island or Biševo. Issues such as ferry schedules, ever present discussions about the young people leaving the islands, an awareness of difficult demographic situation the islands find themselves in, and the endless discussions about the fisheries were all common threads.

The second striking thing about the comparison occurred every time islanders in Croatia talked about government policies. There was plenty of disappointment including the disbelief at some truly remarkable policy blunders such as an attempt to apply new labour law across all sectors effectively penalizing fishers working more than eight hours a day, but what

wasn't there was the hostility towards central governments. The criticism was there, but it was always tempered with the recognition that the central government in Zagreb is trying to be a partner to the islands and the islanders themselves felt they had some power to direct and change policies affecting their daily lives. That sentiment was expressed in various ways. For example, one of the islanders involved with the olive oil and wine co-op said: "The state has good programs, but nobody is keeping track of the implementation and proper regulatory controls so there is a lot of abuse." Even those predisposed to dislike current national, municipal or county governments for political reasons are grudgingly willing to admit that there are policies that are done right: "Today the state invests in some projects. You can't say they don't do anything." What the islanders in Croatia certainly don't feel is that the national or county government is out to get them. They, with all of their problems from rapidly aging and diminishing populations to complicated regulatory environments and often corrupt officials, to what they perceive as unfair fisheries policies, still feel valued and exceptional because they are islanders. That sense of islands' value is imbedded deep in the national psyche and, more importantly, in the policy and regulatory environment - all the way to the Croatian Constitution.

Article 52 of the Croatian Constitution declares islands of special interest to the state for economic, social and cultural reasons. What is fascinating is that the islands are by no means the only special area mentioned in the Article 52:

The sea, seashore, islands, waters, air space, mineral resources, and other natural assets, as well as land, forests, flora and fauna, other components of the natural environment, real estate and items of particular cultural, historical, economic or ecological significance which are specified by law to be of interest to the Republic of Croatia shall enjoy its special protection.

However, a couple of researchers, with Dr. Nenad Starc in the lead, recognized that the

islands have very specific competitive advantages that could be exploited for island development under certain conditions:

The islands experience so far shows that economic structure and their distribution that develop spontaneously inevitably cause conflicts among different activities within island space... Therefore, the spontaneous development must be directed through other, additional measures. Those measure must ensure sustainable island development [...] That means that through fiscal measures, regulations and advice, we need to channel the investment into those activities using, but also preserving and improving the environment... Clean natural and preserved built environment is islands' comparative advantage and it has to stay that way. Sustainable island development is possible only through development of island economic structures and more balanced placement of economic actors and populations on smaller islands as well as in the interior of the larger ones.²³⁷

From there on, after decades of policy and development neglect, the islands became a focal point of a bold and innovative policy development. Probably the most significant aspect of that process was the collaboration between academic researchers and policy makers.

A policy maker in Zagreb, the capital, explains that much of the preliminary work was done by Dr. Starc at the Institute for Economic Research in Zagreb and Goran Crnošija who at the time worked for the National Hydrographic Institute, a government agency. “On the basis of that scientific evidence, a strategic document was developed and, eventually the Islands Act which gave some additional rights to the islanders permanently residing on islands,” she said. “Everything is based on the principles of sustainable development with the intent to make life on the islands better and, eventually, to make it compatible with that on the mainland. Today, we are closer to that goal than in some other regions.”

The strategic document that came out of the academic research in 1997 was The National Island Development Programme. The document, created by the Ministry of Development

²³⁷Nenad Starc, *Otoci, regije i razvojna politika*, [Islands, Regions and Development Policy], 123-124

and Reconstruction²³⁸, is a little over 70 pages long and it maps out everything from governance models for the islands to transportation needs, to potential development directions in a variety of sectors. The plan also includes detailed analysis of infrastructure needs and barriers to development as well as a set of goals and principles that should guide any potential development on islands.

Eventually, the national government at the time built a legislative act around that strategic document and in 1999, the Croatian Parliament passed the Islands Act - a comprehensive legislative support for the implementation of the development plan. Paragraph one of the first article in the act reads:

Article 1

*(1) Islands are viewed as Croatia's national wealth together with all of their fixed assets having special national, historic, economic and ecological importance and as such are of interest to the Republic of Croatia and enjoy its special protection.*²³⁹

That special protection extends to every facet of island life. Article 25 of the Act specifies what supports the state is expected to provide and mandates evaluation and reporting back to the islands on the expenditures and the progress of the program implementation. The programs listed include: modernization of roads, waste water and solid waste management, power supply, delivery of health, postal, and education services, support for academic research, cultural development program, protection of nature and environment; social welfare, and land registry program. The law also provides support for employers with permanent residence on the islands who employ islanders and situate their business on the islands as well as free ferry transportation for seniors, students and medical personnel. The

²³⁸ That particular department does not exist any more. It was created in response to massive amount of damage that was caused to infrastructure and economy during the conflict, and the War of Independence in the early 1990s.

²³⁹ Government of Croatia, Islands Act, 1.

law also regulates ferry rates and mandates provision of terrestrial public transportation on the islands.

The policy makers I spoke with were very knowledgeable about the programs and they identified depopulation as the main driver behind such comprehensive legislative support for Croatian islands. One of them explained:

The basic premise is that the state has to take care of the islands because of the depopulation trends. People are moving away from the smaller towns and into the larger cities on the coast or in the capital. That's why we have the plan for the islands development whose tenets were then translated into the Islands Act with several groups of measures which are implemented in order to encourage people to stay, to stimulate economic activity and all of it based on the principles of sustainable development.

Another policy maker talked about the whole process of drafting the plan and the law as a collaboration with the islanders emphasizing that provisions such as water subsidies and solutions around transportation were directly the result of the islanders' input. That input is built right into the development and project proposal and approval process. The state has an advisory body called Islands Council comprised of the ministers of all relevant departments, MPs with islands as part of their constituency as well as island and county representatives. The Island Act tasks the council with a monitoring and advisory role concerning the state programs, but it does not give them power to direct individual projects. It does provide advice to the Islands and Coastal Administration with the Department of Regional Development and EU Funds a small national body tasked with implementation of the state programs for the islands. "We practice bottom-up development. At the end of the year, we send out a call for proposals. The department establishes the budget, but it's the islanders who have to propose the projects they would like to see funded," explained a policy maker with the Islands Administration.

The Administration is remarkably transparent, especially for Croatian political environment where politicians and government bureaucrats are more often known for the corruption scandals than well run departments. Complete and detailed schedules of projects and expenditures are available annually on the Administration's website with the list of all funded projects and expenditures broken down by the department. There is no equivalent of a similar administrative or reporting structure for any other region in the country.

The islanders on Vis and Biševo islands I spoke with generally saw the government as a partner to their development aspirations. That was the major difference between the attitudes and perceptions towards government and policy makers in Croatia and in Newfoundland. It is crucial, however, to stress that while the programs and the legislative support for the islands are reasonably well done, there is a huge gap between the implementation and the letter of the law. The islanders spoke of pervasive corruption, slow bureaucracy, and the lack of understanding between the Capital and the islands as well as the party politics on the islands and on the national level which make good projects difficult to get off the ground, not unlike the situation on Fogo Island and Change Islands. One of them said:

Problem is that not enough young people are in politics. Being a politician has become a bad word and politics are connected to a lot of dark things so a lot of young people don't want to be in politics or join a political party so those who come on top are those who have no qualifications. Then we complain on the sidelines, but it's actually our own fault. We are complaining and somebody else is deciding on what politics is. That's just stupid. And all those who join parties and become involved in politics do so for their own small private goal and they will do anything to reach it and that's their main motivator for being a politician.

In terms of services the state provides to the island, maritime transportation received the most mixed reviews ranging from excellent, especially in the summer when an additional passengers-only service is available to inadequate. Some islanders would like to see a year-round passenger service; others were asking for a more frequent service and yet others would

like the ferry service to be free for those permanently residing on the islands. At the end of the day, personal preferences and perceptions were just as important as the actual frequency and capacity of the ferry system.

Health care on the island was judged to be adequate, with good air emergency links to the major hospitals on the mainland. Older islanders tended to have more faith in the mainland hospital than the island services, but that seemed to be a generational gap stemming from decades of inadequate health care provision on the island. An islander told the story that illustrates that point:

We have a helipad and a helicopter and maybe that sounds strange, but we can be in a Split hospital faster than if you had an emergency in one of the city's suburbs. We can be there in half an hour and be saved. However, helicopters are grounded during high winds. I have a personal experience as I gave birth to my little one here on Vis during high winds. It was my father who was the only one in tears. "Why?" I said: "What! My grandmother gave birth to 10 kids on the island. Why wouldn't I?" And he said to me something that is the essence of living on an island: "Daughter of mine," he said, "you're not counting those who died because there was nobody here to help." And that's it. That is that sense that you are far away from everything and that you are isolated.

Unlike Fogo Island and Change Islands, Vis islanders I spoke with were extremely satisfied with their primary and secondary education system. Biševo island does not have a school and the population is so small and so old that education was not brought up as an issue. The relationship with the Department of Education and with the school was described as helpful and encouraging. The school has great autonomy around the structure of the programs they offer. The school administrators and teachers have developed an innovative program through a formation of a school based co-operative society which is owned by the students and produces a variety of heritage and tourism related products that students develop and manage. This is how one islander involved with the student co-op describes the philosophy behind it:

[The co-op] gives you independence. It can be profitable, you can make money and you can develop programs within the school that are of interest to students and to the local community. We chose to focus on cultural identity because that is not represented anywhere and the island is made for that kind of thing. The children learned through the co-op how to salt fish and we have three books out: one is about churches and forts on the island, another is Island on a Plate - a collection of Vis recipes and the third is about the legends of the island of Vis. So, you are teaching the children their heritage, they are researching, they are talking to grandmas and grandpas and elders who are still alive, who know this stuff, who still remember it. Children record all of that. Every project lasts three years so that you can do it really well in terms of graphic and artistic work and the literary aspects of it.

The co-op gives you a possibility to do research, to play. We made liqueurs from Mediterranean plants, carob flour, we made candied orange and lemon peels from organic oranges and lemons here on the island. Now we are planting some Mediterranean succulents inside island rocks as souvenirs. They are hardy little devils. The children adore the co-op and that kind of hands-on way of working. We have a kitchen here in the school. They cook, bake, knead - every afternoon there is something going on. The co-op gives us an opportunity to make money and invest in the school. That's how we bought a printing press, kiln, and everything else we need. Children often use the money to go on study trips. The co-op allows you to create a part of the school life in a way that you feel will benefit the children and the community the most because it's really a shame not to know anything about your island, about your traditions and your culture in this time of globalization. We are going to lose those shades between people and we are all going to end up being uniform like hot dogs...

There are two particularly interesting aspects to the student co-op program. The ability to form a student co-op within the school system is not specific to the islands. Theoretically, any school in Croatia could do something similar and there is an annual gathering of student co-ops from the schools that do just that. However, there is a very small number of schools and many of them, according to the islanders I spoke to, come from other islands. The second interesting aspect of this school-based co-op was that the original impetus for the creation of the co-op came from the need to provide the teachers with the ability to work full-time throughout the school year. Because many of the teachers taught only specific subjects they would often not have a full-time position. On the mainland they may teach in more than one school or in schools where there is a sufficient number of students for multiple classes and sessions, but that was not the case on the island which, in turn, made teacher recruitment

and retention more difficult. With the co-op, the school is able to offer more full-time positions. A school on an island of Korčula, southeast of Vis, has a similar co-op program, but it started for a very different reason. The community felt that with the increased drug trafficking on the island brought about by vacationing peacekeepers during the conflicts in Former Yugoslavia, the student co-op was needed to provide an alternative to an unhealthy street scene.

Some islanders saw the co-op as an answer to what is perceived as the major barrier to economic development on the island - the lack of economic capacity and the lack of opportunities to create a meaningful life on the island. This is how one of the islanders described it:

I think the biggest problem is this economic helplessness. There exists this frustration. We need to raise the level of awareness of what is possible, what kind of a profitable enterprise you can have here so that you have a better quality of life. So that you can live well... The co-op is on track to do that. You need to educate them [the students] how they can make money. How they can make a better life for themselves so that they can achieve what they want. [Young people] must not be an island inside their heads. They have to be a part of a bigger whole, they need to be aware of that. You have to break those barriers down.

A municipal policy maker on Vis island also talked about the need to bring younger and well-educated people back. “My biggest wish is for the people who left for the mainland to study to come back because they would bring us that enthusiasm, that positive energy we need,” she said. “I am optimistic.”

There are some examples of young islanders doing just that and creating their own businesses and revitalizing longstanding economic activities such as olive oil production and winemaking. One of those young islanders commented that for anything to change, “the old guard” entrenched in local and national politics has to go. “It’s lovely here. There is a lot of potential, but somehow it never gets realized,” he said. “Tourism season lasts two months!

The local government - you can't rely on them. They don't support entrepreneurs and the question is if they even could if they wanted to. I returned because I think I can succeed here. I want to stay here."

An additional barrier to development is a limited use of the existing state programs. The problem is not only in the capacity of the islanders to access those programs, but also in the inadequate and poor communication on the part of the central government about what is available or possible. Most of the islanders were aware of travel subsidies and some have heard of the government programs for agricultural production. Those working in olive oil and wine producers co-op were aware of the programs in their own fields and the local officials were able to access some funding available through the government infrastructure programs, but most were unaware of all of the options that are, theoretically at least, available to islanders.

One program that is well known and well liked is the marketing program around Croatian Island Product label. That particular program administrated through the Island Administration provides marketing support to those products that meet specific production requirements, quality and origin criteria. A relatively small investment, the program was well marketed on the islands and many producers of traditional and non-traditional products took advantage of the available help. The program assists producers in marketing their products nationally and internationally and it also provides excellent retail space for island producers in the heart of the Croatian capital. The rest of the programs were either intentionally, through lack of resources, or through ineptitude poorly presented to the islanders. Like Fogo Islanders and Change Islanders, Vis and Biševo islanders feel forgotten. One islander expressed her frustration in these terms:

The islands could bring a lot to Croatia, but they [policy makers] are still not aware of that so that it can happen. And even though everybody is talking about the Island Act, I don't see some huge benefits on the island and we feel that they remember us only sometime in April when they start planning their vacations. And then they forget us until next year.

Some policy makers and NGO representatives working on the islands warn that the situation I encountered in 2011 and 2012 may not actually be representative of the government's commitment to the islands. One of them warned that "all of this is the result of the good times right after the independence and the end of the conflicts in the region. [The local people] extrapolated from that and the expectations are high. The real test will be in two or three years when Croatia really enters into an economic crisis. We are already losing some benefits and that is not good."

His warning proved prophetic. Croatia is now one of the worst hit countries within the European Union with the financial crisis and the consequences of decades of unbridled corruption and wild privatization of just about every aspect of the previously socialist economy compounding into a tangly and, increasingly, unmanageable situation.

Others warned that joining European Union may present significant threat to certain industries, especially fisheries: "The fisheries used to be the economic backbone of Vis Island and today fisheries and processing industry are all but dead. There were times when people from Trieste were coming to work in our fish plants here. Fisheries are still important, but we have to be careful with the EU which has a colonial approach to fisheries that is very dangerous."

Despite their concerns with government policies, the changes to fisheries, especially food fisheries, which is eliminated under the new EU regime and insecurity brought upon them with the financial crisis threatening to bankrupt the Croatian state, Vis and Biševo islanders,

unlike their Fogo Island and Change Islands counterparts, have a strong sense of belonging to a region much bigger than their island. They are pursuing EU funded projects of common interest with the neighbouring islands and creating Local Action Groups that meet EU regional funding requirements. Vis youth have formed a political group that ran in the recent municipal elections in both municipalities and won some seats at the table. A new non-profit youth group has spearheaded excellent tourism initiatives including the creation of a bilingual guide to the islands in Vis archipelago. Despite difficult demographic trends, poor economic outlook and barriers common to islanders the world over, there is a sense of optimism on Vis island that is lacking in Newfoundland. At least part of it, if the sentiments expressed in the interviews are true, comes from a firm sense that they, as islanders, matter and have a voice when it comes to a larger political arena. It's important to note that Biševo, with a population of two dozen or less, is very much a community in decline whose future is seen as a seasonal community and tied to agriculture and tourism. There are now more Biševo islanders living on Vis and tending exceptional *plavac mali* (a variety of original Zinfandel) vineyards than on Biševo itself.

These, almost completely opposite, policy frameworks concerning small islands have created somewhat different approaches to economic, regional, cultural and social development. Fogo Islanders and Change Islanders seem to excel in organizing themselves rapidly and in innovative ways when under serious political threat such as resettlement policy or environmental threat such as the recent emergency around an old shipwreck near Change Islands which, after some 40 years at the sea bottom, is starting to leak oil from its tanks threatening an environmental and economic catastrophe. In both of those cases the islanders

found ways to organize themselves with appropriate external partners and pressure relevant levels of government towards action they would like to see. On Vis and Biševo, while well organized in terms of numerous cultural, political and economic entities, the islanders have a much stronger relationship with the central and county governments and work in collaboration with various level of government to achieve their development goals. Both approaches are valid.

Speculating about the underlying causes for such different approaches to small islands policies is a thankless job. Geography certainly plays a role. The sheer size of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada creates a barrier to better communications between its peripheries and centres of power. However the truth is that Vis is further off Croatian mainland than Fogo Island is off the main island of Newfoundland and it takes about the same time to reach Joe Batt's Arm from St. John's as it does to reach Komiza from Croatian capital Zagreb. The relationship between Adriatic islands and Brussels may be more tenuous and more akin to that of Change Islands and Ottawa. Paradoxically, islanders are also among the first to take advantage of EU funding schemes and bypass inert and, more often than not, corrupt structures of county and state government. How exactly that relationship between small islands and EU is going to develop is one of the more interesting aspects of some future research. Besides geography, historical differences explain a significant portion of the tensions between Newfoundland islands and its central government and relative cooperation between Croatian islands and their corresponding state centres of power. Croatian islands have a long history of providing refuge in times of crisis. War, disease or whatever other calamity may strike the mainland, islands were seen as safe havens. Even during the latest conflict in the 1990s, the islands and its empty hotels became temporary home for thousands of Croatian internal displaced people and Bosnian refugees. In Newfoundland small island communities,

at the beginning of the European expansion in 16th century were often secret hiding places since permanent settlement was illegal in order to protect the interests of the British merchants. It is conceivable that such treatment of early European settlers and subsequent colonial governments have created a deep mistrust of government structures that continues to manifest itself in different forms to this day. Whatever the reasons for such diametrically different policy regimes, the islanders recognize that they have to work with the structures currently in place.

In both study areas, those I spoke with identified various levels of government as necessary partners in the development of small island communities. On Vis island a local politician explained that the municipality of Komiza realized almost \$1million worth of projects that year, but none of them would be possible without government support. Those projects included the municipality of Vis as well and have significantly improved childcare and elderly care on the island. There are also plans to revitalize the fishing port in Komiza that would double the current capacity and serve the fishers from the island as well as from the neighbouring islands. That project has recently received the approval from the central government. On Fogo Island, a multi-million dollar project initiated by a benefactor who grew up on the island also received several millions of dollars in government funding for a highly exclusive tourism project. Some Vis islanders echoed comments on Change Islands, that government programs cannot be band-aid solutions, but need to be comprehensive and suitable for the island environment. One islander on Vis said: “If the state does not jumpstart the islands then it will all come to nothing because at the end of the day it all comes down to money and investment. If the state does not succeed in developing the islands then they will just have the expense of buying social peace.”

Islanders on both sides of the Atlantic are adamant that development of their communities is a shared responsibility and they recognize that development has to be sustainable and diversified across various economic sectors with an emphasis on small business and alternative ways of economic organization such as co-ops and other forms of social enterprises. A policy maker in Newfoundland acknowledged that need for government support in the development process when he said: “I think it is the responsibility of local people to handle development, but the government has to provide as many resources as possible to assist them.” A Fogo islander explained that the islanders themselves have to carry the brunt of the development planning: “I think you have to be proactive in order to be able to access policy makers, to be able to access programs... [The Island] is responsible for being proactive and getting out there and saying we have to be part of this. We have to advance policy and when programs are developed we need to know what they are and how they apply to our community and how are we going to use them.”

In Croatia, many spoke about the need to accept that in some ways the islands are always going to be dependent on the mainland, but they also emphasized that the goal should be to reduce that dependancy as much as possible: “The islanders must be the ones proposing development projects because every island has its own specificities. The state must create a legal framework for that. The problem right now is that the islands depend on the state. That’s always going to be the case, but that should be minimized.”

Tourism is seen as an important economic opportunity on both sides of the Atlantic and the islanders understand that tourism offer needs to be comprehensive and a platform that would allow the islands to place their agricultural, fish, manufacturing and small craft products on global markets. Some policy makers, especially in Croatia where the economy of the entire

country is heavily dependent on the four months of the tourism season, warn that tourism for the islands can be a trap that creates a myopic view of what is possible on an island.

Looking at the both sides of the Atlantic, there are lessons that islanders and policy makers could learn from each other and possibly adapt to suit their own particular island environments. The last chapter in this thesis will discuss some of those lessons.



A pipefitter and a gaming executive make fish on Fair Island, Newfoundland

CONCLUSION

*"The sea is a universe and each of its points, each, even the smallest of its islands, can be its centre (...) The Mainland thinks it understands the Island because the Island is, thinks the Mainland, just a small part of it—a piece that has broken off. The Island is self-sufficient and it does not try to understand the Mainland. The Island does not feel it is a stray part of the Mainland. To itself, it is the whole land. The Mainland never understood that and, whenever it could, it would extend its laws to the Island even though the Island never abided by them. The Island has always been a polis regardless whose flags fluttered in its winds."*²⁴⁰

Joško Božanić

ON THE TOPMOST FLOOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MUSEUM at The Rooms in St. John's, there is a bronze statue a little more than a foot tall cast by Newfoundland artist Jim Maunder. It is called "Man Nailed to a Fish." It is a striking sculpture of a Christ-like figure with a cod fish

²⁴⁰ Joško Božanić, Vis island poet and writer, an excerpt from an unknown text on *Moj Otok Vis* Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/107248602661063/posts/302828906436364>. Accessed on November 22, 2012. Translated by Bojan Fürst.

nailed in his arms. In the Newfoundland context this is not only a striking sculpture, but also a powerful reminder and a commentary on the economic, political and cultural importance cod fish had and continues to have on this North Atlantic island. Cod is intrinsically linked to what it means to be a Newfoundlander and while that identity continues to be renegotiated, fishery and rural, outport Newfoundland continues to be “at the heart of what it means to be a Newfoundlander,” as one proud Change Islander told me.

This bold statement would certainly seem to be a sentiment the provincial Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation could wholeheartedly endorse if their sophisticated marketing campaign is anything to go by. In those colourful, expensively produced advertisements much is made of rural Newfoundland and outport life – a life on the edge, out of time and “as far from Disneyland as you can possibly get.”²⁴¹ If geographer Michael Bunce had a shortage of examples of what he calls “the leisuring of rural landscape,”²⁴² all he would have to do is visit Change Islands. “Driven by global capital and exploiting a new and growing leisure class,” writes Bunce, “attractive rural landscapes around the world are being sought out as leisure amenities... Among the places that are most obviously and problematically affected by this process are small islands.”²⁴³

While mass tourism developments were and continue to be a bane of many Croatian islands, Vis has, to a large extent, escaped such a fate due to its strategic position and military history. It is, however, starting to experience another phenomenon Bunce and Baldacchino point out as a relatively recent trend. Island properties are becoming very attractive to those with the

²⁴¹ Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism, *Place Names*, TV Ad, Accessed February 16, 2014: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gtrn8nLMn8&list=PLE1BB7A8A2F97332B&feature=plpp&app=desktop>

²⁴² Bunce, *Leisuring of Rural Landscape*, 969.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

means to afford a second home in an island locale. “Islands thus find themselves presented, even constructed *de novo*, as locales of desire, as platforms of paradise, as habitual sites of fascination, emotional offloading or religious pilgrimage.”²⁴⁴

Among the islands included in this study, this particular trend was the most keenly felt on Change Islands. With a small population of permanent residents, the influx of newcomers is changing the dynamic of island life in ways that some permanent residents I talked to felt was out of the control of those still making a living on the island. Bunce describes this dynamic of leisuring succinctly as the process of conversion from “productive to consumptive land [use]” manifesting itself in “disinvestment in the dominant agricultural sector, low returns in other agricultural sectors, declining agricultural employment and strong demand for development land.”²⁴⁵

The islanders themselves are complicit in this process of leisuring and aware of the pitfalls of it at the same time. A Vis islander said:

“To us this is a place to live in, to others it is a place for vacation and the two are not always compatible... There is not much reflection about the consequences of development. If the money comes here too fast, then the traditional life will be gone... We must create an equilibrium between tourism, fisheries and agriculture.”

That particular conundrum is the one Change Islands and Fogo Island also face together with thousands of small islands around the world. The phrase “sustainable development” can be found, like a prayer for salvation, in every development strategy and plan put together by a small island and it is so worn out at this point that it is almost meaningless. Yet the pressures are all too real. “[Scarce] land resources, waste management problems, limited fresh water,

²⁴⁴ Godfrey Baldacchino, “The Lure of the island: A spatial analysis of power relations,” *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures*, 2012. 1: 55.

²⁴⁵ Bunce, *Leisuring of Rural Landscape*, 970.

health and human settlement requirements, [...] coastal and marine environments and [threats to] biodiversity”²⁴⁶ are some of the issues small islands are trying to cope with - often on their own. It is hard not to see the irony in the fact that these small places, suffering from depopulation, are at the same time facing environmental pressures brought about by a combination of global capital flows, policy neglect, tourism and complacency. These pressures are only exacerbated on small islands that used to be predominantly productive rural places and today are struggling communities in an increasingly commodified space. Vis island at one point in the early 20th century supported a population three times its current size. Even taking into account that the energy needs and expected standard of living of that population were both much lower than today, the large population was deeply involved in the creation and production of island landscapes and was able not only to meet its own needs, but create a prosperous society. The evidence of it is all over the hills and fields of Vis and Biševo islands where abandoned vineyards and olive groves are reverting back into the inhospitable *maqui* bushland. A similar trend can be seen on Change Islands and Fogo Island as well. In fact, the photograph of a stage on Change Islands is not interesting because of what’s in it, but because of what is missing from it. Not that long ago such a structure would have been surrounded by fish flakes for drying and salting cod, while today it stands alone and forlorn with the family of the owner gone or struggling to incorporate some aspect of tourism into the way they earn their livelihoods.

On Fogo Island, the landscape interventions go far beyond anything on any of the other islands included in this research thanks to the artist studios and the exclusive inn recently constructed on the island. Shorefast Foundation, which is the driver behind Fogo Island developments, has worked with the community to develop and build the project, but that

²⁴⁶ Bunce, *Leisureing of Rural Landscape*, 970.

path was not easy nor is the project universally accepted as a ‘good thing’ for the island. The project was presented as a Change Islands - Fogo Island initiative, but, along the way, Change Islands were completely abandoned some residents of Fogo Island now feel disappointed, too as the projects seem to concentrate around former town of Joe Batt’s Arm and they wonder if there is any benefit to the island as a whole.

Change Islands are another example of landscape interventions on a smaller scale, where the seasonal residents and, eventually, the locals have repainted their stages and stores ocher red - a traditional colour, but by no means the only one used. The community is certainly picturesque and the visiting painters and photographers admire the effect, but it is almost impossible not to recall the question Bunce asked in the Caribbean context of

“whether communities which are being surrounded by leisure spaces have a future other than as places to live for those serving the labour needs of the luxury villas and golf resorts. Pushed even further to the spatial margins of their surroundings, these communities are living with the imposition of landscape changes over which they have little or no say and a new form of alienation from control of their environment.”²⁴⁷

At the same time, islanders are very much aware that tourism is a potential lifeline to their communities. In the words of a young Vis islander that echo on both sides of the Atlantic: “Without tourists, there is nothing here. We all live off them.” Baldacchino writes that this “yearning for an island space and island life that is part myth, part marketing hype, part reality... and not all continental or mainland driven [...] seems to be gathering momentum as of late”²⁴⁸ and only a few are pointing out that tourism is not the magic solution to island problems. Indeed, even fewer are those who are worried that this commodification of island spaces may yet prove the greatest threat they have faced. “You cannot sell everything. You

²⁴⁷ Bunce, *Leisure of Rural Landscape*, 977.

²⁴⁸ Baldacchino, “The Lure of the island,” 55.

cannot cut the branch you are sitting on,” is a warning of a policy maker with the United Nations Development Program in Croatia. In his paper about the lure of the islands, Baldacchino tells us that it almost seems as if the islands’ destiny is “to be transformed, Disneyfied,”²⁴⁹ and such a process is hard to resist and stop, but as a Vis islander pointed out: “Who wants to live in a museum?”

Baldacchino tells us that “islanders have their own spatial practices, the capacity to produce their own spatiality; arguably and naturally, one that they believe is suitable to them (rather than to outsiders).”²⁵⁰ However, there is no single path to such authentic island development. The interviews with islanders and policy makers, as well as available literature do suggest that certain paths are more likely to lead to authentic and more sustainable development. So if I would dare to make any generalizations in this conclusion these would be those generalizations:

Perceptions matter

One of the remarkable differences between interviews in Croatia and Newfoundland was the different tone the islanders I talked to used when speaking about the way they see their government and themselves. In Newfoundland, there was a sense of being persecuted by regulations that made no sense and government officials who are out to get decent folk minding their own business. The regulatory framework is seen as nothing but a barrier and the government itself, provincial and federal, is seen as devoid of ideas or any desire to truly help islanders.

The policy makers see islanders in unflattering terms as well: “But this is Joe Batt’s Arm. This

²⁴⁹ Baldacchino, “The Lure of the island,” 57.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

is Fogo Island. Fogo Island is internally the most divisive island I've ever been on and I haven't [sic] been on a whole lot of them. They really dislike each other," is how one policy maker described the amalgamation process on Fogo Island, completely disregarding the fact that this indeed may have been an emotional, difficult and complex decision for communities to make. Should it come as any surprise that a Fogo Islander referred in an interview to the provincial Department of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs as the Department of Amalgamation and Resettlement? That attitude is a difficult barrier to remove if the islanders and the governments are to find common solutions.

It is the lack of that kind of animosity that makes dialogue and cooperation possible in Croatia. Even when pointing out the onerous regulatory environment, failed fisheries policy, general level of corruption and apathy on the mainland, Vis and Biševo islanders almost universally temper their criticism acknowledging that: "The way it used to be - it's better now. Today the state assists with and invests in island projects. You can't say that nothing is being done." In return, officials with the county and national governments are willing to admit that "[t]here is a chasm between Zagreb [the capital] and the islands." At the same time they also speak about the importance of allowing the islanders to make decisions about their own development. That kind of attitude and perception is a basis for a working relationship.

Valuing island communities has benefits

'What if' scenarios are rarely useful, but I am asking you to indulge me here for a moment and ask yourself: "What if Newfoundland had a different history of public policy and a different relationship towards its small island communities? What if at some point in history, even relatively recent history, somebody looked at the map of Newfoundland and, instead of an island, saw an archipelago - a sea of islands?" Resettlement policy was first and foremost a

value judgment. A group of men in St. John's and Ottawa decided that small outport communities scattered over probably more than 100 islands around the main island of Newfoundland were of no value to the social, political, cultural and economic wellbeing of the province. Just as resettlement policies were a value judgment so is a Croatian decision to give islands a special recognition in its constitution a value judgment. The results of those value judgments are very different policy approaches in the two jurisdictions.

But one does not need to go as far as Croatia to see an example of how you can publicly acknowledge that certain types of places matter for reasons beyond their immediate economic impact. The Province of Quebec in its Rural Partnership Agreement recognizes “that rural communities are an essential component of the Québec nation’s vitality; [and] the Québec government and its partners agree on the importance of staunch support for the development of rural communities.”²⁵¹ These are simple statements to make, but they would provide assurance that islands and islanders truly matter as well as a solid foundation to craft policies and development plans for the remaining island communities in Newfoundland.

Context sensitive policy matters

That policies should be crafted in order to meet the needs and challenges of those whose lives are going to be affected by those policies seems self-explanatory, but it certainly needs to be repeated if the islanders in both study areas are anything to go by. A policy maker in Newfoundland said in an interview that: “[t]he government can’t quite collaborate in the way people outside feel the government should,” as an explanation of the animosity some islanders on Change Islands and Fogo Island feel towards their provincial government. The point of a successful public policy is surely to allow government to engage with the people

²⁵¹ Government of Québec, *National Policy on Rurality: A Source of Strength for Québec*, 2006: ii

they were elected to represent and govern. Public policy is about choices. A policy maker can choose to create barriers to development or create an environment where a flexible policy can provide necessary scaffolding on which islanders can build a version of development that suits their needs. There are several models that point to possible solutions. The European notion of subsidiarity that requires the decisions to be made as close as possible to the regions that are going to be affected by those decisions is one such model.

There is a note of caution I would like to sound when it comes to drawing parallels between rural, especially remote rural, communities and small island communities. There is a tendency to see small island as no different than rural and remote areas. There are clearly many policy solutions and approaches that may very well be transferable between the two, but outright erasing the differences between small islands and other rural communities brings us straight back to those “continental, as well as colonial, constructions”²⁵² Hay warns us about. We need to allow islanders to define their own insularity. It is that basic principle of island studies that we should “concern [ourselves] with the reality of islands and how it is for islands and islanders in the times that are here and that are emerging,”²⁵³ that policy makers would do well to adopt. That principle is equally valid for rural, remote, mountain and urban regions as it is for small islands. A place and context sensitive policy begins with listening and valuing the worldviews of those living in particular places and within particular contexts.

²⁵² Hay, *A Phenomenology of Islands*, 30.

²⁵³ Hay, *A Phenomenology of Islands*, 30.

Development is a shared responsibility

There is one thing that everybody I talked to in the context of this study can agree on and that is the fact that development should be a shared responsibility between islanders and the various levels of government that have direct effect on island life. Islanders know that it is their responsibility to build their own future, they are quite unanimous about that, in Newfoundland and in Croatia. "Nobody will come here and do it for you. If you want something done, then you will find a way to do it," is a direct quote from a Vis islander and you can imagine that person nodding as a Fogo islander says: "We cannot wait for a merchant, or the government in St. John's, or anybody else to tell us who we are, to bring the answer. We have to make our own relationship with the world, somehow, the markets and the people in the world. And we have to do it all the while holding on." The appropriate role for a government to play is in creating a policy which actively supports and encourages island initiatives and makes the islanders feel valued and respected for who they are and what they bring to the table. It's not about saving communities, but about allowing them to be the best they can be under the circumstances.

Island development networks

Several islanders interviewed for this study indicated that the islands have to learn to work together. "There should be a Canadian voice for small islands," said a Fogo islander. "Because we are a small island. I think there needs to be a learning aspect. We need to connect."

Another called for an island caucus within Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador as a start. In Croatia, several islanders mentioned that historically Dalmatian islands had been well connected to each other, but those connections are today almost non-existent. However,

since July 2013 and Croatian full membership in European Union, the islands of what is locally known as Middle Dalmatia have formed a Local Action Group that includes Vis as well as Hvar. These partnerships are a necessary part of the process for the islands to access European Union funding for infrastructure and development projects. Similarly, federal and provincial governments in Canada supported Shorefast Foundation project which was originally pitched as a Change Islands Fogo Island initiative

During the 2012 Canadian Rural Revitalization conference in Olds, Alberta, Dr. Rob Greenwood of the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development at Memorial University of Newfoundland called for just such a distributed, guerrilla-like approach to rural development. He envisioned small pockets of innovative, resilient communities networked together for support and exchange of ideas. Island studies researchers are also moving into that archipelagic space increasingly interested in “connection and entanglement *between* and *among* islands.”²⁵⁴

Communities in decline

It is important to acknowledge that not all island communities will continue to exist as permanently inhabited places. The island of Biševo, for example, has only 11 permanent inhabitants according to the last census although the summer population is somewhat larger since there are families permanently living on Vis, but spending their summers working in the family vineyards on Biševo. Acknowledging that economic, social and demographic circumstances are such that a community may eventually be abandoned, is not of itself a bad thing. Unfortunately, planning for decline is not something that any level of government on either side of the Atlantic does. In Newfoundland especially, where the emotional toll of the

²⁵⁴ Stratford et al., *Envisioning Archipelago*, 114.

resettlement programs of the 1950s and 60s is still felt, the existing relocation program is a blunt policy instrument still not taking into account that among islanders resettlement is seen as a collective failure. A mix of supports and reasonable services that would allow a community to close on its own terms would require the level of government engagement that, if at least one policy maker is to be believed, government is not capable of. The Croatian government is more humane in its approach with basic supports in terms of transportation and health programs, but the policies are implemented sporadically and seem to work better on the islands than, for example, in highland communities in the central mountain range facing similar issues but not enjoying a special protection of the constitution or the Croatian national mythology.

This study was largely driven by my interest in islands and island lives and a desire to understand what kind of policies provide useful support to small island communities and make difference in islanders' lives. As the interviews and conversations I had with islanders and policy makers indicate, I think it is fair to say that the experiences of Fogo Island and Change Islands and Vis and Biševo have shown that the policies matter, but what also matters is the way those policies are developed and implemented. Lack of communication and mutual understanding remains a major barrier for creation of a better and more appropriate island and rural policy. Living on the periphery of political and economic power of their respective mainlands, islanders seem to have grasped that inherently better than the policy makers. A Change Islander described the situation in these words:

“In Ottawa they don't know what it's like in rural communities, but that is understandable, too. If you comes from a large centre and I come from a small, it's two

different lifestyles, eh. We need to get one to understand the other what it's really like, right."

I am convinced that academic researchers have a strong role to play in breaking those barriers down. As researchers we have to accept that we are also just tourists, but tourists with unprecedented access to islands, islanders, island researchers and policy makers. I certainly feel enormously privileged to be able to conduct my research on two different continents and present that research in Newfoundland, Malta, Shetland Islands and any number of points in between. The least we as researchers can do is follow the advice of Baldacchino, Hay, Stratford and McCall who all, in various public appearances and academic papers, called for those pursuing research based on study of islands on their own terms to band together into a network not just of researchers but islanders as well. And while every island may indeed be different from any other island, it is also true that learning from each other may yet prove the most beneficial strategy for those trying to continue to live in vibrant and thriving island communities. There are already initiatives in place that aim at breaking down such barriers. North Atlantic Forum is explicitly bringing together policy makers, islanders and island scholars who call North Atlantic Rim home once every two years for a conference with a theme important to island development. Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation is attempting to do the same for rural Canada on an annual basis.

It is important to note that even where robust policy frameworks for island development exist, that by any means does not guarantee that the islands will continue to receive adequate policy support. In Croatia, there are indications that the government will allow supranational entities such as the EU to dictate the rules on everything from agriculture to fisheries to real estate markets that will have a direct impact on residents of island communities that the same government has constitutional obligation to protect. There are

ways to create exemptions and deviations from the standard EU policies outlined in the accession treaty, but there seems to be no willingness on the part of the national government to enter into such arguments and negotiations. In fact, the Islands Administration's scope and name has recently been changed into Administration for Islands and Coastal Development and it yet remains to be seen whether its focus will shift to large urban centres on the coast or remain on island communities.

We should not lose sight of the fact that policies towards small islands are part of dynamic and often volatile political environments influenced by events and interests usually outside of the islanders' control and often outside the control of the mainland governments as well. What is also clear is that public policy is not a pre-requisite for island development or for island-based social, cultural, governance and economic experiments. Fogo Island and Change Islands' experience certainly tells us that much. However, public policy that values islands and creates conditions where economic and social experiments are more likely to occur in a systematic manner is more likely to benefit not just islands, but also their mainlands.

A Fogo Islander, clearly dismayed at the current treatment of islands in Newfoundland wondered out loud about what is going to happen to Newfoundland if it were to abandon its remaining inhabited islands and rural and coastal areas: "Are we going to wake up one day and see what has been lost?" she asked.

Is Fogo Island to remain "nailed to a fish," desperately trying to cling to the fisheries that remain a backbone of their community while every national and provincial policy in place favours large fishing vessels and fleets over small locally controlled fisheries? Can Vis forge its own development path that will not depend solely on the mass tourism plaguing many other Croatian islands? Within the new European Union context, can Vis and Biševo islanders

preserve their fishery industry and grow their olive oil, wine and other agricultural industries? If the policy makers continue to disregard island interests, would it be acceptable for island communities to disregard continental rules? Is civil disobedience action such as establishing a fish market on Change Islands or disrupting Italian fishers allowed by EU rules to overfish Croatian waters an unreasonable approach?

Small islands such as Vis and Fogo Island have demonstrated over and over again that they are resilient and resourceful communities. To succeed, they need support and respect for considerable talent, social and economic innovation, place-based cultural and environmental knowledge and the strategic benefit they bestow on their mainlands. Those are reasonable foundations for the creation of policy frameworks that would allow at least some of the island communities to flourish in the 21st century.

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APPENDIX

Interview process and questions

The interview questions and protocol for this research evolved through consultations with my primary supervisor, Dr. Kelly Vodden, and Memorial University of Newfoundland's Ethics Review Committee.

While I knew from the beginning that I wanted my conversations with islanders and policy makers to be open ended and highly interactive rather than interrogations where I asked questions and they answered them, I also understood that having a set of questions to guide those conversations was of great importance. Originally, I proposed two sets of questions. The first set was aimed at island residents (permanent and seasonal) while the second set was aimed at policy makers. Upon reflection, it became clear that such perfect division of roles was not indicative of islanders complex lives. Some of the islanders I interviewed were policy makers in their municipalities, but also had other roles in the community whether as fishermen, small business owners, health care professionals, educators or artists. The list of questions below became a guide for me to help me keep the conversation on track, but not all of the questions were asked of all of the participants.

While most questions could be asked in a variety of ways, it was important to me to ask the first couple of questions in more or less exact wording. The reason for that is that I wanted to see if the residents (seasonal and permanent) will identify their community as an island community without prompting.

Potential interview questions

(These may vary depending on how the open-ended interview proceeds and the role(s))

individual participants play in the community or within a government, organization, union, co-op, etc.)

1. What do you consider to be your community?
2. How would you describe your community?
3. What are the benefits of living in an island community (your community, if the respondent does not identify islandness as a defining characteristic)?
4. What are the disadvantages of living in an island community (your community, if the respondent does not identify islandness as a defining characteristic)?
5. Do you think you will continue to live in your community? Why or why not?
6. Do you think your children will spend their lives in this community? Why or why not?
7. What kinds of things that government does (e.g. services, policies, regulations) most affect your life as a resident of this community? (Follow up questions may be asked to ensure clarity/seek further explanation depending on the answer. Anticipated answers may include fisheries regulation, transportation, cost of living, availability of services, water management and waste management issues, business development, education and health services etc.)
8. What kinds of government policies and regulations have most affected your community in the past?
9. How have these government policies and regulations affected the community?

10. In your opinion, which government policies and regulations are most useful in helping to ensure the future of your community?
11. Which government policies and regulations should be changed?
12. Aside from the decisions and actions of government, in your opinion, what other factors (things) most affect the future of your community?
13. What are the most important steps, in your opinion, that can be taken to ensure long-term future of [community name] as a community?
14. Who should be responsible for ensuring these steps are taken?
15. Could you describe for me a process your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.) goes through in order to formulate a new policy or initiate a new program?
16. When creating policies and programs within your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.), do you take into consideration how are those policies and programs going to affect small island communities? If yes, how do you do that? If not, why not?
17. What kind of specific rural policies and programs exist within your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.)?
18. To the best of your knowledge, are there any policies or programs within your jurisdiction or department (organization, union, co-op, etc.) that are designed to specifically address concerns of small island communities? What would those policies be?
19. If islands specific policies have been developed, please explain why. If they have not,

please explain why not.

20. In your opinion, how do the decisions in your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.) impact small island communities?
21. In your opinion, what do small island communities bring to the table for the rest of Newfoundland (or Croatia)? How is that reflected in the policies of your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.)?
22. What would be the most appropriate channel for representatives of a small island community to use in order to have their concerns taken into consideration during the policy or program development process within your department (organization, union, co-op, etc.)?