

# Nordic Border Crossings

## Coastal Communities and Connected Cultures in Eighteenth-Century Norway, Scotland, and Canada

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**ABSTRACT:** Coastal cultures form a complex area of research, offering new opportunities to investigate and understand the history of cultural encounters and transnational “regions of culture” across the Northern peripheries. This article investigates the connected cultures of coastal communities of Norway, Scotland, and Canada after 1700. A shared, diverse, but similarly sea-focused cultural landscape exists across the North that informs the way in which regional cultural identities are formed and maintained. Using new methodologies of cultural transfer such as entangled histories or *histoire croisée*, this article pays particular attention to the creation of transient cross-cultural networks and regions stimulated by trade and related contacts across the North Sea and the North Atlantic.

**RÉSUMÉ :** Les cultures côtières forment un domaine de recherche complexe, offrant de nouvelles opportunités d’enquêter sur et de comprendre l’histoire des rencontres culturelles et des « régions de culture » transnationales à travers les périphéries du Nord. Cet article examine les cultures interconnectées des communautés côtières de la Norvège, de l’Écosse et du Canada après 1700. Un paysage culturel partagé, diversifié, mais, de façon commune, axé sur la mer, existe à travers le Nord, renseignant sur la façon dont les identités culturelles régionales sont formées et maintenues. Par l’utilisation de nouvelles méthodologies de transfert culturel telles que les histoires croisées ou entangled histories, cet article accorde une attention particulière à la création de réseaux interculturels transitoires et aux régions stimulées par le commerce et les contacts connexes à travers la mer du Nord et l’Atlantique Nord.

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## Connected Cultures

**A** shared, diverse, but similarly sea-focused cultural landscapes exist across the coastal areas of the North Sea and the North Atlantic that informs the way in which national and regional cultural identities are shaped and maintained (Rian). They also form the basis of ways in which coastal communities interact across the North Sea in transnational cultural regions or “sub-national regions crossing international boundaries” (Winge 48). This article investigates the connected cultures of Norway and Scotland’s coastal communities and the intercultural links that have historically crossed the North Sea and the North Atlantic, linking the coastal regions of Scandinavia with that of the British Isles and Canada.

The time frame for the present article is the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which for both Norway and Scotland is a complex historical period. Norway was part of the Danish realm (Kingdom of Denmark–Norway) until 1814, and from 1814 to 1905 in a union with Sweden, whereas Scotland became part of an Anglo-Scottish kingdom from 1707 onwards. Parts of northern Scotland, such as the Scottish Northern Isles, had for long been part of a wider Nordic territory, with political transfer of the islands of Orkney and Shetland from the Norwegian to the Scottish Crown occurring in 1468 and 1469 respectively (Crawford 47). When the shared cultural heritage that connects Norway and Scotland is considered, the archipelagos of Shetland and Orkney therefore stand out as particularly evident areas of intercultural influences. Archaeological, historical, and cultural evidence suggest regional communities that are far from isolated by their geographical position, but connected via maritime links both across the North Sea and the North Atlantic.

As is apparent from maps of the North Atlantic such as the *Carta Marina* (Magnus 1539), the islands of Orkney and Shetland continued to be of significance to Dano-Norwegian, Dutch, and German traders and fishermen throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Zickermann). However, the Shetland Islands, in particular, were almost unknown to British visitors up until the introduction of a regular steamship service from the Scottish mainland in the mid-nineteenth century (Reeploeg 2015). Exploring eighteenth-century connections as part of the dynamics of intercultural regions thus allows us to understand cultural encounters that cross the borders of Scandinavia as well as focus on less dominant areas of research, offering new avenues to investigate cultural encounters across the North Atlantic region.

Within Europe, both tangible and intangible cultures have already been shown to be rich sources for investigating the dialogue between space, identity, and organization (Jönsson, Tägil, and Törnqvist). Coastal communities perceive

the sea not as a boundary, but as more of a bridge, a link to the world beyond, an opportunity for intercultural contact. A shared, cross-cultural vocabulary and knowledge about both the sea and the land, the offshore fishing grounds, and the coastal environment also form a critical part of the economic and cultural capital of North Atlantic coastal communities. They share a set of environments and cultures that are different from inland areas, often shaped by a combination-economy of farming and various ways of using the sea and coast (Schjelderup 35-65). This is visible in tangible objects such as harbours, boats (Christensen), and coastal buildings, but also the less tangible knowledge about the coast, such as navigation (Redondo) and fishing meds (a combination of inland and offshore orientation to locate fishing grounds, safe anchorages, and other underwater landscape features) (Klepp 13; Simpson). Shared narratives mediate and transmit this knowledge to coming generations. They connect coastal communities to each other in diverse but similarly sea-focused cultural landscapes that exist across the cultural landscape of the North Sea (Løseth and Sæther; Andersen, Greenhill, and Grude). These narratives, in turn, inform the way in which regional cultural identities are formed and maintained (Paasi; Rian). They also form the basis of ways in which coastal communities maintain communal memories (Aronsson). Thus “sub-national regions crossing international boundaries” are created, maintained, and transformed over time (Winge 48).

## Entangled Histories

Cultural identity often hinges upon “belonging” to one or the other homogenous nation-state, ethnic group, or language area. Modern historical narratives have often aligned cultural and territorial borders with those of nation-states, with historians often speaking of the “birth of...” nations, regions, or cultures as if, before that point, no common or defined cultural identities existed.

The term “multicultural” emphasizes cultural difference, often linking it to modern nation-state or ethnic borders. Equally, the terms “cross-cultural” or the experience of “acculturation” (the modification of the culture of a group or of a single individual as a result of contact with a different culture) depend on the way in which these unique and different cultures come into contact with each other’s distinct systems of norms, beliefs, practices, and values. This separatist stance has been questioned by historians and cultural theorists keen to point to transnational political spaces, questioning nationalist perspectives that uncritically accept historically-constituted formations (Werner and Zimmermann). Alternative concepts such as entangled histories or *histoire croisée*, for example, reach beyond the notion of cultural influence as a simple (one-way) reception of culture. Instead, it aims to add to cultural transfer studies in that connections and relations are

emphasized and the back-and-forth negotiations in influences are considered (Marjanen 244).

Intercultural links have occurred throughout history, and it is possible to discern trends and distinct periods that gave rise to new coherences and connections, often over large areas. Intercultural relationships differ from political or economic links in that they often ignore geo-political borders, treating them as permeable boundaries through which cultural information may continue to flow (Pearson-Evans). Research into what happens when intercultural links are established has generally focused on wider processes and coherences such as Colonialism or Europeanization (Mehler and Gardiner; Körber and Volquardsen; Armitage and Braddick). However, some studies of cultural transfer have also commented that some coherences can remain restricted to local areas, without affecting larger areas (Schmale). These are usually referred to as regional “clusters of coherences,” which are created by historical and commercial links such as the Viking Age, the Hanseatic period, or the Scottish Trade (*Skottehandelen*) between Scotland and Norway during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Brink and Price; Mehler and Gardiner; Lillehammer). This means that although political and geographical borders always impose some sort of structural constraint, this does not necessarily change the nature or continuity of the relationship. So, for example, migration itself occurs due to both economic and personal reasons and often leads to the emergence of “geographically diffuse socio-cultural fields” (Olwig 787).

Coastal culture is an example of such a geographically diffuse socio-cultural field in that it connects cultures across the sea. The term *kystkultur* [coastal culture] in Scandinavia has traditionally been perceived in different ways: the life and activities in the days before industrialization or in the form of material culture such as structures and buildings but also including contemporary coastal heritage, which rediscovers and reinterprets ancient coastal traditions and folklore. Interpreted in that way, the culture(s) of the coast shape our perceptions of coastal landscapes today. At the root of the term lies the belief that life along the coast is not the same as life inland, or even along the fjords or other waterways that connect the land with the sea. So, coastal culture can mean a collection of artifacts that relate to living in this unique environment (where, for example, fishing may be as important as farming), working descriptions, stories, and artistic production.

The Danish maritime historian Poul Holm has argued that since the 1970s coastal culture within Scandinavia has acted as one of the building blocks of both individual national (i.e. Norwegian) and Nordic (*nordisk/norsk*) identities. Romantic visions of national roots connected primarily to peasant farming formed the basis for the European movement of romantic nationalism during the nineteenth century (Anderson). Here literary and historical narratives were used to create or re-invent individual national narratives in Scandinavia and Northern Europe (Leerssen).

During the nineteenth century the northern parts of the British Isles also became part of a romantic imagination that identified “Aboriginal districts” such as the Scottish Highlands or the Northern Isles. Here a shared traditional past that united all Britons could be found, including antiquities and the remains of ancient languages such as Gaelic or Norn (a now extinct North Germanic language spoken in the Scottish Northern Isles) (Stenroos, Mäkinen, and Særheim 218; Wawn). Romantic nineteenth-century literary narratives such as Sir Walter Scott’s located Scotland (including the Highlands and Islands) as a part of Britain where “the physical space we call Scotland is overlaid with the psychic, iconic space he contrived” (Kelly 4).

Scotland had previously been seen as more a site of alterity, a Celtic Other (Byrne). This new visualization of a heroic Nordic Scotland was supported by a new and different Viking “culturology” (Church 202; Lange), which both exoticized and domesticated the “Old North” by making them part of the Victorian reinvention of the British “character” (Wawn 190). In Norway, in contrast, three major representations of the nation existed during the eighteenth century. The “statist,” “romantic nationalist,” and “populist nationalist” defined different ways in which the nation ought to be linked to the state (Neumann 239). The development of coastal culture or *kystkultur* can thus be seen as a response to the continued uneasy coexistence of different national romantic discourses (which celebrate people’s innate qualities) and European Enlightenment discourse (which focuses on development and progress).

The Norwegian historian Asbjørn Klepp defines *kystkultur* not so much as a concept, but as a process and a movement within Norwegian cultural heritage research. This movement aims to counterbalance a historical focus on farmers, mountains, and fixed cultural identities with an interest in the coastal landscape and diverse regional identities based on cultural encounters. In the Norwegian context, this means a move away from larger land-based monuments such as churches towards a deliberate distancing from a national-romantic search for the “urnorske” essence found in the Viking sagas and antiquarian historiographies (Klepp 9). Instead, the focus is on the diverse and changing cultural landscape of the coast, which means we can never really speak about a defined coastal culture “but more like a series of adaptations to variable conditions – and elastic or flexible lifestyle that is intimately connected to the coastal environment” (Klepp 11).

Coastal culture can thus be used as a collective term for the economic, social, and cultural life along coastal regions. It refers to a way of life lived in accordance with the coastal environment, using the unique resources available both from the sea and land, but also to the creation of identities via intercultural encounters. Seen in a wider context, island identities such as the British Isles are essentially coastal cultures and need to be approached

as a network of diverse identities that include intercultural features... Although islands have a very easily defined border, between sea and land, the cultural identities of the islanders neither define themselves in isolation or only in relation to their nearest 'national centre'. In view of an intercultural analysis of cultural practices and historical narratives, the sea that surrounds the British Isles is therefore not a barrier, that somehow keeps 'Britishness' contained, but 'more of a bridge, a link to the world beyond'.  
(Reeploeg 2012, 215)

## Trade and Cultural Exchange across the North Sea

It is important to consider economic and social relationships when studying transnational coastal cultures as well as the possibility of non-obvious regions where cultural elements can be detected via the analysis of both contemporary and historical material. Contacts between Scandinavian and Scottish coastal communities have a long history, ranging back through time from the contemporary economic and technological links of global oil and fisheries activities to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fishing and smuggling connections. Before that, Hanseatic trade connected the coastal communities of the British Isles to both Scandinavia and the European Continent, building on previous trade and migration networks established during the Viking period (Brink and Price; Woolf). Modern historians on both sides of the North Sea have often argued that the Northern Isles experienced a period of rapid cultural change after the fifteenth century, with direct links to Scandinavia, particularly Norway, diminishing. This period is said to have begun after the islands were transferred to the Scottish kingdom in 1469 or, due to increased acculturation or "Scottification" (Marwick 15), even before then. Both Scandinavian and British national histories generally take the view that the Northern Isles of Scotland, although retaining some remnants of Nordic culture, were essentially incorporated into a different cultural "ethno-territory" (Jönsson, Tägil, and Törnqvist 46). This perspective has led to an insular approach to the study of the Scottish Northern Isles that delegates them to the peripheries of Northern Europe:

In the area of cultural contacts, scholars have too often viewed the Viking Age through the distorting lens of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imperial conquest and colonialism... in the area of nationhood, scholars have often reduced locally variable communities of the North into monolithic ethnic units ("nations"), dramatically oversimplifying archaeological evidence and textual evidence and often extending the national boundaries of the present day backward problematically into the realms of the mediaeval era.  
(DuBois 11)

When considering the cultural links between Scotland and Norway, earlier contacts such as these historical trading networks into Europe and the Baltic are therefore good starting points, but they need to be seen within their own historiographical contexts. Historical analysis allows us to look at the development of trade and cultural exchange between Norway and countries across the North Sea, especially centred on the supply of resources such as timber, grain, salt, etc., but also migration and the creation of cultural networks stimulated by trade (Bjørklund; Sögner; Pederson).

Regular trading links between Scotland and Norway meant the opportunity for people to not only maintain and extend a variety of commercial networks but also to engage in comprehensive cultural contact (Murdoch). In Norwegian history the Dutch period (1550-1750) or *Hollendartida* is connected with a tri-angular trade in timber, dried fish, grain, and commodities to and from the Norwegian port of Bergen and along the whole northern and southern coast of Norway (Løyland). Similarly, the Scottish Trade or *Skottehandelen* (1450-1759) continued existing timber imports and wooden items from Norway to Scotland and across Northern Europe (Næss; Thomson; Lillehammer). Scottish traders often bought timber directly from fjord communities such as Ryfylke, but the method used “appears to have been transferred directly to the fjords of Sunnhordland, the area lying north of Ryfylke, and south Bergen, western Norway’s main port” (Thomson 15). This led to the west Norwegian region of Sunnhordland becoming “the leading source for timber exports to Scotland” (Thomson 15). The timber trade also instigated a new semi-official tri-angular trade between the Netherlands/North German coast, Norway, and the eastern coasts of the United Kingdom. This revolved around the trade of dried stockfish, salted-dried cod or *Klippfisk*, and import of commodities from mainland Europe.

It is hard to measure the impact of the cultural exchange that took place during both the Dutch and Scottish periods in Norwegian history. Margit Løyland points out the cultural influence the Dutch period had on West Norwegians, ranging from Dutch place- and family-names to lexical additions to the Norwegian language (Løyland). Similarly, traces remain of the Scottish period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both in the form of Scottish place names and words and phrases that were retained in each other’s languages or were mutually intelligible at the time (Lorvik; Pederson). Andreas Næss in *Skottehandelen på Sunnhordland* lists place names that commemorate the connection with the Scottish Trade, with the existence of *skotteferdsle* or traffic routes (both by land and sea) previously used by Scots, and specific coastal promontories where the Scots loaded timber appearing as *Skøtanese*. Harbours and beaches are named *Skottavik*, *Skottasund*, *Skottaflua*, or *Scotland Anes*, etc. Næss also notes the name of *Skøtøyo* and *Skøtasonde* found in Os (Tysnes) south of Bergen, which he argues have the same origin in the connection to the Scottish Trade rather than other Old Norse interpretations connected to shooting [*skot*] (Næss 40–41).

More specific terminology seems to have developed around regular trading objects such as timber and boats, but intercultural exchange is also found in coastal folklore, literature, regional traditions, and music (Thomson; Russell and Kearney-Guignè; Reeploeg 2010; Shaw; Ronström). Examples of this North Sea Culture demonstrate the interaction between Dutch and Scottish communities and the coastal communities of western Norway. The study of the cultural landscape of the North Sea thus provides us with an opportunity to “explain the feelings of mutual relationship among the coastal inhabitants of the North Sea” (Bjørklund 151).

## Commercial Cultures and Cultural Influences

Eighteenth-century contacts between Scottish and Norwegian coastal communities were quite varied according to regional contacts on both sides. Norwegian historian Arne Odd Johnsen in *Den Britiske Innflyttingen til Nordmør på 1700-tallet* describes the impact of what effectively were headhunting activities by the Danish monarch for Protestant migrants to come to the area Post-Reformation. A variety of advantages were offered to the incomers, including freeing them from obligations such as paying taxes or local civic duties. Scottish and English migrants brought their own social and commercial networks with them, as well as their particular brand of entrepreneurship and religious and cultural norms (Vollan). So, for example, the production of *Klippfisk* (dried and salted cod) along the coast around the Nordmøre region in Western Norway, originally started by a Dutch migrant during the sixteenth century, was developed further and commercialized. One of the first migrants from Scotland, John Ramsey (1701-1787), originally from Banffshire on the Northeastern coast of Scotland, arrived in Fosna (now Kristiansund) through buying the fishing village Grip on Veidholmen in 1737 (Bryn). Working with two other Scottish associates William Gordon (1669-1755) and George Leslie (1713-51) (both also from North-East Scotland), Ramsey then developed a successful commercial enterprise in exporting salted and dried cod for the next 20 years, laying the foundation for what is still today the region’s main export industry (Johnsen 1942-63).

However, it is not just in commercial relationships that the influence of migrant Scots is evident in the coastal regions of eighteenth-century Norway. Technical innovations, farming, and fishing practices, as well as art and literature from European centres came to Norway via migrant Scots who added a cosmopolitan perspective to their capital investment and commercial practices. It was through them that the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment entered the Dano-Norwegian regional intellectual sphere in Norway. Migrants often brought with them, or acquired, extensive art and book collections consisting of works of international significance. Books were read in a variety of languages such as French, Latin, English, and German, and artworks often included popular British



paintings of the time. So, for example, the Kristiansund merchant Walther Miln left behind a collection not only of paintings but also a small astronomic observatory, furniture, and a formal English garden (Johnsen 1938–41, 323). Another migrant Scot, Jon Robertsen Brandt, who came to Kristiansund from Grangemouth as an employee of John Moses, settled as the manager of the fishing village of Storholmen in Hustad. He improved the technique for growing potatoes, receiving both the Prince Frederik medal and a prize from the Scientific Society in Trondheim (Johnsen 1938–41, 324).

The “British period” in Kristiansund’s history came officially to an end in 1814 with the establishment of the Norwegian national constitution, which removed many of the royal privileges that migrants had enjoyed up until then. This, together with a succession of European wars, had a major impact on the commercial enterprises run by Scots. John Moses’ commercial enterprises were bankrupted by the economic crisis that followed the Napoleonic war. After going into administration in 1818, we find him living in London during the 1820s, with his marriage to the Norwegian Anna Holck Tordenskjold annulled in 1823 (Mardal).

## Other Migrant Networks in Norway

Of course Scots were not the only migrants to Norway in the eighteenth century. Social and cultural relationships were not just between one or two related migrant groups and their host country but led to the creation of migrant networks within a specific region or developing commercial centres. Similar to the relationships between Scots and English merchants in Kristiansund, relationships with other migrants such as those from northern Germany became an important part of the economic growth of towns such as Trondheim. Trondheim and its surroundings became a storage- and transit-centre for fish, timber, and copper destined for export during the eighteenth century (Supphellen 276). Families from Schleswig-Holstein, in particular, already had commercial interests in Norway during the seventeenth century (Bull 2008). So, for example, Lorentz Mortensen Angell (1650–1767) from Angeln in Holstein was a merchant and owner of a copper mine in Røros (Bull 1992). Angell was followed by fish exporters and merchants Henrik Hornemann (1667–1788) and Henrik (1730–1830) and Hilmar (1710–71) Meincke, all from Flensburg in Northern Germany. In parallel with Danish, Scots, and English migrants in other parts of Norway, German migrants not only ran successful businesses but also contributed significantly to the social and cultural development of coastal areas (Støren 157–162).

Only a few of these merchants brought capital in monetary investment; instead they transferred their experience and contacts to international networks (Bull 2002). As a social class, they brought social and cultural capital, the result of being brought up in a cosmopolitan merchant family. This included an education, ideas, and cultural influences acquired from other cities or regions in

Europe. As a result, these families often integrated locally as part of a migrant elite (Bull 2008). Trondheim migrant families can be seen to collaborate with each other, forming intermittent and long-term personal and commercial relationships either through marriage or business partnerships. However, they also integrated with the existing commercial and civic society, where political ideas and social contacts could be exchanged and social capital converted into commercial advantage.

## Boat Building and Cultural Transfer from Scandinavia to Canada

Poul Holm argues that coastal societies are marked by a particular mentality, a combination of strong individualism but also a sense of community and solidarity (Holm 219). As can be seen from the examples above, these economic, social, and political/administrative regional relationships have resulted in both “obvious and hidden regions” with complex cultural encounters occurring within them (Winge 49).

In *Traditional Fishing Boats* James Miller suggests that the influence of Norse boat design seems “so strong and obvious as to overshadow any lingering inheritance from non-Norse sources” (Miller 103). Boat building traditions therefore need to be considered in the context of modern developments that embraced the whole Atlantic seaboard and, as I would argue, across the whole of the North Atlantic region. The wooden boat represents “an important part of the technological basis for a Europe and a world in transition. The ships and their men brought with them not only goods but also new technology and cultural impulses” (Bjørklund 151).

Wooden boats were exported from Western Norway to Scotland until the mid-nineteenth century, with Norwegian boatbuilders adapting regional styles to those required by buyers and Scottish boatbuilders adopting/adapting Norwegian boat designs for regional markets (Thowsen; Fenton). The trade of Norwegian boats in Scotland during this period is paralleled in Ireland, where these boats (*Norway yawl*) became mainstays of coastal life (Meide and Sikes). Imports of boats and other wooden objects led to transregional innovation (Christensen; Munro). So, for example, an adaptation of a local boat-design in Western Norway led to the development of distinctive “Shetland boats” (*Hjeltabåtane*), which were built south of Bergen in the island communities around Os, Tysnes, Fusa, Strandvik, and Samnanger, or the flat-bottomed *dory* built in Bjørkedalen and other districts along the West Norwegian coast (Fenton 554; Økland 27–36).

A contemporary source, Eilert Sundt, provides both descriptions and oral histories of both regional boatbuilding and uses of boats in *Om Husfliden i Norge* (Sundt 32–49). Sundt gives us a detailed study of a regional boat type, the

Søgneboat, built and used near Søgne, a coastal town between Kristiansand and Mandal. An interview with the local teacher J. Th. Storaker describes the export of boats to Holland during the previous 120-130 years (1730 onwards).

Det, som gav stødet til udvikling af denne bedrift, var *hollændernes fart* på Norge. Dengang kom en mængde hollandske smækker herop for at laste med sten og trælast, og til dem afhændede man et ikke ubetydeligt antal både. Disse bestode forendel i skibsjøller; men det var dog fornemmelig spidsbåde af alle størrelser - idetheletaget dog små -, som opkøbtes af hollænderne, for, som man antager, atter at sælges i Holland. Salget og opkøbet skede i havnene rundt omkring, fornemmelig Flekkerø, Hellesund og Udø. Derhen drog man da med sine både og solgte dem. (Sundt 35)

[What prompted the development of this was the coming of the Dutch to Norway. Back then a quantity of Dutch smacks came up here to load stone and timber, and to them also a significant number of boats were given. These mainly consisted in dinghies (*skibsjøller*), but there were boats of all sizes on the whole, however small—that were bought by the Dutch and which, one assumes, were again sold in the Netherlands. Sale and collection happened in ports all around, chiefly Flekkerø, Hellesund and Udø. That is where you went with your boats and sold them.]<sup>1</sup>

The same informant also discusses the development of boatbuilding with Sundt. He mentions *storbåde* og *dæksbåde* [bigger, decked boats] bought from a boat-building factory in Grimstad, whereas smaller boats were built locally. Forty years earlier (during the 1820s) a change to mackerel fishing had started, which required larger vessels. Local boat builders were now able to transfer their skills from building smaller boats and knowledge from using larger Grimstad boats to building *makrelbåde* [Mackerel boats] based both on the Østlandsboat or *skøiterne* construction from along the eastern Norwegian coast. Other nineteenth-century boat types from the area include *sildebådene* [Herring boats] used for the spring herring fisheries, lower-lying (in the water) Lister boats, and higher Søgne boats for use in the *sognet* or fjord area and nearby coastal localities. Boat builders also produced other wooden items, such as furniture or violins, with Sundt recording Gjert Gundersen, a builder of Lister- and Hardangerboats or *skjægter*: “Ligeså lod han arbeide en mængde violiner til salg” [just as he worked with many violins which he sold] (Sundt 40, footnote). Sundt also records that in a five-year period, from 1861-65, seven boat builders in the Sognet parish built seven *Danmarksfartøier* [“Denmark boats”], three *lodsskøiter* or *dæksbåde* [decked freight boats], fifty-three *makrelbåde* [Mackerel boats] and seventy-seven *småbåde* [small boats]. As one of the first contemporary sources to record the cultural exchange of boat designs between Norwegian, Dutch, and Scottish types, Sundt uses the example of Hvaløerboats. He notes that this type of regional boat derives many of its characteristics from contact with Dutch and Scottish boats.

Arne Emil Christensen has suggested that the types of *yole* [Dutch/Danish term, in English: *yoal*] found in the North of Scotland (including Orkney and Shetland) were adapted from a particular regional Norwegian boat type, the Sunnhordland boats, and so show a clear interregional link (85–95). Earlier historical records from 1776 show that boats were then delivered to Alexander Wallace and Son in Bergen, to be delivered to Gideon Gifford, the largest land owner in Shetland. Between 1755 and 1757 seventy-five boats a year were exported from Bergen to Scotland and the Scottish Northern Isles (Fenton 554–62). However, the exact origins of the traditional boats that evolved in all the coastal and island communities of Scotland are difficult to trace. As with many other technologies practised by local craftsmen, knowledge and skills were passed orally and in a hands-on fashion from generation to generation without any permanent records being made (Miller).

In terms of naming boats, the Norwegian historian Atle Thowsen has shown that there is a distinct link between the Shetland *sixareen* and the *seksæring* of the western-Norwegian type (the area between Stavanger and Bergen). However, distinct regional differences also exist in the naming of types of Norwegian open boats.

The same small double-ended boat was called *snekke* in the Oslofjord-area, *kogg* on the coast of Telemark, and *sjekte* at the southernmost coast. In western Norway, such a boat would be named after its number of oars – for instance *færing* was a four-oared boat. To make the confusion complete, in northern Norway boats would often be named after the number of “rooms,” the space between the frames or the thwarts.

(Brooks 34)

The wooden boat clearly represents an important part of how not just technology but also cultural impulses were transferred between the coastal communities of the North Sea and the North Atlantic. Several of the Norwegian boat designs mentioned above were exported to the Orkney Islands, from where they travelled to Canada as part of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s activities. The Arctic explorer John Rae, who was employed by the Hudson’s Bay Company and originally from the Orkney Islands, for example, mentions the construction and extensive use of small to medium-size wooden boats by several of his expeditions crews (Rae). However, in terms of boat design and construction, the adaptation and re-contextualization of the Orkney *yoal* as the *York Boat* for a new coastal environment in Canada during the early twentieth century still remains to be investigated.

## All at Sea: Cultural Transfer in the Northern Peripheries

The sea clearly links communities across the North Sea and the North Atlantic to each other, through navigation, fishing activities, boatbuilding, flows of people, objects, and ideas. Regional contact between coastal communities has led both to visible and invisible cultural regions, dependent on the historical period, intensity of contact, but also the shifting political, economic, and social contexts. So, for example, for social scientists, historians, and geographers alike, it became accepted practice to isolate cultural and historical studies within the “current” imperial, national, or regional limits. The shift towards the devalorization of non-urban as “peripheral” or “pre-modern” saw coastal regions incorporated into a “sub-national” mental map of industrial progress (Reeploeg 2015, 26). Coastal culture as a research field thus connects a range of peripheries in Northern Europe and across the North Atlantic.

A useful sea-focused approach using an intercultural stance has been the study of the North Atlantic Rim. As a conceptual tool for political economy the North Atlantic Rim has allowed Northern “marginal regions” to be compared and policies to be developed (Leroy). Within the social sciences Atlantic history emerged from a network of economic, geo-political, and cultural exchanges between the British, French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese empires, and the Americas. Atlantic historians argue that the continents and societies bordering the Atlantic Ocean can therefore be studied as a shared regional sphere (Benton). As an emerging academic field, North Atlantic Rim studies can thus be seen to follow Bernard Bailyn’s *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours*, which focuses on cosmopolitan and multicultural elements (Bailyn). This encourages a critical engagement with issues such as (post)colonial studies, imperialism, and other spheres often neglected or considered in isolation by traditional historiography dealing with Europe or the Americas. In this context, the study of the North Atlantic Rim offers the opportunity to compare North American historical and cultural perspectives with those of the Northern European and Nordic countries.

## Conclusion

This article has investigated the connected cultures of Norway and Scotland’s coastal communities and the intercultural links that have historically crossed the North Sea and the North Atlantic. It has investigated the shared socio-economic environments and cultures that connect Norway and Scotland’s coastal communities, not only to each other but to other regional communities across the North Atlantic. Coastal societies are different from inland areas in that they are shaped by a combination-economy of farming and fishing, but also by their use of regional coastal land- and sea-scapes (i.e. the area between high and low tides). This creates and maintains a unique way of life expressed in both tangible

and intangible cultural capital. A shared, diverse, but similarly sea-focused cultural landscape connects the coastal communities of the North. This cultural landscape informs the way in which regional cultural identities are formed and maintained. It also forms the basis of ways in which coastal communities interact across the North Sea and the wider area of the North Atlantic Rim, forming “sub-national regions crossing international boundaries” (Winge 48). Adopting the approach of entangled histories or *histoire croisée* allows us to study the social and cultural links that continuously cross established European or Nordic macro-regions and connect the histories and cultures of regional communities in the North. Coastal communities cannot be studied in isolation or only in relationship to geo-political regions. Other cultural and historical perspectives need to be added—with the sea not seen a barrier but as “more of a bridge, a link to the world beyond,” an opportunity for cultural contact (Smith 323).

*Kystkultur* thus presents us with a new approach on how to investigate examples of intercultural contact that lead to a variety of cultural identities, as well as a “tool for demonstrating regional variety or even autonomy” (Reeploeg 2012, 215)... Or, as the Shetland author Robert Alan Jamieson has put it: “Da sie’s da wy da wirlid kum’s ta wis” [The sea’s the way the world comes to us] (Jamieson 74).

#### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

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