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“Make it tangible!”

Exploring University Students' Perception of Environmental Sustainability in Friluftsliv Studies



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This thesis is worth 60 study points

Abstract

Exploring University Students' Perception of Environmental Sustainability in *Friluftsliv* Studies

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The purpose of this master thesis was to explore the perceptions of environmental sustainability among students in *friluftsliv* studies. The reason for researching this topic is the growing importance of sustainability in education and the perceived growing expectation from students to learn more about sustainability. The research addresses sustainability within the framework of the UN sustainability goals. It looks at both education for sustainable development and sustainability didactics, drawing on the latter for the purpose of the research.

The research was conducted based on qualitative methods using focus groups. The participants were students selected from the second and third year of a bachelor programme in *friluftsliv* studies at a Norwegian university. There were in total four focus groups. The data was transcribed, coded and analysed using thematic analysis. The main findings are four themes (1) carbon emissions: transport, clothing and equipment, (2) skills and knowledge: a pre-requisite, (3) finances as a driver for actions and (4) sources of influence and role models. In addition, and a little beside the research question, the focus groups provided interesting data and insight on how the students would like to operationalise sustainability differently in *friluftsliv* studies.

If I were to sum up the findings from this thesis in one sentence it would be “Make it tangible!”.

The research results indicate that students have a high awareness of sustainability, **yet are hungry for more insight, knowledge, and skills. They would not mind seeing sustainability as something that permeates the entire study, on the condition that it is practical and accessible. More bluntly, the participants want someone to tell them what to do, and what not to do, in order to be environmentally sustainable.**

Keywords: *friluftsliv*, *friluftsliv* studies, sustainability, environmental sustainability, higher education, sustainability education, sustainability didactics.

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Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to all the informants for setting aside time in hectic everyday student life to participate in this study!

I wish to thank my brilliant supervisor, Simon Beames. Thank you for your dedication, enthusiasm, and critique. You inspire me!

Current and former NIH Friluftslivsfag colleagues. Thank you for your open office doors and generosity. Thank you for meaningful days and nights outside teaching.

Marianne and Pernille. Thank you for always saying yes! Fuelling the joy of playing, exploring, and just enjoying being in nature - *friluftsliv(ing)*.

Thank you, Mum and Dad. Always interested and supportive. My deep connection to nature comes from spending time alone or together outside since childhood. Thank you for all that I have learned and still learn from you.

Thank you, my dearest Elin - for all your patience and support. For contributing with discussions, suggestions, proofreading, and tackling the third shift. Without you, I would not have started this journey and would certainly not have been able to finish. It's you and me on the rock.

Oslo 22.mai 2023

/ Ella

Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson

1 Thesis outline

1.1 Structure

The thesis starts with an introduction chapter. Here I describe the rationale and motivation behind the study, including what has changed along the way. The introduction covers both how the idea of the project came about, how it has evolved and how I have attempted to limit the scope. It defines the key concepts touched upon in the research, including some of the challenges in doing just that.

Following the introduction chapter is a chapter on methodology and research methods. This chapter is important to move from an idea of what I want to achieve, to defining how I am going to achieve it in a scientifically reliable way. It starts by discussing methodology and the scientific positioning for the project. I go on to discuss the chosen research method, which is qualitative primary research through focus groups. The choice of method is done to suit the problem statement and scope definition. The method for analysing the focus group results is thematic review, where I rely mostly on reflective thematic analysis. I evaluate benefits and drawbacks of the chosen research method, as well as ethical considerations. I have throughout tried to be as open and transparent as possible, by for example calling out flaws and pitfalls where I have found them, and openly discussing crossroads.

The first chapter to review the data is called Findings. In this chapter, I defer from drawing heavily on literature, but rather focus on the flow and correct representation of the findings. The findings chapter tries to unpack the layers of insight from the discussions, while at the same time providing enough structure to make sense for the reader. The material is brought to life and illustrated using multiple quotes from the participants. All quotes have been translated to English. Following the Findings chapter is the Discussion chapter. This chapter takes three of the four themes identified in Findings and tries to unpack and interpret the insights drawing on theory and literature.

The culmination of the thesis is a chapter on Conclusions and Implications. This chapter summarises the main findings and looks at the implications for practice and potential further topics for research.

1.2 Clarifications on translations and language

In this section, I wish to give a short rationale as to why this thesis is written in English, even though it has been developed and written as part of a Norwegian master's programme. I will also clarify some of the implications this has for translations in this thesis.

An increasing number of master theses in Norway are written in English (Svarstad, 2022). According to the Language Council of Norway (Kristiansen, 2020), the English language is used more and more in Norwegian academia. This is not seen as unproblematic and is frequently debated in academia and media the recent years. The rationale for writing this thesis in English is to gain a wider outreach and to be able to share it with an international network of peers.

An implication of the decision to write in English is that it is more demanding to work with terms that have no direct translation. An example of this is the two terms *friluftsliv* and “friluftslivsfag” where I have chosen two different approaches to translation:

The term *friluftsliv* will not be translated but marked in cursive, in the same manner numerous scholars have done before me (Gurholt, 2008a; Gurholt, 2014; Hofmann et al., 2018; Høyem, 2020). *Friluftsliv* is in the context of this study viewed as a specific concept, woven into Norwegian national identity, and as a situated socio-cultural phenomenon. There is therefore no suitable English translation.

The term “friluftslivsfag” will be translated to *friluftsliv* studies. I have chosen not to use outdoor studies or outdoor education since those terms encompass a wide Anglo-American field of practice, traditions, and development that differ (and share some similarities) from the specific Nordic and Norwegian contexts. Many Norwegian universities use outdoor studies or outdoor education as a translation to their *friluftsliv* studies when offering their courses to exchange students, perhaps as a compromise to attract a larger international base of applicants that are initially unfamiliar with the concept of *friluftsliv*.

I found few peer-reviewed definitions of “friluftslivsfag” (from now on known as *friluftsliv* studies) and I will not delve into the origins of *friluftsliv* in education here. However, Høyem (2012, p. 42) outlines a description that in addition to highlighting my two approaches to translation, informs the context that this project is developed within:

“Friluftsliv studies is in my opinion about pedagogical work within *friluftsliv*. This includes being responsible for a group of people in nature and facilitating their experiences, education, and learning. There are multiple issues related to this, including societal, safety discourse, motivation, perception, and embodied experiences. Friluftsliv studies further examines *friluftsliv* as a historical and cultural phenomenon, and in relation to various demographic groups.”

Another implication of writing in English is that cited excerpts of data that are used must be translated and potentially pose issues regarding trustworthiness. This includes quotes from participants in focus groups, which were conducted in Norwegian. Read more on this in Chapter 3.2.9. Quality and trustworthiness of the research.

2 Introduction

At the beginning of this research project, I automatically started to work on a literature review. This was a default response, and a continuation of my work on the project outline, a shortened research proposal prepared earlier in the master programme. This seemed like the natural way to structure a thesis, using a traditional literature review to build evidence identifying a knowledge gap.

The approach was useful for me as a researcher to gain an overview of the state of research. However, as the project and my work evolved, I realized the need to make a more informed decision on research design. While going through the process of collecting data, grappling with analyses, etc., I still updated and tweaked that early literature review for a long period although it had stagnated thematically.

Braun & Clarke (2022) advocate for a different take on an introduction chapter, what they call constructing an “argument model” which in their view is more suitable for research projects that draw on reflexive thematic analysis. So instead of providing a traditional extensive review of existing literature and knowledge, this chapter aims to offer an informed rationale for my research and clarify context and theory of the project.

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Framing sustainability

We all have different understandings and applications of sustainability. However, we still talk about it in our daily lives as if there is a consensus on a common definition and scope. The truth is that this is a complex term with multiple facets.

Regulation is a key driver of sustainable development, ranging from everything from finance and energy to education. Higher education institutions in Norway have since 2021, according to the law (the act relating to universities and university colleges) had: “a purpose and responsibility to contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainable development”. (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005, pp. §1-1.). Strategies for environmental, social, and economic sustainability are also a part of the Norwegian government's Long-term plan for research and higher education

2023–2032 (Meld. St., 2022-2023) This white paper uses the UN Sustainable Development Goals as guidelines, and the previously mentioned law conceptualise sustainability into three aspects: economic, social and environmental.

Let us look closer at the backdrop for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

One of the early definitions of sustainability comes from the World Commission on Environment and Development led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, as far back as 1987. The commission defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 8) The governing thought was that humans need to better balance and develop the complex systems they depend on. The systems referred to cover both ecosystems, but also social and economic systems. The rationale for balancing was that if pushed beyond its boundaries, these systems will weaken, potentially with self-reinforcing mechanisms, and eventually even break down. (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987)

The early work from 1987 has formed the backdrop for much of the thinking since, for example when the United Nations (UN) in 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Agenda is the UN's global plan for more sustainable development and is more commonly known as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). It is a framework developed through a long line of political decisions by all UN member states. This could also be a good starting point to define sustainability, but with the 17 identified goals spanning everything from poverty to peace, not to mention climate action, it needs to be scoped down for the purpose of this research. The 17 goals are broken down into 169 sub-goals, but it is also aggregated into three broad dimensions. The three dimensions (mentioned above) are economic, social, and environmental. Sustainable development has been criticized for its Western-oriented perspective, trusting heavily on economic growth in line with technocentric and anthropocentric worldviews (Nerland & Aadland, 2022; Sharpley, 2000).

Questions relevant to sustainability are complex. When searching and reading peer-reviewed literature on sustainability, it is striking how many articles use adjectives such as ‘ambiguous’, ‘confusing’ or ‘unclear’ in reference to the topic (Salas-Zapata & Ortiz-Muñoz, 2019; Sharpley, 2000). This citation from Salas-Zapata & Ortiz-Muñoz felt aptly put and resonated with myself:

“The ambiguity and polysemy of the concept of sustainability is a problem often faced by researchers. The existence of definitions that are not operative, diverse and some- times contradictory represents a difficulty for the election of a suitable concept of sustainability. Even most of the research works whose title includes the term sustainability do not define what it is, which eventually, constitutes a methodological error. This leads the researchers to avoid defining sustainability, or to study it indirectly through the study of social and ecological variables of certain systems.” (2019, p. 153).

Despite Salas-Zapata & Ortiz-Muñoz critique of avoiding to define sustainability, I move forward in this thesis without unpacking the muddled concepts of sustainability further. Instead, I choose to frame sustainability as the government documents above and institutions in higher education in Norway adhere to, namely the UN Sustainable Development Goals as the context and discourse of this thesis revolves around education.

2.1.2 Friluftsliv studies in higher education and the ethos of environmental awareness

Friluftsliv was established as an academic discipline in 1972 at the Norwegian University of Sport Science in Oslo (Gurholt, 2008b). The central figure of the development of the *friluftsliv* course, as it was offered then, was engineer and mountaineer Nils Faarlund. As *friluftsliv* developed as an academic field in the 1970s, it was heavily influenced by the modern environmental movement and the philosophy of deep ecology and: “inspired a critical, reflexive and supposedly alternative but practical environmental pedagogy” (Gurholt, 2014, p. 234). These normative, and value-based didactical principles were developed by Faarlund and called *vegledning*¹ (Leirhaug et al., 2019) which “literally means leading or guiding someone on their way/through life” (Gurholt, 2008b, p. 138). Nerland & Aadland (2022, p. 122) states that the task of *vegledning* is to facilitate “authentic meeting with self-willed nature, sharing the nature experience, learning from it, and developing”. I am not going to go further into explaining the pedagogical and didactical principles and development in *friluftsliv* studies since the 1970’s, but it is relevant to clarify that pedagogy in *friluftsliv* today can also be viewed as a normative pedagogy. Leirhaug, Haukeland and Faarlund

¹ Faarlund coins the English term conveying for *vegledning* Dahle, B. (2007). Norwegian Friluftsliv: A Lifelong Communal Process. In B. Henderson & N. Vikander (Eds.), *Nature first : outdoor life the Friluftsliv way*. Natural Heritage Books.

(2019) argue all learning and pedagogy in *friluftsliv* is normative because it represents values and holds ideas on the development of human-nature relations.

Pedagogy, learning, and the ethos that *friluftsliv* is linked to environmental awareness have been and are still intertwined with *friluftsliv* studies. It is timely with a contemporary contribution to this subject matter. Nerland & Aadland (2022) look at *friluftsliv*'s environmental dimension and explore the potential for developing environmental awareness. They position themselves in an ecocentric pedagogical perspective, in tradition with Faarlund and Tordsson. Making use of the normative tradition of "vegledning" . They argue that familiarity with nature becomes friendship, and that friendship with nature ignites the action to protect your friend. This argument is widely known: to care about nature, we have to get out in nature and experience it, and that will lead to us taking care of nature. This might work in some cases, but if we look at the state of the current climate and environmental crisis , this strategy has not worked too well this far. Andre Horgen (2019) point out that these ideas of *friluftsliv* as "green practice" are contrary to research which shows that Norwegians' *friluftsliv* activities in reality are part of the environmental sustainability problems, e.g., through high personal consumption, travel and building cabins (Aall et al., 2011).

Nerland & Aadland (2022, p. 124) state (in a normative) and manifest-like manner that they "like and support the wild pedagogies project" and point out key inspirations from wild pedagogies that inform their pedagogical project. In 2023, lecturers, teachers, and pedagogical practitioners in *friluftsliv* studies have access to multiple approaches, traditions, theory and practices to explore and complement our practice.

Today *friluftsliv* studies are offered at several universities and university colleges across Norway. A search with the word "friluftsliv" at the website Utdanning.no² in January 2023 generates (that includes nature guide studies, outdoor recreation/travel studies, *friluftsliv* and physical education) the option of 28 shorter courses such as 1-year or part-time studies, 15 relevant bachelor programmes and 10 master programmes to choose from. As mentioned initially in the previous section: universities and university colleges in Norway have an obligation since 2021 to contribute

² www.utdanning.no is the official Norwegian national education and career portal.

to environmental, social, and economic sustainable development. In the next section, I will look closer at a possible means to do so: sustainability didactics.

2.2 Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

2.2.1 Clarification of term: ESD and “sustainability didactics”

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the dominant term when it comes to the role of education in sustainable development. The term is closely tied to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNs political agenda more broadly. The term is not just a strategy for education, but also an approach (Sinnes, 2021). The distinguishing factor in the approach is that it aims to educate *for* sustainable development, and not just about sustainable development (McKeown, 2002). To achieve this the students will need to gain a cross-functional understanding that enables them to make sustainable choices for both themselves and for society (Sinnes, 2020)

There is however not consensus around the term ESD. Kvamme & Sæther (2019) argue that sustainability didactics³ is a better term in a Norwegian context, since the Norwegian equivalent to the word education is much narrower than the English version. The term “education” in English can refer to both concrete didactics as well as theory on the practice.

Using the term sustainability didactics will therefore better capture both the empirical and theoretical dimension in a Norwegian context. It will also separate itself more from being associated with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNs political agenda (Kvamme & Sæther, 2019) In this research thesis I draw on both ESD and sustainability didactics so this clarification is necessary.

2.2.2 A didactical model for sustainability and action competence

Jensen & Schnack (1997) state that a main goal for environmental education is to develop students’ ability to act on environmental concerns. They coin the term “action competence”.

³ Bærekraftdidaktikk in Norwegian.

Based on research on ESD (2020) Astrid Sinnes presents a model with a framework for how to teach action competence.



Figur 1-1 translated by Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson based on Astrid T Sinnes (2020, p. 29)

This model invites the teacher to deal with issues in your teaching/school subjects/ local environment that needs response. The idea is that the model is not a strict regime but a support that makes it possible for the students themselves to act and find solutions.

Key features of the sustainability didactics are:

- What is the challenge about?
- How is this challenge expressed in my environment?
- How do I impact this challenge?

- How can the school/university be a part of the solution?

2.3 Michel Foucault on power

The research in this master thesis touches upon both sustainability and education. The research targets are students, which in the simplest form share perspectives related to the institution where they are currently undertaking their studies. For this reason, it felt necessary to also look into power as a third dimension. Here, I present some key perspectives I will draw on in the discussions chapter.

To understand power, I researched Michel Foucault, said to be one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. Agamben (1998, p. 71) describes: “One of the most central features of Foucault's work is the abandonment of the traditional approach to the problem of power. Foucault denounces the repressive power and goes for “an unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects’ very bodies and forms of life”. In other words, Foucault takes the traditional thinking on political power and flips it over. Instead, he says that power is everywhere, it flows through us and circulates (Foucault, 2012). It is not limited to a few people over the many, but everyone. He also argues that power is not just negative:

“We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault, 1977, p. 194)

In way Foucault is one of few thinkers who view power not only as negative but see it as a productive and positive force in a society.

This turned my initial rationale of why to research power on its head. I had thought of power in its traditional form, visible through the likes of governments and judicial systems, or in the case of this thesis, an educational institution. However, Foucault claims this is an oversimplification of power,

even for educational institutions. To nuance the discussion on power, it is useful to look at the ideas of repressive power vs normalising power (Foucault, 1977).

Repressive power is often thought of as violence and oppression. However, our lives are shaped of repressive power on only few occasions when we are forced to do what we do not want to do. Examples of this can be the police, which are used to control the adherence to laws.

Normalising power is more subtle and far less visible. It is what makes us to do what we want to do anyway. If society has taught us successfully then it constructs our view of the world and ourselves to make us believe no one has forced them on us. As such, Foucault is also extremely sceptical of the idea that there is a "true you" hiding underneath what society has made you. Without society you would not be a person at all - all of us are - and will always be "normalised" to a very large extent. The normalising power ensures that we do what we do.

According to Foucault's thinking it is not possible to radically break free from normalising power, and from how we are shaped by society. Normalising power is everywhere, in the family, in school and university, in the workplace, etc. Education and science cannot be separated from normalising power. A university will create a student that thinks and acts in certain ways, thus is scientific knowledge also an important standard of normalisation. This perspective advocates that it is not just the educational institution exerting power over students, instead, power travels in all directions. Students also have power over lecturers. Foucault does not think we can be totally free of how we are shaped by society - but becoming aware of the many ways we are subjected to power we can be a little more autonomous. (Foucault, 1982)

2.4 Research question and scope of this study

The theoretical background described in the introduction has grown in both depth and breadth during the research. As such, it is not unnatural that the research question has evolved. The initial research statement was: "Understanding environmental sustainability in university outdoor education programs: A case study of student's experiences of how sustainability is conceptualized

in a Norwegian university *friluftsliv* program". The aim of this study was to investigate how concepts of environmental sustainability "*come to life*" for university *friluftsliv* students.

I also wanted to narrow the scope. Through the process, I gained a better understanding of the breadth of the sustainability topic, and it seemed a more fitting approach would be to narrow the topic to environmental sustainability. While this seemed like a good idea at the time, both to have a more manageable scope, and also to make the task more concrete for the focus group participants, it did not turn as expected. The topic of sustainability is not broad and difficult to grasp without reason. Limiting it to environmental sustainability was seen as an unnatural constraint by the participants, which struggled to disentangle the topic from other aspects of sustainability.

Despite the later realised limitations, another version of the research statement had emerged: "Exploring University Students Perception of Environmental Sustainability in Friluftsliv Studies", and this remains the research statement for this thesis.

During the process it was easy to get carried away trying to solve "everything". This is a treacherous pitfall, because there is a risk that you start fitting the research question to your data. I had to constantly evaluate and remind myself what the scope is and is not. The scope was e.g., not to discuss opportunities and challenges of developing more sustainable outdoor education, despite there being multiple answers that could be seen to address this.

There is also a temptation to "come up with solutions", but that is beyond the scope of the research question. Throughout the work, I have continuously gone back to the interviews to maintain focus on what the participants actually said, and thus avoid adding own opinions, developing solutions or otherwise trying to solve problems. This focused lens is reflected in the data collection, analyse and findings.

It is also not within the scope of this research project to solve or offer solutions to a global sustainability crisis. However, by providing the perception, perspectives, and ideas of students, the outcome of the project can potentially contribute to developing innovative outdoor education programs as well as offering some theoretical framework to operationalise sustainability.

3 Methodology and research methods

I start out by positioning my research project and methods within theory of science. Next, I will describe and explain the choices of method and discuss I will also explain my role as lecturer/practitioner and as researcher. I also clarify how the empirical data has been analysed and interpreted. In the end I discuss ethical considerations and critique the trustworthiness of my research.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Qualitative research

The research project is based on qualitative research. Qualitative research looks at individuals' or groups' meanings and opinions. The data is typically collected either through written or verbal data collection, or through observation. The data collected is analysed inductively to go from individual data points to themes. The researcher typically plays an important role in interpreting the data (Creswell, 2009). Postholm (2010) also emphasises the importance of an inductive approach in qualitative research, equating it to being open-minded and willing to change in the research process.

“Qualitative research aim to capture meanings or qualities that are not quantifiable, such as feelings, thoughts, and experiences, that is those concepts that are associated with interpretative approaches” (Jones, 2015). This project uses data based on words instead of numbers to explore concepts and perceptions of environmental sustainability, and those words must be interpreted by the researcher. Interpretive research is a process of trying to make sense of the data, rather than working from hypotheses and testing whether they hold true (Jones, 2015). Postholm (2010) describes the process as the researcher trying to understand, interpret and create meaning of the data material using their experiences and theories. This result is that the research can never be totally objective, and the researcher who operates within qualitative methods must reflect upon this fact.

According to Schwandt (2000) qualitative research holds three epistemological perspectives: interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructivism. Interpretivism and hermeneutics try to understand the meaning of human actions (Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren, 2017). As mentioned

above, interpretivism tries to understand the subjective meaning of human actions and thoughts. Social constructivism, on the other hand, is about people creating knowledge in the exchange and interaction with others. This can be seen as a learning process.

The data collection method in this project is focus groups. I argue that the method used should be viewed as a social constructivist approach. Kook et al. imply that focus groups work this way (2019, p. 89): “There is general agreement that the added value of focus groups lies in its interactivity and in the multitude of ways in which the participants interact with each other (and with the moderator), co-construct meaning, and produce multiple and often conflicting narratives and positions”. Focus groups differ from other qualitative methods like individual interviews and observation by viewing the world from a collective perspective. (Barbour, 2008; Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren, 2017). This is an important understanding because it stipulates what kind of knowledge we produce by using this method.

Moving on from the method for data collection, the case for data analysis is different. I argue that the process of data analysis using thematic analysis in the way I have applied the method can be seen as interpretative. I have based the analysis heavily on Braun & Clarke (2022) approach to thematic analysis. They highlight that a common feature of thematic analysis is that it is theoretically flexible. However, they also state that “all reflexive TA involves interpretation” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 202), but the analysis can span from offering description to being more interpretative.

3.1.2 Hermeneutics and phenomenology

We set out by looking closer at the last one of Schwandt’s (2000) three epistemological perspectives: hermeneutics, and how this perspective is relevant to my research. Hermeneutics stems from the Greek word for interpretation but is in this context used more specifically to describe a type of interpretation that emphasises and interprets meaning related to actions. This type of analysis assumes that all understanding builds upon prior understanding (Grønmo, 2004).

Having clarified that I am conducting qualitative and interpretative research methods, this is a useful backdrop to be aware what really goes on when we interpret. According to the theory, no phenomenon can be fully understood outside of the bigger context, and we are all part of this

bigger context which is the foundation for how we see and experience the world around us (Føllesdal & Walløe, 2002). We use this foundation to understand new experiences and events, and according to Gadamer (2012), we can never be free of this preconception. Even in my role as a researcher, I will always have preconceptions. According to Gadamer (2012), what is most important is to stay open-minded to the fact that the experiences you have may not fully align to your preconceptions.

Another important term within hermeneutics is the hermeneutic circle. It attempts to describe the process of forming opinions when we interpret a text. The circle is a metaphor for the iterative process of evaluating a text, starting with understanding the background and situation, evaluating the text itself, reflecting on the text, and so on (Føllesdal & Walløe, 2002; Gilje & Grimen, 1993). The theory is useful to help me as a researcher become aware of the process of evaluating and creating meaning from a text.

Phenomenology in research focuses particularly on actions and experiences from real life and understanding and interpreting these (Grønmo, 2004; Postholm, 2010). The concept is both a philosophical one and a methodological one according to Jones (2015). The aim is to describe a phenomenon (thus the name), and to do so one should use research subjects in the reality where the phenomenon takes place (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

3.2 Research methods

3.2.1 Focus groups as a method for data collection

Focus groups are facilitated group discussions to explore specific themes and issues. This is a very broad term. In the following section, I therefore present how this research project has approached the use of focus groups and why it was considered appropriate useful to use focus groups as a scientific method in this context.

3.2.1.1 From focus group interviews to focus group sessions

“Focus” derives from a group being involved in some kind of collective activity (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). The term is often used in inconsistent ways when you explore the literature on this method. At the beginning of this project when I has only just built up a sufficient knowledge base to choose

the appropriate method, I assumed that I as a researcher would ask the questions to each person in the group – and used the term focus group interview. Much of the literature also varied in its use of the explicit term. An example of this is “Focus groups are similar in many ways to interviews, with the key difference being that a small group of people, rather than a single respondent is used. Members of the group are able to interact with each other, with the interaction leading to a greater depth of discussion, in that ideas can be generated and discussed between group members, allowing for richer information to be gathered than if participants were asked individually.” (Jones, 2015, p. 195). However, learning more about the method I realized there are several approaches.

What makes a focus group different to a broader group interview? One approach suggests that focus groups are different from group interviews because specifically, it implies participants interact to generate data. (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren, 2017). Sociologist David L. Morgan (1996) define focus groups as “(...) research techniques that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher.”

The reader will find strands of this process of going from using the term focus group *interview* to explicitly focus group *session*. When I got closer to conducting the sessions and worked on how to moderate the sessions I also delved deeper into literature on the method and refined a more informed approach. If the reader experiences an inconsistent use of the terms, e.g., in the NSD application or the invitation to participate in the appendix, it is simply a reflection of the learning process of using the focus group method in the way relevant to this project.

Understanding the difference between focus group *interviews* and *sessions* also raised the question of what impact the fact that the participants might influence each others’ responses had on the data quality and reliability. Reverting to literature I found that this is not necessarily a drawback, as it aims to capture the collective sentiment, and not necessarily the individual responses. While I will dive further into this point later, it was still important to go back and refine the interview guide to reflect this.

3.2.1.2 Choosing focus groups as research method

The method of focus groups was chosen based on suitability to answer the research question; “Exploring Students’ Perceptions of Environmental Sustainability in Friluftsliv Studies”. According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) focus groups are particularly useful to study the attitudes and experiences around specific topics. When the participants of the focus group interact and discuss, they themselves are encouraged to argue for their own attitudes and make their points come to life with specific examples. Through this the participants shed a light on their perceptions.

At the beginning of the research process, my approach was to look for individual experiences on environmental sustainability. After reading and understanding more about focus groups as a qualitative research method, I understood that this method differs from other types of qualitative research. Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren (2017) describe how focus groups are based on a collective understanding of the participant's points of view, not the individuals: “According to literature, the purpose is not to understand how the individual sees the world. Focus groups will seek to exchange experiences, and therefore the collective and not the individual point of view will take centre. Even if individual points of view are dominant in the discussion, they are not in focus.”

Focus groups are useful to explore how points of view are constructed and expressed. It is a common approach, that allows for the exploration of new and unexpected insights through the interaction and questioning among the participants. This interaction enables the development of a deeper understanding and knowledge of the topic being discussed. By participating the students drive the research further and contribute to developing new knowledge. The method is widely used in multiple disciplines of research, and the area of class and gender have specifically used the focus groups a lot. (Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren, 2017; Wibeck, 2010; Wilkinson, 1999)

3.2.2 Individual interview as a method for data collection

According to Morgan (1996) the most frequently combined method with focus group research is either individual interviews or surveys. Initially the research design of this project intended to combine focus groups with structured in-depth individual interviews. The rationale for combining the two methods was threefold.

First, since this is the first time I am moderating focus groups, I was concerned that the focus group sessions would take on a different directions than I had planned. Perhaps the participants would go completely off topic in the discussions? Perhaps the discussion would end up revolving around themes that were not relevant to my research questions? This actually ended up happening, briefly, during one of the focus group sessions were some participants derailed the discussion to irrelevant topics they themselves were interested in talking about. This dependency on the facilitator's skills and experience, is a common drawback of using focus groups. There is however research that argues that this is less important when the topic is not very sensitive, and more straightforward.

Second, I found it hard to predict how much data would be sufficient. Another pitfall of using the focus group method is that it relies on few, open questions and that it can be hard to predict where the discussion will go. By design, I also wanted to keep the door open to probing deeper in case emerging themes needed further inquiry. This is a useful strategy according to Morgan (1998).

Third, I was conscious to make sure that all voices in the invited groups were heard and would contribute to the collective process of the focus group sessions. Even though I had a relationship with the participants as a moderator, there is an ongoing social relationship that I do not see or take part in (Michell, 1999).

Individual interviews would have solved all three challenges above. However, if correctly managed, they do not rule out using focus groups as a standalone research method. Given other constraints, such as time, and access to participants, I therefore chose to focus on doing focus groups as well as possible, rather than adding a second research method on top. This meant that I put a lot of effort into the preparations and facilitation of the focus groups. As I did not pursue the use of structured individual interviews, I do not mention that method in any other segments of this thesis, other than reflect here on why I chose to keep the option open and why I abandoned individual interviews during the data collection process.

In reviewing the data, I also found that sufficient themes emerged to say that the data seemed saturated (Krueger, 1998) based on the four focus groups, and without the addition of individual interviews.

3.2.3 Selection and recruitment of participants

3.2.3.1 *Case study design*

A case can be seen as a specific instance, for example, the university programme the participants of this study attend. (Andersen, 2013; Jones, 2015) I would argue that this is an exploratory single case study, despite not necessarily following a specific method on case studies to the point. This differs from what Yin (2018) calls explanatory case studies or descriptive case studies. This is because the research is designed to study a phenomenon within a context. In my daily life, I also work as a lecturer and teacher for this group, granting full access to the context.

Yin (2018) also outlines three conditions to decide whether or not to use case study design. The three conditions being the form of the question asked (how, why), the control the researcher has over actual behavioral events (no) and whether it focuses on a contemporary event, which give further support to this as a case study.

3.2.3.2 *Not a random sample: selection and number of participants*

As mentioned in the previous section, the choice of a single unit, in this case one university, defines this study as a case study. The selection process is therefore already limited to members of the unit. When defining additional selection criteria, it is typically important to include factors such as demographic diversity and make efforts to consider voices that might be excluded etc., to ensure a representative population. All students that had the opportunity to participate were included in invitations.

In selecting participants, I started out with a governing thought that everyone should be interviewed, and all voices heard, in a sort of democratic approach to selecting focus groups. However, I soon realised that what I was after was not the totality, but rather the representative cross-section of the unit. I would also not have capacity in this research process to talk to absolutely everyone. Given the participation is voluntary, there is an element of self-selection.

I initially planned to have groups of six participants each, which would offer a solid base. However, I revised this to four participants based on Morgan (1998) arguments that it can be beneficial to use

smaller groups when participants have a high level of involvement in the topic, which is true for environmental sustainability in 2023. There are however pitfalls to smaller groups and the number should not fall below four. According to Wibeck (2010) a strategy for this is to invite an extra participant. In my case that would mean 5 participants for each group. One should also emphasize in the invite that it is important that they show up. However, as I invited the total number of students some fell through, and I soon ended up with only four in each group. This left me with no buffer, and when one participant withdrew on the day of the session, I was left with only three participants in one of the focus groups.

3.2.4 Planning and developing questions for focus groups.

A lot of work went into the planning and preparations for the focus group. “Focus group questions are not just thrown together. With care and thoughtfulness, the researcher arranges a questioning sequence, this question sequence is the hallmark of focus group interviews and the reason that we use the word focus in the title. This focused sequence makes sense to participants, and it provides an opportunity for them to anchor their opinions and then build on those views” s37 (Krueger, 1998, p. 37)

The initial interview guide for NSD was built on a common template from SSB (Sundvoll et al., 2006). Focus groups can be either structured or unstructured (Wibeck, 2010), and I attempted to find the middle ground between the two, balancing open questions with a clear agenda of what needed to be covered in the sessions. After the initial application to NSD I therefore became more and more aware that what had started as an interview guide needed to become a discussion guide, or moderator guide (Greenbaum, 1998) This represents a more semi-structured approach.

The first question in a focus group should always be easy to answer (Krueger, 1998), in order for the participants and the group to feel comfortable and get started. This could be for example questions on something they have in common and does not need to be useful to the research work. I chose to open the focus group discussions with an icebreaker around what they studied and what they enjoyed most about their studies. Roughly halfway through the focus groups I planned to have an activity. To round off the focus groups I planned a brief oral summary of the key questions and the big ideas that emerged from the discussion, using quotes and references from the discussion.

There are multiple constraints to be aware of in planning and developing focus groups. In the chapter "Know the Limits", Krueger (1998) structures constraints in four groups. The first is Time and Attention Constraints. A focus group has a set duration, which means the moderator will need to move the discussion on, or potentially also round off a discussion that is heading in an interesting direction. In addition, the participants attention span will impact the quality of the discussions and the duration. The second is Clarity Constraints. Conceptual clarity is essential, "the researcher must have a clear grasp of the problem and develop questions that reflect that clarity. Open-ended questions are not the same as unclear questions. The focus group discussion is of limited value unless the participants truly understands" (Krueger, 1998, p. 50). The third and fourth are Cultural Constraints and Language Constraints.

Along the way I continuously tried to evaluate whether I hit the mark in shaping the focus group sessions. However, it was also important not to change the questions along the way, to avoid a different basis for discussion across the four focus groups. I also tried to evaluate whether I reached theoretical saturation. According to Krueger (1998, p. 54)

"Theoretical saturation is a process of adding additional cases (or focus groups) until you have reduced variation and uncovered the range of experiences. You have essentially discovered what there is to discover. The actual number is unimportant, but each case should aid the researcher. When additional interviews or observations do not yield new insights, the researcher has reached the point of "theoretical saturation".

My evaluation is that four groups was sufficient to reach saturation, since multiple topics and themes repeated across the groups.

Evaluating the process of planning and developing questions, I see multiple areas with room for improvement. The questions were first developed at a time when I thought the research would take the shape of a focus group interview more than an open discussion. Through the process I learnt that the activities were most productive in terms of triggering discussions. The NSD application was a premature version, taken from a common template. Timeline considerations meant that this had to be done early in the process. This later evolved but was still impacted by the transition from focus group interviews to focus group sessions.

3.2.5 Degree of structure and style of facilitation

Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) suggest that focus groups are characterised by a non-controlling style of facilitation. The aim of the session is to discuss subject matter – not to agree on solutions.

Therefore, it is important to facilitate an open and friendly atmosphere where participants are willing to share and discuss personal ideas, perspectives and creative thinking on certain themes. According to Madriz (2000) the role of the facilitator is not to interview the group – but to kindle interaction and discussion.

As a final step before conducting the focus group session, I tested my moderator guide with a colleague to share and revise the questions. She provided useful input and feedback on the questions and how to conduct the session. Both the moderator guide and questions were revised based on this. The final guide for questions is attached as appendix 1 (in Norwegian) and appendix 2 (translated to English).

The focus groups were facilitated as part structured, part unstructured. The first part was more structured with questions for the participants to answer and debate. The second part was an activity that asked the students to take on the role of the administration/lecturers and discuss concrete changes they would make. The activity meant to both re-energise the group mid-way, and to provide a context for them to discuss their ideas and perceptions more detached from their own daily lives. While not by design, this opened the opportunity for me to combine both deductive and inductive coding in the data processing work described later.

An important aspect, and potential caveat, to be aware of in this research is that I in this case I knew all the participants beforehand as a teacher and lecturer. We have spent time together both in the classroom and outdoors in the field. I have also assessed and graded their work.

3.2.6 Conducting the focus group sessions

Focus groups are considered a valuable means to collect data, “but they can require much more in the way of organization and resources than other methods” (Jones, 2015). Two days before the scheduled focus groups sessions I emailed the participants a friendly reminder of our meeting with updated information on place to meet. Krueger (1998) highlights the importance that all advance communication ensures uniformity, consistency, and sufficient generality regarding the purpose of

the discussion. I also included a question to trigger the thought process around the research theme. Wibeck (2010) describes this as “stimulating material”. This can be an article, citations, film, pictures, or questions. The material should be designed so that it evokes discussion and questions rather than stating facts or answering questions.

During the focus group sessions, I made sure to follow the outlined moderator guide. I had written down the questions we were going to discuss, including examples of probing questions to get the discussion going. I made sure to give the participants time to think on their own, typically saying something along the lines of “I would like you to take a few minutes to reflect on your own”.

Towards the end of the focus groups, I gave a brief summary of the key questions and discussion, drawing on the participants own comments. The participants were asked about the adequacy of the summary, which is critical for the analysis (Krueger, 1998). I also used the first focus group session to ask the participants for feedback and input ahead of the remaining focus group sessions.

I did not take a lot of notes during the sessions, only enough for the summary at the end. This allowed me to be open and present in my role as facilitator and I could engage in the discussions by e.g., asking probing questions. During the focus groups I noticed that the questions I posed were given different importance and attention in the different sessions. After each focus group session, I wrote up a short note, reflecting on ways to tweak the next session as well as impressions of emerging themes. This process of taking “thick notes” helps capture non-verbal communication.

There are many lessons to be learned from being a moderator for the first time. It was a benefit to have prepared a discussion guide, which allowed me to be more present and active in the room. I tried to take the role of an active listener, but while transcribing the recordings it struck me that I might have bordered on encouragement, especially in the first focus group. As a moderator, you should always avoid encouragement and signaling what is right and what is wrong.

It was also challenging to steer the discussion while at the same time not inhibiting it. I wanted to give everyone the chance to speak up, but in one of the focus groups there was an especially dominant participant who would recurrently turn the conversation on to other topics not relevant to the research question. In that instance I patiently allowed the participant to finish his line of

reasoning and then politely repeated questions or moved forward in the moderator guide. Having multiple sections to the moderator guide helped somewhat, as this gave multiple new “starts” to the discussions.

I was also conscious that the participants shouldn't piggyback too much on each other's opinions, but this was not an issue. Finally, I noticed that the participants would often contradict themselves after having discussed for some time. This is not unnatural when getting into details the participants haven't necessarily prepared for, but it was still interesting and something I also paid attention to when processing the data.

The setting for the focus groups was the university campus. The sessions were held in neutral meeting rooms and on familiar ground for the participants. A practical challenge in the first round of focus groups was that the fire alarm went off, causing a break in the session and the discussion. The consequence was that the group took a bit of time to get back into things, and some time was lost.

A practical challenge in conducting the focus groups was that one participant withdrew from the focus group leaving only three remaining participants in that group. Another participant showed up late after the session had started.

3.2.7 Data Processing and Analysis

Kitzinger (1995, p. 302) aptly states that “Focus groups are not an easy option. The data they generate can be cumbersome as they are complex.” With that backdrop I argue that you can still trust the analysis.

3.2.7.1 Data processing

The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. The transcribed material in font size 12 with a 1.5-point line spacing made up a total of 99 pages. I initially investigated the opportunity to use a speech recognition program, but a small test run showed that it would be more difficult to ensure the accuracy and the understanding of the results in a dialogue context, so I decided against it. The downside to that is that transcribing four focus groups is very time consuming. A positive outcome of the manual transcribing is that one becomes close and familiar with the material.

3.2.7.2 *Thematic analysis*

I learned more about thematic analysis the more I used it and would still consider myself a novice. In the beginning I tried to find the “right” approach, but quickly understood from e.g., Braun and Clarke (2021) that thematic analysis is cluster of more than one approach, with more than one underlying philosophy. The similarity is in the interest to capture patterns in the datasets. Communication and climate change researcher Victoria Wibeck (2010) point out that a great challenge of using focus groups as research method is that there is no set method of analysis that are to be used. Instead, the researcher has the freedom to explore and improve methods.

According to Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren (2017) the analysis should be systematic, and it should comply to an in advance set process. It should also be valid, meaning that another researcher could use the data and land on a similar result. I agree on the importance of trustworthiness and that the analysis should be systematic, but in this context, a more explorative process was needed, allowing both inductive and deductive approaches.

Johannessen et al. (2018) argue that thematic analysis is the among numerous approaches to qualitative research - the most basic and student friendly and say that it is often conveyed more mysterious and less accessible that needed. I used this to simplification to circle back when I got lost in the analysis.

Having repeatedly gone back to literature to better understand thematic analysis I started to shape my approach, inspired by two approaches found in literature. The updated version of Reflexive thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2022) and elements from Boyatzis (1998). Common for all approaches was in my experience that they offer an iterative structured process. It was also the element that I was doing thematic analyses for the first time and learning about the method as I was using it – proving to be time consuming and rigorous work.

Braun & Clarke (2022) structures the process of thematic analysis in

Phase 1: Getting familiar with the dataset. The focus was listening, learning, and transcribing. Even here, I had to revisit the recordings to make sure they were correctly transcribed, and that there was no context missing as the discussion passed from participant to participant.

Phase 2: Coding. When starting to code I first looked for a step-by step guide or cookbook to get me started, wishing to be systematic and efficient. However, the more literature I reviewed on the topic, the more I realised that thematic analysis is not a single approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I settled for being systematic, and realised efficiency did not fully apply. Rather I needed to work rigorously and get coding. I approached the coding with curiosity. First, I tagged everything of interest and then sorted it. I did this again and again. An example of tagging everything that is of interest is the following quote, that ended up with multiple tags:

“And another measure in relation to travelling less, is this local *friluftsliv*. To see the possibilities we have around us, that we don’t necessarily need to go that far away to have deep and intimate experiences.” The same data could have several codes. For example, this excerpt was coded and sorted in several categories: 1. Nature experience 2. Nature connection 3. ravel/carbon footprint and 4. Local *friluftsliv*.

Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 55) say about coding an iterative process: “We also view coding as a *subjective* process shaped by what we bring to it. Coding is a process of *interpretation* – or meaning making – and researcher subjectivity fuels that process”.

I approached the coding also with both an inductive and deductive approach. Braun & Clarke (2022) suggest that rather than looking at inductive versus deductive as a dichotomy, we can view it as a spectrum. I had my own ideas on theory and expectations that implied a deductive approach as well as keeping the mind open for data-driven inductive perspectives. I would rather argue that it is impossible to be either deductive or inductive completely. As researchers, we will always have with us ideas, expectations, and preconceptions into the process. I would also suggest that a third interesting option in the coding phase is to draw on Charmaz (2014) and the idea of abduction. Abduction is in short a “mode of imaginative reasoning researchers invoke when they cannot account for a surprising or puzzling finding” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 200). Abduction happen during inductive inquiry when a researcher deals with findings that do not fit patterns or can be explained in the same way as the rest of the data.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes. While this was the first attempt at drawing out themes from the data, there were clear hypothesis already from the coding of the data. However, in generating the

initial themes I went beyond looking at individual codes to look at different ways of grouping the findings and going back to the original data to make sure I captured all angles of what the participants said.

Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes. Having looked at different ways to group the coding and the data, I selected a few and started writing out the findings. It was important to ensure that the themes synthesised the data rather than summarised it, and again I needed to loop back to the original data to make sure the coding and quotes were captured in their true context.

Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes. Having settled on themes I started work to further refine the true findings. During this work the question of whether the coding is refined enough came up multiple times, but I decided against going back to the coding at this point.

Phase 6: Writing up. The final phase was to truly capture the full findings and make sure the insights are communicated back to the reader in a comprehensible manner without losing the flavour of the data. This was again an iterative approach, and I also had a colleague read the findings to improve the quality of the communication.

3.2.7.3 Problems with thematic analysis

There are multiple shortfalls in using thematic analysis. One is simply that there is a high degree of autonomy for each researcher to shape their own approach (Wibeck, 2010). Another problem is that it is a non-linear process that demands rigorous work. I learned to use the method in practice as I was conducting the project. It was perpetual work and had to start somewhere and ended up going full circle multiple times. Thematic analysis is a method that need practice.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Evaluating ethical considerations is important to maintain standards and guidelines for scientific research, but perhaps most importantly to maintain the rights and integrity of participants. According to Ruyter (2003b), all research poses ethical considerations and should be underpinned by ethical principles that guide the research. Ruyter (2003b) outlines a framework based on ethics as *protection*, and use “lines of defence” as metaphors. “The seven lines of defence” are: liability, informed consent, the descending order of permissibility, risk versus gain, approval by independent

committees, democratic control through transparency and dialogue, and protection of internal research norms. The order of the lines of defence reflects their importance. Ruyter points out that for example the second line: informed consent, is particularly fragile, as it is often more based on trust than understanding. Hence the idea of several “defence lines” are useful and offer a comprehensive strategy for dealing with ethical considerations. However, I found it is exhaustive and not all aspect of this framework easy to operationalise nor relevant with the scope and context of this particular research project.

Humberstone & Riddick (2020) draw on (Ashworth et al., 2016) when they suggest that the context of outdoor studies is diverse and complex, and also point out that ethical considerations are critical and should not be based on assumption. Further they elaborate that “ethical behaviour in research is underpinned by considerations of six fundamental principles that are the foundation of human service codes of ethics: respect, honesty, beneficence, non-maleficence and competence”. (Humberstone & Riddick, 2020, p. 22) These principles can be grouped into four ethical deliberations: informed consent; risk of harm; confidentiality and anonymity; and gain and justice, each of which are explored below. The research work is evaluated as one, on the grounds that participants have been given the same information and treatment throughout.

Informed consent: As a researcher it is my responsibility that the participants take part in the research on a voluntary basis, with information and understanding about what they are taking part in (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Ruyter, 2003a). This was particularly important during the recruiting process, where I was careful to state in a written information letter that the participant can at any point, also after the focus group has taken place, withdraw their consent. The students were also verbally reminded of this at the start of each focus group session. The letter of information and consent form is attached as appendix 1. All informants signed informed consent forms, and none have been withdrawn.

Risk of harm: The topic of sustainability is a timely, relevant, and much debated one. There is a risk that individual responses will be met with negative emotions such as shame or stigma. It is the researcher’s responsibility to ensure the integrity of the participants. I have tried to do this to the extent possible through all the phases of the project. Kvale & Brinkmann (2015) emphasise that ethical considerations must be reflected upon in all parts of a research project. The facilitation of

focus groups paid extra attention to this by using open questions, providing ample time for responses and self-deliberation, and reiterating that there are no right or wrong answers. One critique could be that there were times when the researcher-facilitator got involved in the conversation beyond asking open questions, which could give a perception of some answers being more correct than others. Finally, I have been careful to fully capture and transcribe the responses ad verbatim, to avoid attributing out-of-context conclusions and opinions to the participants before the material is fully processed. The data is also only used in its aggregated and coded form and not attributed to individuals.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The thesis is based on primary research, conducted through four focus groups, each with 4 participants (one session with 3 participants due to illness). The focus groups were recruited and conducted by me, giving me access to participants' personal information. Projects of this nature need to be approved by Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research. I therefore submitted an application to Sikt when planning data collection, which was approved. A preliminary interview guide was submitted to Sikt together with the application. This guide was later revised and refined prior to conducting the focus groups and is attached in the appendix. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder as well as the mobile app "Nettskjema-Diktafon" as a backup solution in case the voice recorder failed. The app encrypts and upload the files to TSD – Service for Sensitive Data. TSD is a digital platform for collecting and storing sensitive data in compliance with the Norwegian privacy regulation. Both the app and TSD is a secure solution developed and run by the University of Oslo (UiO). The sound files from the voice recorder were stored on my private laptop that I set up according to data protection guidelines of the University of South-East Norway (USN).

Measures taken to protect the data include:

1. The device is connected to USN OneDrive Disc and USN Safe
2. Automatic backup to the cloud like for instance Dropbox or iCloud turned off
3. Encryption is turned on and all firewalls and software are updated.
4. The device was set up to go into sleep mode and turn off screens after 15min.
5. The device was not shared by other users.
6. The primary research follows the data protection guidelines of the University of South-East Norway.

7. The recordings were also backed up on an encrypted physical external disk which was kept locked in my office.

The recordings were later transcribed, and the identities of the participants were coded for anonymity. All names used in this thesis are fictive names. I use the fictive names in *cursive*. Despite the measures taken to uphold confidentiality and anonymity, the research was conducted in groups. This poses a potential risk of leaking the identity of participants or their answers and opinions related to the interview guide. The research is also conducted at a small institution, which if identified, could lead closer to the identity of the participants.

Gain and justice: The focus groups were recruited from the student base at a Norwegian University. There is a risk that the relationship of student-lecturer might pose a real or perceived conflict of interest between the participants and myself. As a researcher, I need to ensure that participation is understood as voluntary from the student's side and that there are no perceived gains on either side that can affect participation or responses given. The letter of information and consent form were important in ensuring this. I have also been conscious not to use my position of authority to recruit participants or otherwise take gain from the process, e.g., by never singling out individuals to ask for participation. I was very careful in the communication (mostly per e-mail) with potential participants to facilitate dates, times, and other practicalities for the focus group sessions in a neutral and friendly fashion, as not to be perceived as "pushy" or disappointed if scheduling did not work out or if they simply did not wish to participate.

Wibeck (2010) groups ethical considerations together with the quality and trustworthiness of the research. In the next two sections, I will explore these dimensions further.

3.3.1 Quality and trustworthiness of the research

Quality and trustworthiness are important considerations in research. High quality and trustworthy research mean the results are given more credibility. When conducting primary qualitative research, quality and trustworthiness is often evaluated based on the research method and process, including the steps from planning, conducting the study, to how the material is processed and analysed. Yin (2018) points out the need to document the as many steps of the research process in case studies as possible. In my case this materialised in keeping a research journal where

I noted down ideas and rationale for choices, concerns, ideas relevant to the research on a regular basis. This was the first time I used this research method so there are many learnings and things that could have been done differently, as highlighted in this chapter.

3.3.1.1 Focus groups as method

The trustworthiness of research data is influenced by many factors, among them, the quality of the research itself. In my work, I have used several strategies by Wibeck (2010) underpinned by Krueger (1993) to ensure the quality of focus group research.

The first strategy is to clearly express the purpose of the research. I was deliberate in sharing the purpose of the research in all communication around the focus groups, as well as opening for questions around this in the focus groups themselves.

The second is the choice of environment. There are some natural limitations to this in my work, as the study of *friluftsliv* is not a universal study. My research is based entirely in Norway, and in only one academic institution. The result is that underlying homogeneity can influence the results. In terms of the physical environment, I chose meeting rooms that were neutral in their appearance and functionality. The location was nonetheless located at the university where the participants' study, which could provoke a form of loyalty bias in answering questions about their current studies.

The third is ensuring suitable participants. The participants were sourced from students from a bachelor programme in Friluftsliv studies to ensure relevance and experience to answer the research questions. Beyond that, participation was through self-selection, i.e., an invitation went out to a body of students, and they signed up voluntarily.

The fourth is using a skilled moderator with effective questions. A limitation there is me being a master student and then a novice in research work. This was the first time for me as moderator of focus groups. To minimize the downside of not using a skilled moderator I was diligent in preparing a thorough interview guide, as well as using the first focus group for feedback. I also tested my interview guide with a colleague that has experience in working with and moderating focus groups. This was useful to receive critical feedback and ideas.

The fifth is about handling data precisely, analysing and presenting it in a suitable way. The data were recorded from all focus groups on two separate recorders to ensure nothing was missed and to have a backup in case of technical problems. The data was then diligently transcribed in full. I have also taken steps to improve the quality of the data, including having an independent party read the transcripts in full and comments on their understanding, checking with colleagues on the choice of selection, asking colleagues to comment on the results, and repeatedly going back to the recordings and transcripts throughout to ensure I interpret the findings in a factually correct manner.

There are limitations to using focus groups that is worth to point: According to Anvik et al. (2021) focus groups as a qualitative research methodology have been seen to follow a certain design or set of procedures, but without this being founded in theory or otherwise justified. Most studies using focus groups describe the method without sufficiently tying it to research or research design theory. Most publications conclude by presenting a group consensus, e.g., “the group believes” based on generalised statements from the discussion. The conclusions as such often become descriptive and the research does not fulfil its full potential in generating new insight. Anvik et al. (2021) further argue that focus groups are still useful to understand the interaction of research objects, but that this is often not the focus of studies using the methodology. In terms of my research question, I would still argue focus groups has been a suitable research method given the limitations of scope and the objective of exploring participants perception and ideas.

3.3.1.2 Data handling, coding and analysis

I was learning the process of thematic analysis while applying it, which led to multiple circles of going back to the method, beginning to process the data, going back again to the method, and so on. Throughout it was important to maintain a high degree of reflexivity, to try to understand my own motives as a researcher and avoid this influencing the insights.

An approach to avoiding this would have been to include participant critique of the findings (Creswell, 2009) (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). In my initial plan, I had intended to share the themes and possibly also excerpts back to the participants to ensure it was in line with their sentiment, but unfortunately time did not allow for this last iteration.

3.3.1.3 A short note on language, translation, and AI tools

The focus groups were conducted in Norwegian, consequently, all transcribed data also are in Norwegian. I wish to point out that the analysis and interpretation are based on the original Norwegian data. Cited data presented in this thesis were translated into English by me and proofread by a friend in addition to a separate colleague in the *friluftsliv* field of practice. This measure was taken to ensure that meaning was not lost or biased in the translation. In chapter 1 I clarify my rationale for writing in English further.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has not been used in producing or translating sections of text in this thesis. I have used Grammarly, a software for writing enhancement and plagiarism checks that utilizes AI. Grammarly's AI system use machine learning in combination with different natural language processing approaches. The software offers in this way a powerful tool for writing but is constricted to conventional support on language like grammar, sentence building, and synonyms. We must acknowledge that AI tools like ChatGTP are here to stay, but I found it too early to implement in my writing process since I also needed more practice myself on how to use it in a transparent, constructive, and ethical way. AI tools can fabricate source names, direct quotations, citations, and distort the truth. In addition, there is ongoing litigation linked to copyright infringement. Universities are struggling to keep up with this development, offering unclear policies regarding usage and cheating. For all these reasons I have refrained from using AI tools other than for language enhancement and plagiarism check. This gives me more control of trustworthiness of information by using reliable sources evaluated by myself.

3.3.2 Reflections on the dual role of lecturer/practitioner and researcher

A central feature of social science is that it is a part of the society it deals with and studies. Social researchers are not only observers of society, they are also participants (Grønmo, 2004). The implication of this is known as the two methodological problems *reflexivity* and *reactivity*. Performing research projects can affect the individuals or groups that are studied in a way that they act differently than they normally would. Therefore, the research produced will not give an accurate result, - or rather a different result. This is known as *reactivity* (Jiménez-Buedo, 2021). Secondly, the researcher's social background and experience will affect their perception and understanding of the social phenomena studied. In this way, the knowledge produced will to some extent be affected. This methodological problem is known as *reflexivity* (Grønmo, 2004).

Conducting research in your own field of practice calls for dealing with and being acutely aware of reflexivity (Delamont, 2002). Working with this project I have perpetually investigated and debated my preconceptions situated in the field of practice I am a part of.

Creswell (2009) states that research that involves studying the researcher's own organization, work setting, and students raises difficult power issues. A relevant problem to point out in this research, is that it plausible to assume that a power relation exists between me as lecturer/researcher and students/informants. In addition to striving for an awareness of reflexivity, I suggest that choosing focus group as a method potentially can shift that power relation. Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren (2017) argue that a key feature of focus groups is to give power to the participants to express their opinions and emphasize their importance. Wilkinson (1999, p. 70) supports this claim when she discusses focus groups as a non-hierarchical method, arguing that “focus groups inevitably reduce the researcher’s power and control”. The collective nature of the focus group session in combination with being chosen/invited to participate empowers the participants. Focus groups are seen as especially suitable for researching underprivileged and vulnerable groups. Sharing experiences can result in the participants appreciating that their opinions and perspectives are valid and meaningful (Kitzinger, 1995; Madriz, 2000). Further, the shift of power between researcher and participant can lead to the participants having more control of the discussion and feeling meaningful to participate (Wilkinson, 1999). My subjective experience was that many of the participants expressed positive feelings, curiosity, and engagement with the project in all the focus group sessions. Although not found in the transcribed data of this project, the same feelings were expressed at the end of every session when the voice recorder was stopped, and the meeting came to an end.

3.3.3 Limitations

This study has from my perspective one significant limitation. After conducting all the phases of the research process, I view my beginner experience with thematic analysis as a limitation for this study. As mentioned, and reflected upon earlier, thematic analysis is a non-linear method that you will not find a step-by-step guide for, and that calls for more experience and practice.

4 Findings

Before diving into the findings, I would like to remind the reader of the context. The data collection took place at a Norwegian university that offers a three-year-long bachelor programme in *friluftsliv* studies. Second- and third-year students participated in focus group sessions where their perceptions and thoughts on environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies were discussed. The participants were between the ages of 21 and 55 years old, the majority of them in their early 20s. The interviewer and researcher is their lecturer.

I will defer from drawing heavily on literature in this chapter to rather focus on the flow of presenting the findings. In the next chapter I will unpack and discuss these findings in relation to theoretical concepts.

The findings chapter is structured in two main sections: 1. Looking closer on ways that participants perceive environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies. 2 What ideas they have on operationalising these ideas in their bachelor programme.

4.1 In what ways do participants perceive environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies?

The participants all appear familiar with the term environmental sustainability. It is a term they take to without asking for clarifications, albeit the topic can be abstract and overwhelming. *Maren* explained: «When I think about environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies, I think this is very big ... and ... there are kind of so many things tied to this very big question” A pattern in the responses is that the participants focus on what is tangible and close to their lives. Based on the responses, there are four dominant themes.

4.1.1 Carbon emissions: transport, clothing, and equipment.

The first of the four themes is the topic of carbon emissions, a topic quickly pointed out by all the participants. The main comments on this theme revolve around either transport or clothing and

equipment. The topic of food also comes up, but only briefly and without real discussion, which is why it is not included here.

Across focus groups, one of the first responses from participants is to mention transport and its impact on carbon emissions. *Bjarne* began by highlighting: “At the top of my list here I have written transport. I think that is probably what I think the most about. Or maybe at least what I would think of first». It is a tangible aspect of environmental sustainability that both the participants and the study can address. The participants are aware of the drivers of carbon emission (e.g., flights, cars etc.) and the alternatives (e.g., public transport, not traveling). It is a topic they have discussed before in context of the *friluftsliv* study. *Bjarne* noted that transport «is of course something we talk a lot about in *friluftsliv*, and that we should stay close by kind of, the local *friluftsliv*, and try to reduce emissions by using what we have nearby”. In addition to mode of transport, they recognize that traveling is a choice. *Jenny* summarises some of the choices that can be made: “For example, should you go somewhere nearby, or should you go far away, or should you go on a longer trip, or should it be a shorter trip?”. Despite the consistently high awareness around transport as a contributor to carbon emissions, participants still see travel, and thus also transport, as a natural part of *friluftsliv*, and even see that *friluftsliv* can lead to increased travel. This is also pointed out by *Jenny*, who notes that, «*friluftsliv* can lead to a lot of travel, especially if you look at modern *friluftsliv*”. This is seen as a paradox by *Lena*’s comment that this leads, «*back onto the paradox of friluftsliv, that we go on all these trips, we buy all this equipment...*”.

When reflecting on *friluftsliv* studies and the role of transport, the participants believe that travel or going far away is not necessarily needed. *Pernille* believes a lot can be achieved without travel: «We don’t have to go as far away as possible to the most pristine or the most, well, the best place to exercise *friluftsliv* to learn about *friluftsliv*. You can learn a lot in your local area as well, also the importance of the local area as well”. *Friluftsliv* in nearby areas is seen as a positive way of exercising more sustainable *friluftsliv*, as described by *Pernille*: «The experience of having to find the opportunities that we have around us, that we don’t necessarily have to go far away to have deep and real experiences”. The participants also point out that this is specifically addressed as part of the academic programme in courses such as “local *friluftsliv*”⁴ and “slow *friluftsliv*”. At the same

⁴ Nærfriluftsliv – *friluftsliv* taking place in natural environments close to home translated here to “local *friluftsliv*”

time they also acknowledge the fact that to achieve specific learning objectives in the courses travel is necessary, as *Trine* points out: «The fact that we travel here and there and airplanes and cars and all of that is not very sustainable, but at the same time it is, because you depend on going to different types of environments, especially in school, to learn about different things. Or to work with different things, right. To be an avalanche guide, I was about to say, you can't, or then you have to go somewhere with snow”.

It is not only transport that is linked to carbon emissions. The participants also point out clothing and equipment as a key consideration. The discussion on clothing and equipment distinguishes between two types of clothing and equipment. The first one is items they need or believe they need and are likely to be frequently used, which is covered in the text below. The second one is items for special activities, single excursions or which for other reasons they don't believe they will use frequently. For the second topic, the participants point out that the university disposes of a large storage of different types of equipment. *Arne*: «We have a *friluftsliv* storage, where there is a lot of equipment which in my opinion is maybe not getting enough use”. The participants see this as an opportunity to be more sustainable and economic, as *Geir* points out: “Maybe you could further develop the storage in *friluftsliv*, the one that belongs to the *friluftsliv* programme, to be more, that you could borrow a few more things, that not everyone has to buy stuff”.

When discussing items purchased by themselves, the difference between the participants' discussion on transport versus clothing and equipment is significant. While transport to a large degree is seen as something decided by the university, clothing and equipment is a choice they often make themselves, albeit one that might be inflicted on them by the university. *Jenny* explained: «If you look at the study [of *friluftsliv*], then you need a lot of equipment” and remembers when she was given «a long list of equipment, just like that, for our first trip, that we only had two weeks to get hold of”.

The participants are conscious that many of the decisions related to purchasing clothing and equipment are made by themselves, and the discussion has a significant “before” and “now” narrative. The common theme is that the participants were less aware before. *Lene* describes that before: «I guess I just bought what looked best or sounded best, what was supposed to be of best quality”, while now: “I think more about sustainability. So that's something I didn't think that much

about before I started here". In addition, the participants spend more time reflecting on the other factors impacting the decision-making process. *Jenny* admits that the need for something new is sometimes more perceived than real: «Of course you get tempted to buy new stuff because you kind of feel there is a, you know, a need for it". They also comment on lack of knowledge to make informed decisions, especially early in the studies, as *Arne* recalls: "I also used to be like that, when I started, I had to have expensive stuff, cool, cool things. And then it blows up in the first year".

Influence from advertising, social media and peers is also seen as significant. *Jenny* thinks it is harder for people with limited knowledge: «they don't know what they need", and that this makes it easier for producers to influence purchasing decisions: "there are big campaigns and big companies pushing out amazing adverts, then you buy because you don't know what you need"- *Jenny* admits that social media can have the same influence; «It's very easy to be influenced by for example, Oh that jacket is so nice, in some social media or customer magazine". *Pernille* brings the influence discussion back into the room, and turns to address *Tor*: "I looked at you, and you're this kind of ..., you're a *friluftsliv* -person". She explains: «You are, you know, interested in gear and equipment, and then I saw that you had bought this Mountain Equipment trouser that you were very happy with [...] And then [XX] within a month came with the same trousers. And who else? Oh yeah, and [ZZ], he came with a Mountain Equipment jacket. There was this kind of Mountain Equipment trend spreading because of *Tor*".

The participants discuss several solutions to more environmentally friendly clothing and equipment, including maintenance, repairs, buying less and buying used. They agree that this solution does not compromise their ability to exercise *friluftsliv*. *Arne* chimes in: «You don't necessarily need the newest equipment to hike that mountain top, it is possible to go for a hike, or just go sit under a tree in completely normal clothes". However, something stops them from doing this today. Knowledge is discussed as one of the main obstacles, and the students acknowledge that they spend a lot of time trying to figure out what they need. *Anne* explains the issue: «We're supposed to know a lot about a lot of different *friluftsliv* -activities, and for each activity there are special requirements. So that, I guess I understand that we that are going to be guides and know a lot about a lot of stuff, might need more equipment than others that aren't going to do a lot of different stuff. But it still surprises me how much, I think it has been a lot, yeah, and a lot of googling and searching for things".

The prominent role of carbon emissions in the focus group discussions came as no surprise. The participants show a high degree of awareness around this, and the discussion is made tangible through the focus on concrete drivers of emissions: transport, equipment, and clothing. This is not to say the road from awareness to action is an easy one.

4.1.2 Skills and knowledge: a pre-requisite

The second of the four themes are skills and knowledge. This stands out both as a topic on its own, and as weaved into practically every other topic. The topic takes many forms in the discussion, with some clear similarities. Participants wish they had more knowledge on environmental sustainability. Specifically, they want the study to convey a more tangible understanding, as *Tor* puts it: “Just the matter of putting it even more in perspective, that you actually get it, and understand what is being said and the consequences of it. What happens to nature if we stop caring about sustainability or if we don’t care enough, and help us understand, to get the big picture and rather make sustainability more lucrative in a way”.

The participants generally express a high willingness to be sustainable but fall short in terms of translating theory into actions. Being a few years into their studies, most participants acknowledge knowing more now, and therefore making more conscious choices. “On my part”, *Erik* says: «it’s become more important to make sustainable choices, after I joined the university. I have learnt more about it, gotten more knowledge, and also become more aware”. That said, the participants wish they knew more earlier on. There are skills and knowledge they wish they had from the onset, which might have cost them opportunities to be more sustainable along the way. For example, the participants typically feel they bought a lot of new clothing and equipment in their first year, not knowing what options there were in terms of using alternatives or buying used items. *Pernille* explains that it’s not a matter of big changes, just: “a couple of hours where we can go through what you need or what you don’t need, or what you can make do without”. *Bjarne* has a similar idea of arranging: “two theme days or a day just focusing on repairing equipment”. Another unused potential for learning is the previously mentioned equipment storage at the university. *Arne* explains that the warehouse is run by students, «and most students see this as something that’s a big effort and it’s just another thing you’re not super keen on taking on. But it’s actually a great

opportunity to learn about taking care of stuff, reusing stuff, coming in to fix your own stuff and things like that”.

The interest and hunger for more skills and knowledge is present throughout the discussions. The participants frequently both refer to lack of environmental sustainability in the current studies and refer to concrete examples where it is covered in today’s curriculum. Nevertheless, the consensus is this is something they want and expect to play a bigger role going forward. A suggestion brought forward by among others, *Maren*, is building concrete sustainable skills: «Proper and practical repairs and maintenance skills, of all the *friluftsliv* -equipment we at any point in time have and use that gets worn, and that needs to be taken care of to last”.

Skills and knowledge are not enough. It also has to be easy and accessible. The participants express the desire for someone to tell them, not just what to avoid doing, but also what to do to be environmentally sustainable. *Trine* explains that: «It’s very easy to say don’t do that, kind of, but what about what you actually can do instead that is possible to do and beneficial to go through with”. The participants also want the lecturers to be even clearer and more tangible on when to buy, borrow or substitute, as captured in this quote by *Maren*: “Of course I think it’s important to talk about the list of equipment with the students. It has to be early on, and not just what you need, but also how to get hold of it in a sustainable way”. The participants also have suggestions for sharing knowledge and skills across cohorts. *Pernille* suggests starting the semester with: “a kind of Q&A session with the first, second and third years all together. Where the second- and third-year students can talk about the equipment they have purchased. About their thoughts about the equipment. Is there something they regret. Was anything just waste. Any tips and tricks”. Other suggestions include common channels to buy and sell used clothes and equipment, repair days and workshops. There is a sense of convenience in the discussions, as if to say, if only all the above were in place, we could be more sustainable. The participants do not fully reflect on their role in acquiring skills and knowledge, but this could of course be the result of how the focus groups were framed.

The participants also reflect on their future roles as guides, lectures etc., and the importance of knowledge in communicating environmental sustainability. *Geir* summarises the curriculum on

sustainability into: “how do you best facilitate sustainable attitudes and behaviours in others, either through the students, or with other people, through education”.

The desire to know more and understand more was evident from the focus groups discussions. However, it is not just about making the theory available to the students, they want practical skills and knowledge that can be translated into actions.

4.1.3 Finances as a driver for actions

The third of the four themes is finances. The focus groups consist entirely of full-time students. Even though Norway offers scholarship and student loan arrangements for everyone, most students live on tight budgets, even if working part-time next to their studies. It is no surprise therefore that finances are a driver of both attitudes and actions. *Bjarne* puts it bluntly: «Financial considerations usually trumps the sustainable in most things. As plain as that”. Becoming a student, with the associated financial situation has had a bigger impact on *Bjarne’s* behaviour than sustainability: “Before it was like, I could go into a shop and buy a new shell jacket that looked nice. Or in a way you thought, oh I want this, and maybe one that was a bit more expensive. But now when you’re a student, you live on your own or in shared accommodation, especially the way the housing market is now, then you can’t just buy stuff you want anymore. You become a lot more price conscious.”.

The *friluftsliv* study, with all its requirements for clothing and equipment, adds to this financial burden. *Pernille* has found it difficult: « the fact that we need all this equipment and stuff we have to buy and it’s been a real shame in terms of having to spend so much money. And as a student you maybe don’t have that much money. *Friluftsliv* can be really expensive».

From the perspective of environmental sustainability, the participants don’t necessarily see a contradiction between what a good economic decision is, and what is a sustainable one. *Leif* goes far in saying the two go hand in hand: «But often what is economic is also what is most sustainable. A lot is at least”, and after a bit of discussion in the group comes back with more arguments to support the idea: “but think about equipment and the topic of emissions from transport and stuff like that. It is cheaper to walk to school. And that’s what is best for the environment kind of. It is

cheaper to buy used stuff, and then there won't be made as much new stuff". The other participants share this view and use experiences from the curriculum to underpin it. *Bjarne*: «Or maybe it has to do with this shift, from ..., this *friluftsliv* -shift, that I feel has happened now over the past few years. It's gone from, kind of, clothing worth 20 000 NOK to when we for example did the lumberjack project where we wore cottonwool trousers that didn't cost much and were normal to use at that time. Yeah, rather than buying new things».

The weight given to financials resonates well with research from Aall et al (2011) which has looked at leisure activities and consumption. In general, Norwegians, travel more and farther to practice *friluftsliv*. They also spend more money on clothing and equipment to practice *friluftsliv*. The ideal has moved from something that is simple in materiality to something that is simple practically. In John Sverre Rønnevik's master thesis (2019) he suggests that the only reason consumption is flattening is because time is becoming a constrained factor. A confirmation of this is that during the pandemic, a lot of people had both more time and more money, and consumption again went up (SSB). An interesting question that lingers is perhaps being financially constrained is actually more sustainable for the practice of *friluftsliv*?

4.1.4 Sources of influence and role models

The final of the four themes is influence and role models. The participants mention multiple sources of influence. While environmental sustainability might have become a more mainstream topic, there is still a lack of consensus as to what it means on an individual level. This is reflected in the participants discussions, both in terms of their search for the tangible and in their search for someone to tell them what to do, what is right and what is wrong. This leaves the participants open, and perhaps vulnerable to opinions, which is what makes the role of the teachers so important. *Maren* confirms that: "the teachers have a very big influence". *Trine* explains how important the balancing aspect of the teachers' influence is using an example of buying new equipment: "[the lecturer] walked in and said, do you need it? Is it necessary? Is it? And then I think, no it's not, but I only believe it when it comes from you, but I don't believe it when it's just something I'm thinking for myself in my head".

Teachers exercise this influence not just through teaching and discussions with students, but in every choice they make. *Maren* lists the many ways subtle messages are given: «how the institution that offers *friluftsliv* as a study talks about, considers, evaluates, and invites for discussion in many different aspects like for example *friluftsliv* equipment and how much *friluftsliv* - equipment, transport, travel, location, local nature in the area”. She also describes how lecturers exert influence: “how you talk about this to students, how teachers talk between each other and are role models in, yeah, living sustainable *friluftsliv*. Which literature have you decided that we should read, or not read. And what have you decided that we should discuss. How teachers portray certain topics, and if they portray it subjectively or objectively”. *Maren* and *Trine* support this with a concrete example of how little things can carry great significant. *Maren*: «and it can be very little things, like I have noticed, if I see that, no sorry, it’s just if I see that a teacher has a big patch on his or her jacket, just that is enough to think: shit if I get a hole in my jacket ...”, *Trine* : “... then it’s actually pretty cool [with a patch/repair]”.

At times, the participants discuss being a role model almost like a duty for the teachers, thus further adding to the power attributed to teachers. *Trine* says that: «The teachers can also (...) be seen kind of like role models”, and goes on to explain how this can be used to further sustainability: “if something gets broken then we don’t have to think about buying something new. But then [lecturers] can say just do this and this and then it’s perfectly usable again”. She even suggests students can bring broken items in to learn how they can be mended or solved in other ways than buying something new. *Trine* sees a big benefit from this type of role modelling: «The fact that it’s cool to use old stuff, that it’s used, that it’s cool to be like that, mention it, don’t just say something about it, and then maybe get onto the topic after all the students have bought something, but the whole way, just be like: it’s cool, it’s vintage, then you kind of see that you have done it instead. There are so many that just buy the newest and most expensive equipment, then they have never gone skiing before and all that, and it looks dumb”.

The participants themselves realise that they will have great influence once they start teaching, or guiding, and even now as senior students. *Lene* feels there could be an even higher awareness of this: «we need to emphasise that we as teachers or guides on tour, a tour-guide also have a lot of influence and power in what we do and not just what we say”. *Erik* draws a parallel between the influence teachers have, and that of the students: «[teachers talk about] being role models in terms

of clothing and what clothing they wear, that they are walking billboards or whatever it's called. And that is a bit similar to us as students of *friluftsliv*, we have kind of become experts in this area, and are supposed to be in many different areas, maybe in school and everything. And then I think it's a good idea that we are conscious of the choices we make". The participants discuss the responsibility that comes with being a role model and having influence over others. Especially the exercise of what they would do if they were in control of the study, spurs reflections on this responsibility. *Maren* uses a concrete example of where she should have tried harder to fix a broken jacket: «I tried desperately to get this jacket fixed that had been attacked by a puppy, but the producer wouldn't fix it themselves, and then I had to try harder and look for a place. When I didn't find anywhere in my first attempt, I thought then I need to buy a new one, or a used new one, but still, then I have thought a lot about it since and I'm very embarrassed about it and now I want to try to fix it again". The participants also tie this role to their need for better skills and knowledge on the topic, and the perceived expectation that this is something they should know and be aware of.

The first theme, carbon emissions talked about external factors such as adverts, social media etc., trying to influence purchasing decisions. The theme on influence and role models is therefore an important one, as it showed awareness and reflection around the influence the participants and teachers exert, and the responsibility that comes with being a role model.

At a headline level the four themes almost create a form of narrative of why it is important (we need to reduce carbon emissions), how can I do something about it (we need more knowledge), what is stopping me (it's expensive) and finally a reminder that what each of us do is important (you are a role model). While this was never the intention, it illustrates how tightly interlinked the four themes are, and how complex the topic of sustainability is. The participants demonstrate awareness of the main challenges to environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv*, but don't feel they have enough knowledge or the right skillset to fully address them. Finances quickly become an absolute limiting factor, especially with the burden of the equipment list needed for the *friluftsliv* study. The discussion on influence and role models highlights the need to raise awareness and ambitions higher, as little things can have a big impact.

4.2 The students' ideas on operationalising environmental sustainability in their *friluftsliv* studies

As part of the focus group research, I asked the participants what they would do to better incorporate environmental sustainability if they were in charge of the faculty. The question was meant to trigger the students to think freely by stepping into another role. The question and following discussions almost ended up throwing me off track, as it gave several interesting responses that I have spent a lot of time deliberating over, but which are not necessarily core to this research project. The findings can be divided into two themes: how to make daily operations more sustainable, and how to learn more about sustainability.

4.2.1 How to make daily operations more sustainable

The participants are not familiar with all aspects of the university's operations, so the discussion naturally focused on the areas they are more or less directly involved in, such as lectures, trips and excursions. The topic of transport and carbon emissions was brought back up, and several suggestions were made for improvements. *Lene* suggests that the study should: "teach students to plan transport and maybe even calculate how much emissions it actually produces, It doesn't have to be for one of the long trips, but I think, or we hear a lot about the fact that there are a lot of emissions when you travel far, but you don't really ever hear about the difference in taking a train or taking a bus". The participants clearly feel a lack of insight into the impact the operations have, as can be seen from a comment made by *Emelie* as well: "I think there is a bit too little information about sustainability ahead of trips". At the same time, the participants are explicit that they want sustainability to be a theme throughout, and not just related to excursions. *Maren* wants to make it clear that sustainability has to be considered all the time, and not just on expedition: « t is something we have to look at in all of society, kind of. Also, when we work with *friluftsliv* and health, for example. Not just in the nature guide that has to think about flying here and there and stuff like that, you know".

The participants were quick to dive into lectures and trips with concrete suggestions. Many of the suggestions were simply about adding it to the agenda, being explicit about sustainability as a consideration, more than actually making major changes.

4.2.2 How to learn more about sustainability

The participants agree that sustainability is already part of the current curriculum and would like this to continue. *Erik* points out that there are already multiple courses that touch upon sustainability and adds: «That is something I think we should continue doing». However, this does not mean the participants see it as enough. On the contrary, a suggestion by *Maren* sets a different expectation: “could you have this requirement, that everyone that teaches, has to, during each lesson, mention sustainability. That sustainability should be an agenda item in all classes”. Another participant, *Emelie*, suggests a separate course could be another solution «could they instead get sports and ..., no, *friluftsliv* and sustainability as a course during the second year”. She refers to the course sports and sustainability which is part of a different bachelor programme and suggests reusing relevant material. The participants also see a need for teaching on this topic to become more practical and tangible. *Trine* is clear that they need to not just learn about sustainability, but also what to do about it: «Instead of just saying what it is, also learning what you can actually do to in order to actually conduct sustainable *friluftsliv*”.

That said, the groups did come up with several ideas for how to make sustainability practical and concrete. Examples include getting students to sell something on Finn.no (online marketplace) as suggested by *Anne*: «go through your equipment and find one item you don't need and sell it on Finn”. Another version of this was using the university e-learning platform to buy, sell and exchange as suggested by *Bjarne*: “create a separate Canvas room called re-use and sustainability. Where you for example, the students can upload their equipment and make deals between themselves. Or that on the homepage there are links to stored searches, e.g., winter sleeping bags on Finn. So just one click and you can get notifications every time a new ad is posted”. Another example on how to learn more about sustainability while making it tangible for the students is arranging repair-workshop or even separate days dedicated to repairs.

The ideas on learning range from the simple ideas of adding to the curriculum either as part of other courses or a separate course, to more innovative ideas of using or creating online tools and marketplaces. An interesting afterthought to these ideas is where to draw the line between what an institution is responsible for and should naturally take on, and where students or student bodies could play a more proactive role. The latter is naturally targeted at some of the more innovative ideas.

While the ideas on operationalising environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies unlikely captures the full width of how the study needs to evolve, it does lend support that more sustainability in the curriculum, in a more embedded way, and more tangible will be welcomed by the students. It also suggests that the students don't necessarily want to see everything turned on its head, but rather experience that sustainability is a topic that permeates everything, from operations to teaching and facilitation.

5 Discussion

In the previous chapter, I present the findings from the research grouped into four themes. I arrived at the four themes based on methodical work, first coding the transcribed focus groups, and later attempting various alternatives for grouping the codes until I arrived at the one used above. While the typical next step is to continue the discussion along the four themes, I have chosen to move forward with only three of them. I have not focused on the finding of Finances as a driver for action. Although this would be an interesting theme to explore further, I chose to focus on the other three themes which tie more closely in with the research question.

5.1 Carbon emissions: From awareness to action

The first theme is carbon emissions. Carbon emissions is a well-known aspect of environmental sustainability, and the topic has been made mainstream by both media, government and the likes. It is no wonder therefore, that this is one of the first themes to emerge from the research data, and also a natural place for the participants to start the discussion.

The findings chapter notes two aspects of carbon emissions that the participants delve on especially, transport, and clothing and equipment. Transport is discussed both in relation to the study, and the numerous trips and expeditions that are part of the curriculum, but also in terms of the need or desire to travel to practice *friluftsliv*. Clothing and equipment is discussed in relation to the study by referring to the “list of equipment” the institution requires that the students have, but the discussion lingers more on the general need for clothing and equipment in practicing *friluftsliv*.

There are two dimensions to the discussion on climate emission. What the participants can do themselves or influence directly, and what the university decides. The participants seem to have higher expectations, or demands, to the university, while being more forgiving over personal choices. The Norwegian climate psychologist Per Espen Stoknes (Stoknes, 2014, 2015) argues that even if we as individuals have a lot of knowledge about sustainability it does not seem to lead change of behaviour. This resonates with the findings from the focus groups. The participants claim to have made some improvements since becoming students of *friluftsliv*, stating that they are now

more aware. However, they still describe a need for convincing before changing their behavior, such as seeing a teacher wear repaired clothes or discussing sustainability.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, this raises the question of what education in relation to sustainability is. Is the role of the university to educate the students about sustainable development or to educate the students for sustainable development? (McKeown, 2002) The UN Sustainable Development Goals list education as a tool or method to achieving the goals, thus lending support to the latter. This paradigm shift happened in 2015, but it still remains to be seen how this will unfold. With the recent updated school curriculum in Norway (UDIR, 2023) sustainable development is an integral part as an interdisciplinary theme.

5.2 Skills and knowledge: Learning about or learning to

The second theme is skills and knowledge. The participants vary in their views as to how much theory and knowledge is currently part of the curriculum, but they all agree on the need for more. While they generally demonstrate a high awareness of environmental sustainability as a topic, they grapple with what it actually means and more importantly what it means they should do or not do.

Once again tangibility permeates the theme. Participants discuss concrete suggestions for building sustainable skills such as maintenance and repair, or even just knowledge of what to buy or what not to buy, and what can be bought used. In discussing the need for more practical skills, the participants are clear that it also has to be easy and accessible, for example by being able to use university resources for own repairs. This poses the question of where the line is drawn between the university's responsibility in building practical skills as part of a wider curriculum, and the students' own responsibility. Sustainability didactics are based on students' normal life and authentic learning situations. With this backdrop, the university will potentially have an extended responsibility in facilitating the building of practical skills outside the classroom, as is situated in *friluftsliv* pedagogies.

In terms of theory and learning about sustainability, the participants express the desire for someone to tell them what to do. This deviates from the traditional didactics in Norway, which typically revolve around teaching students critical thinking. However, perhaps the participants request resonates with Astrid Sinnes (2020) model on “action competence” in sustainability, which highlights the need for teaching to lift solutions to the problems and give the students ample opportunity to implement practical solutions;

- What is the challenge about?
- How is this challenge expressed in my environment?
- How do I impact this challenge?
- How can the school/university be a part of the solution?

5.3 Influence and role models: The role of power

The third theme included here is influence and role models. The participants were conscious that there were many sources of influence when for example discussing decisions on purchasing clothing or equipment. However, the realisation that they themselves might be seen as role models only really picked up in the discussion during the activity where they were asked to “be in charge of the institute”. *Lene* was quick to point out that actions and not just words were important: «(...) I also wrote that knowledge is key for change and action. And tried to emphasize that we as teachers, slash guides on a trip, a *friluftsliv* supervisor⁵ also have very strong influence through what we do – not just what we say».

The participant citation claims that knowledge is key for change and action. This is contradictory to what the Norwegian climate psychologist Per Espen Stoknes (Stoknes, 2014, 2015) claims. He argues that at an individual level, knowledge about sustainability does not seem to lead to action.

⁵ I choose to use “*friluftsliv* supervisor” as translation for *veileder* according to the suggestion of Hofmann, A. R., Rolland, C. G., Rafoss, K., & Zoglowek, H. (2018). *Norwegian Friluftsliv : A Way of Living and Learning in Nature* (1st, New ed.). Waxmann. “Conwayer” is also suggested to use by Dahle Dahle, B. (2007). *Norwegian Friluftsliv: A Lifelong Communal Process*. In B. Henderson & N. Vikander (Eds.), *Nature first : outdoor life the Friluftsliv way*. Natural Heritage Books.

The interesting aspect of influence and role models is whether that has more impact than knowledge on its own.

To understand the impact of others on sustainable action, I went back to Foucault's theory on power. One of Foucault's theories is that of normalising power. Normalising power assumes that power is everywhere and runs through all of us. It is what makes people do what they want to do anyway. In other words, the structures and systems that make us who we are. For example, a university will create a student that thinks and acts in certain ways. This is a source of influence that can potentially bridge the gap between knowledge and action, and as such power can be seen as a positive driving force for change.

6 Conclusions and implications

6.1 Main findings

In this research project I have attempted to understand university students' perception of environmental sustainability in *friluftsliv* studies. I have reviewed theory on *friluftsliv*, sustainability, education. I attempted to limit the scope to environmental sustainability, but this was challenged by both the focus group participants, and later by myself in critiquing the method. I have looked at the role of power in making university students discuss their own line of education.

I have conducted four focus groups, with 3-4 participants in each. The participants were recruited from the second and third year of *friluftsliv* studies at a Norwegian university. Through the research work I have gathered a useful set of data that really lifts the hood on what students think. The data has been transcribed, coded and analysed, landing on four themes as findings: (1) Carbon emissions, (2) Skills and knowledge, (3) Finances as a driver of action and (4) Influence and role models. Out of the four themes from the findings, I included 1, 2 and 4 in the discussion, and reviewed the implications against theory. Finding number (3) finances as a driver of action, I excluded, since this, although interesting on its own, is less relevant for my research thesis.

If I were to sum up the findings from this thesis in one sentence it would be "Make it tangible!". The students have a high awareness of sustainability, yet are hungry for more insight, knowledge, and skills. They would not mind seeing sustainability as something that permeates the entire study, on the condition that it is practical and accessible. More bluntly, the participants want someone to tell them what to do, and what not to do, to be environmentally sustainable.

The discussion also lingers on the tangible. Carbon emissions surfaced as a theme based on discussions on the impact of transport, clothing and equipment. The theme skills and knowledge surfaced from discussions not just about more theory as part of the curriculum, but a desire for practical hands-on skills such as maintenance, repairs – and knowing what not to buy or what to buy used. Again, the use of concrete examples in the discussions confirms that the students are serious when they ask for sustainability to be made more tangible. Influence and role models as a

theme emerged as a theme based on discussions of what teachers could do to make being sustainable more acceptable, and how they themselves needed to reflect on their responsibilities as role models. That said, the road from knowledge and awareness to action is an easy one, as much of the discussion also exemplifies.

6.2 Implications for practice

The intent was never to invite the participants to solve any problems. I wished to give an interesting and open-ended task, to which the participants enthusiastically jumped into the discussion with their experiences and ideas. The implications do not take into account all the students wishes and ideas for the programme, but rather acknowledges the insights and perspectives they bring.

Implementing sustainable development in an organisation is not a straightforward process. It requires that all parts of the organisation are involved. A take-away from this research work is that students should, and need to be, involved in the whole process, from planning, to implementation and reflection. Whether it is at an institutional level, or in a single course, having that discussion with students: what are the implications and trade-offs, what can we do differently will also help build the practical skills and insights the students call for.

Another implication is that the study should avoid trying to narrow down sustainability. It is difficult, if not impossible, to limit sustainability to cover only environmental sustainability. The participants, represented by *Maren*, argue that sustainability in *friluftsliv* is much broader:

"[it] something we need to consider throughout society, in a way. Even when we work with *friluftsliv* and health, for example. It's not just the nature guide who has to think about flying here and there".

6.3 Potential topics for further research

There are multiple interesting research topics that could serve as possible continuations of this project.

It would also be interesting to further unpack the theoretical foundations of didactics in *friluftsliv* relative to the education for sustainable development framework. There is a potential for *friluftsliv* studies and *friluftsliv* pedagogies to look at sustainability didactics for inspiration. An action research project on this utilizing practitioners and students research would be interesting.

One example that is less related to my original research question is pursuing the finding on financials as a driver of actions. Research shows that despite higher awareness of sustainability, the only limiting factor to consumption is time and money. Norway has, with few exceptions, seen declining interest rates and rising wealth for close to 30 years. This has now turned, with high inflation, high interest rates and a reduction in disposable income. How will this impact the consumption trend in *friluftsliv*?

7 References

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1: Invitation to participate and consent form

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

«A Case Study of Students Experiences on How Environmental Sustainability is Operationalized in a Norwegian University Friluftsliv Program»

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et masterprosjekt ved Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge (USN) som undersøker hvordan høyskolestudenter opplever at de lærer om klima- og miljømessig bærekraft. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Universiteter og høyskoler arbeider for å gjøre sine utdanningsprogram mer bærekraftige, dette kommer til syne i f.eks. ulike strategidokument og visjoner. Men på hvilken måte operasjonaliseres dette for studentene i utdanningsprogrammene?

Dette masterprosjektet undersøker: a) hvordan opplever studentene arbeidet med klima- og miljømessig bærekraft på sin institusjon? b) på hvilke måter lærer studentene noe om klima- og miljømessig bærekraft ved å studere friluftslivsfag på høyskole?

Ved å undersøke studentenes erfaringer og perspektiv vil prosjektet diskutere muligheter og begrensninger for å utvikle mer bærekraftige og innovative utdanningsprogram.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet gjennomføres av masterstudent ved USN, Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson. Ansvarlig for prosjektet er veileder professor Simon Kennedy Beames. Institutt for friluftsliv, idrett og kroppssøving ved Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge (USN) er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Vi ønsker å komme i kontakt med bachelorstudenter i friluftslivsfag for å gjennomføre individuelle, semi-strukturerte intervju og fokusgruppeintervju.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Dersom du ønsker å delta i prosjektet vil dette forgå i 2 deler:

1. Du blir invitert inn til et fokusgruppeintervju med Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson. Intervjuene vil ta 60 – 90min og gjennomføres på NIH og spørsmålene vil dekke temaer som berører dine opplevelser og erfaringer fra studieløpet på NIH så langt. Intervjuet blir tatt opp med lydopptaker. Lydopptaket vil slettes etter at det har blitt transkribert og navn på deltagere blir erstattet med fiktive navn. Fokusgruppa vil bestå av 4 deltagere
2. Du blir også potensielt invitert til et individuelt semi-strukturert intervju som tar ca. 30min og blir gjennomført på NIH. Spørsmålene vil dekke samme temaer som i fokusgruppeintervjuene. Intervjuet blir tatt opp med lydopptaker. Lydopptaket slettes etter at det har blitt transkribert.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Om du trekker deg fra prosjektet vil det ikke ha noen innvirkning på lærer – student forholdet mellom deg og Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson. Dette prosjektet inngår ikke ordinær undervisning ved NIH.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er kun Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson og Simon Kennedy Beames som har tilgang på opplysninger.
- Datamaterialet vil lagres på en kryptert laptop og USN OneDrive med diskfil (Encrypted Virtual Disk). Sikkerhetskopi lagres på en kryptert ekstern hardisk som er låst inn fysisk. Dette følger retningslinjer for håndtering av forskningsdata ved USN.
- Navn og kontaktopplysningene dine vil jeg erstatte med en kode på en navneliste som oppbevares separat fra datamaterialet.

Deltagere vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i den ferdige masteroppgaven

Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes i utgangen av juni 2023 og datamaterialet med dine opplysninger vil slettes.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke. På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge har Personverntjenester NSD vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge ved Simon Beames
- Vårt personvernombud: Paal Are Solberg 35 57 50 53 / 918 60 041/ paal.a.solberg@usn.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost (personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Simon Beames
(Forsker/veileder)

Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson
(Masterstudent)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «A Case Study of Students Experiences on How Environmental Sustainability is Operationalized in a Norwegian University Friluftsliv Program», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i fokusgruppeintervju
- å delta i individuelt intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

8.2 Appendix 2: Approved application SIKT



[Meldeskjema](#) / [A Case Study of Students Experiences on how Environmental Sustainai...](#) / Vurdering

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer 645035	Vurderingstype Automatisk	Dato 23.12.2022
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Prosjektittel
A Case Study of Students Experiences on how Environmental Sustainability is Operationalised in a Norwegian University Friluftsliv Program

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge / Fakultet for humaniora, idrett- og utdanningsvitenskap / Institutt for friluftsliv, idrett og kroppsøving

Prosjektansvarlig
Simon Kennedy Beames

Student
Elisabeth Kjeldahl Nilsson

Prosjektperiode
29.11.2022 - 30.07.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 30.07.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

Grunnlag for automatisk vurdering

Meldeskjemaet har fått en automatisk vurdering. Det vil si at vurderingen er foretatt maskinelt, basert på informasjonen som er fylt inn i meldeskjemaet. Kun behandling av personopplysninger med lav personvernulempe og risiko får automatisk vurdering. Sentrale kriterier er:

- De registrerte er over 15 år
- Behandlingen omfatter ikke særlige kategorier personopplysninger;
 - Rasemessig eller etnisk opprinnelse
 - Politisk, religiøs eller filosofisk overbevisning
 - Fagforeningsmedlemskap
 - Genetiske data
 - Biometriske data for å entydig identifisere et individ
 - Helseopplysninger
 - Seksuelle forhold eller seksuell orientering
- Behandlingen omfatter ikke opplysninger om straffedommer og lovovertrедelser
- Personopplysningene skal ikke behandles utenfor EU/EØS-området, og ingen som befinner seg utenfor EU/EØS skal ha tilgang til personopplysningene
- De registrerte mottar informasjon på forhånd om behandlingen av personopplysningene.

Informasjon til de registrerte (utvalgene) om behandlingen må inneholde

- Den behandlingsansvarliges identitet og kontaktopplysninger
- Kontaktopplysninger til personvernombudet (hvis relevant)
- Formålet med behandlingen av personopplysningene
- Det vitenskapelige formålet (formålet med studien)
- Det lovlige grunnlaget for behandlingen av personopplysningene
- Hvilke personopplysninger som vil bli behandlet, og hvordan de samles inn, eller hvor de hentes fra
- Hvem som vil få tilgang til personopplysningene (kategorier mottakere)
- Hvor lenge personopplysningene vil bli behandlet
- Retten til å trekke samtykket tilbake og øvrige rettigheter

Vi anbefaler å bruke vår [mal til informasjonsskriv](#).

Informasjonssikkerhet

Du må behandle personopplysningene i tråd med retningslinjene for informasjonssikkerhet og lagringsguider ved behandlingsansvarlig institusjon. Institusjonen er ansvarlig for at vilkårene for personvernforordningen artikkel 5.1. d) riktighet, 5. 1. f) integritet og konfidensialitet, og 32 sikkerhet er oppfylt.

8.3 Appendix 3: Final interview guide focus group

Intervjuguide fokusgruppe

Versjon: siste før gjennomføring 19.01.2023

Tid: 60 – 90minm

Antall deltagere: 4

Husk underveis:

- Bruk korte pauser.
- Ikke vær redd for stillhet.
- Stimuler til mer utfyllende informasjon, f.eks. Kan du forklare mer?; Kan du gi et eksempel?; Kan du utdype det?; Er det noe mer?; Kan du beskrive det, jeg forstår ikke.
- Gi respons for å vise at du har lyttet og forstått deltakerne, men unngå oppmuntring om hva som er positivt og negativt som "det er bra, flott osv."
- Forsøk å sørge for på en naturlig måte at alle får ordet og at ikke få dominerer samtalen eller drar diskusjonen vekk fra temaene som prosjektet er interessert av.
- Vær obs på om deltagere henger seg på hverandres meninger.
- Ikke spør «hvorfor».
- Hold spørsmålene enkle.
- Vær forsiktig med å bruke eksempler.

Første fase: etablere atmosfære og sette rammer for intervjuet

1. Løs prat (5 min)

- Plassere alle i rommet.
- Tilby noe å drikke.
- Vente på de som er seint ute.
- Del ut noe å skrive på og med til alle deltagere.

2. Informasjon (5 min)

- Ønske deltakerne velkommen.
- Kort presentere meg selv.
- Sier litt om tema og bakgrunnen for samtalen.

Stikkord: Skal handle om erfaringer dere har hatt som studenter på BA Friluftsliv. Jeg er ikke ute etter noen «riktige svar» men jeg er nysgjerrig på hva deres tanker og erfaringer er.

- Kort forklare hva en fokusgruppe er, og hva det brukes til.

Stikkord: intervju vs. diskusjon. I innkalling har jeg skrevet intervju – men velger mer å fasilitere det som en diskusjon.

- Gå igjennom noen kjøreregler for gruppen:
 - a) Vi legger alle vekk telefoner.
 - b) Dere snakker med hverandre, da er det viktig å lytte til hverandre og vise hverandre respekt. Alle er like viktige.
 - c) Dere skal gi uttrykk for egen mening uavhengig om det er forskjellig fra andre sine.
 - d) Rollen min som moderator er å guide samtalen.
- Jeg kommer til å notere underveis og det kan dere gjøre også – det blir en aktivitet der vi skal bruke penn og papir
- Ta dere god tid til å tenke, litt stillhet er ikke farlig
- Er det noen spørsmål før vi fortsetter?

3. Formaliteter (5 min)

- Med deres tillatelse bruker jeg lydopptaker for å samle data på en så presis måte som mulig. Presisere at opptaket er det kun meg selv og veileder som vil ha tilgang på opptaket og at det blir lagret etter retninglinjer.

Starte lydopptaket

Andre fase: Samtale og diskusjon kring temaer

Spørsmål for å samtale over tema (ca. 60 min)

- Fortell hvor gamle dere er, hva du studerer og hva du synes er mest morsomt med å studere friluftsliv.
- Bruk to minutter på å tenke selv i stillhet: Hva tenker dere på, når dere tenker på klima og -miljømessig bærekraft i friluftslivsfag?
- Har deres forståelse av klima og -miljømessig bærekraft endret seg i løpet av studietiden?
- Tror du man kan lære om klima- og miljømessig bærekraft gjennom friluftslivstudier?
- Opplever dere at man tematisere klima- og miljømessig bærekraft på friluftslivstudiet?
- 'Drømmescenario': Nå sier vi at vi sender alle friluftslivfaglærerne på ferie resten av året. Dere fire tar over daglig drift og skal planlegge for og videreutvikle BA i friluftsliv. Dere skal ha arbeidsmøte nå straks om hvordan dere skal endre utdanningen slik at studentene lærer mer om klima- og miljøbærekraft.
- Før møtet starter får dere 10 minutter individuelt i stillhet til å forberede dere til arbeidsmøtet (diskusjonen).
- Igjen – her er det ingen fasit- jeg er nysgjerrig på deres diskusjon – vi trenger ikke bli enige om noe som helst.
- Min rolle er å være sekretær.

- DERSOM DET ER NOK TID: Jeg bytter nå rolle, jeg er nå instituttleder og sekretæren har sendt over referat fra arbeidsmøtet deres som jeg har sett på. Her er mine spørsmål:

Husk: Noter underveis og still kritiske spørsmål som f.eks. hva er formålet med utdanningen, og bruk gravende spørsmål som f.eks. hva mener du med det.

Begynner å runde av diskusjonen

- Er det ting dere gjør i hverdagen på grunn av klima og naturkrisen?
- Av det vi har snakket om i dag, hva har vært det viktigste for dere?
- BONUS om nok tid: Om du var i mine sko som moderator, hva ville du spurt gruppa om?

Tredje fase: Oppsummering

Oppsummering: (ca. 15 min)

- Oppsummere kort muntlig, hold det kort så deltagerne ikke mister tråden. Siter gjerne.
- Er dette en god oppsummering av hva vi har snakket om?
- Har dere noe å legge til?
- FØRSTE INTERVJU: Dette er første intervjuet jeg gjennomfører, skal gjennomføre flere neste ukene, har dere noen råd til meg?
 - Del målet med arbeidet.
 - Nok tid til å tenke selv?
 - Var det for mange eller for få spørsmål

Takk for at dere deltok!

8.4 Appendix 4: Final interview guide focus group translated to English

Focus Group Discussion Guide

*Version: Final updated version prior to focus groups taking place.
Translated to English on the 16th of May 2023.*

Duration: 60 – 90min

Number of participants: 4

Remember during the session:

- Use short breaks.
- Don't be afraid of silence.
- Use probing questions for more information; Can you explain further?; Can you provide an example?; Can you elaborate? Is there anything else? Please describe what you mean, I do not understand.
- Give response to show that you are listening and understand the participants. Avoid encouraging what is positive and negative, like «that is correct” or “very good” and so on.
- Make sure that all participants are allowed to talk and that not only a few dominate the conversation or divert the discussion away from theme of the research question.
- Be observant to if the participants piggyback on each other's opinions.
- Avoid asking «Why».
- Keep questions simple.
- Be cautious about giving examples.

First phase: establish the atmosphere and context for the discussion.

1. Smalltalk (5min)

- Seat the participants.
- Wait for latecomers.
- Offer beverages.
- Hand out pen and paper to everyone.

2. Information (5 min)

- Welcome.
- Brief introduction of me.
- Information on the theme and background for the conversation.

Keywords: The University is working on environmental sustainability – the goal of the study is to explore the students' experiences and perspectives – and hopes to contribute to develop the education. Your experiences and thoughts are important.

This is about the experiences you have had as BA students of Friluftsliv. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, but I am curious to hear your thoughts and experiences.

- Briefly explain what focus groups are and what they are used for.

Keywords: interview versus discussion. In the information letter I wrote interview, but I have chosen to facilitate it as a discussion.

- Go through some code of conduct for the group:
 - a) Put away all phones.
 - b) You are talking with each other, and it is important to listen to each other and show respect. Everyone is equally important.
 - c) You should express your own opinion even if it differs from others.
 - d) My role as moderator is to guide the conversation.
- I will take notes and so can you. You will need pen and paper for some activities during the focus group.
- Take your time before answering, don't be afraid of the silence.
- Are there any questions before we proceed?

3. Formalities (5 min)

- With your consent I will use an audio recorder to collect the data in a precise matter. Only I and my supervisor will have access to the recordings, and it will be stored according to guidelines.

Start audio recording.

Second phase: Discussion on themes.

Questions to discuss theme (approximately 60min)

- Please share your age, study programme and what you find most enjoyable studying *friluftsliv*.
- Spend two minutes individually: What you think of when you think of environmental sustainability and *friluftsliv* studies.
- Has your understanding of environmental sustainability changed during your time as students?
- Do you think you can learn about environmental sustainability through *friluftsliv* studies?
- Have you experienced that environmental sustainability is conceptualised during your studies?
- 'Dream scenario': Let's assume the teaching staff are sent on vacation for the rest of the year. The four of you will take over the running of the studies and will plan and develop the BA in *Friluftsliv*. You are about to start a meeting on how you will change the studies in order for students to learn more about environmental sustainability.
 - First you will get 10 minutes individually in silence to prepare for the meeting (discussion).
 - I repeat – there is no right or wrong answer. I am curious to hear the discussion and we don't have to agree on anything.
 - My role is to be the secretary.

- IF TIME ALLOWS: I will now switch roles, I am the head of the institute. My secretary has shared the minutes from the meeting. I have reviewed the minutes and have some questions.

Remember: Take notes and use critical questions, e.g., what is the goal of the study, as well as probing questions.

Starting to round off discussions.

- Are there things you do today because of the climate and nature crisis?
- Of all the topics we covered today, what has been the most important for you?
- IF TIME ALLOWS: If you were in my shoes as a moderator, what would you ask the group?

Third phase: Summary

Summary: (ca 15 min)

- Give a brief verbal summary. Keep it short so the participants can follow. Quote or refer to their answers if possible.
- Is this a good summary of what we have discussed?
- Is there anything you would like to add?
- FIRST ROUND ONLY: This is the first focus group. I will be conducting more over the coming weeks. Do you have any advice to give me?
 - Share the purpose of the work.
 - Was there enough time to think individually?
 - Where there too many or too few questions?

Thank you for participating!