

Insularity and Maritime framing in Northern Europe: The shaping of early modern notions concerning islands, isolation and connectivity by Olaus Magnus 1535-1555



Zeno de Jong

Student number: 1156403

Address: Van de Waalsstraat 3a
2313VB Leiden

Mail: zeno.de.jong@gmail.com

Phone: 06-36315764

MA Thesis: Colonial & Global History, with sub track Maritime History.

Supervisor: Louis Sicking

Second reader: Claire Weeda

Word count: 24407

Index	2
Introduction: Olaus Magnus and the early modern insular representation of Northern Europe	3
Chapter 1: Northern European Insular trade and economy and its influence on Olaus Magnus' insular representation	11
- 1.1 Insular economy, isolation and connectivity in the North-Atlantic Ocean	13
- 1.2 Insular economy, isolation and connectivity in the East Sea	20
Chapter 2: Maritime mobility present in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of Northern Europe	26
- 2.1 Maritime mobility, isolation and connectivity in the North-Atlantic Ocean	28
- 2.2 Maritime mobility, isolation and connectivity in the East Sea	33
Chapter 3: The influence of fictitious elements on Olaus' insular representation	42
- 3.1 Myths and imagination in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of the Northern Atlantic	44
- 3.2 Myths and imagination in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of the East Sea	48
Conclusion	51
Registry of the list of figures edited from the <i>Carta Marina</i>	54
Bibliography	60

Introduction: Olaus Magnus and the Early Modern insular representation of Northern Europe.

Islands played pivotal roles during the Age of Discovery. Maritime exploration and subsequent expansive movements constructed a world wherein the sea functioned as the most important realm where mobility, trade and the consolidation of power could be furthered.¹ Research concerning the place of insularity within maritime history is linked to the versatility that islands embodied within maritime networks. Islands could prove useful for utilizing strategic and economic properties but could also function as havens making long distance travel more endurable. Since the roles of islands link to different aspects of realizing connections it is important to look at the way insular territory was thought of and conceptualized. Islands have never failed to fuel the imagination of contemporaries as islands could represent utopia and dystopia.² The connection of islands with mythical creatures and sites not only links with the status of islands as desolate and harsh places, but symbolizes the ambivalence of an island. However, isolation was also perceived as a route to the holiness and pureness of an island on the margins of society.³ Islands could be viewed as individual units functioning in solitude but also as nodes connecting remote regions to the civilized world. The place of islands in the historical narrative and the way notions of insularity were conceptualized showcase how the maritime regions were approached. Conceptions of islands fluctuated over time as the imaginary steadily made way for the need to approach islands realistically. However the overlap between these two perceptions tell of a grey area wherein scholars and cartographers could envision the maritime world through the available knowledge.

The early modern period saw the discovery and integration of the fourth continent of the Americas into western history. The aftermath of the Columbian and Cabot voyages generated interest in developing accurate notions concerning cartography and geographical knowledge about the new lands that were discovered. The lines of connectivity stretching from the western shores of Europe towards the eastern shores of Northern America were made more accessible due to the knowledge about the islands situated in between. Iceland and Greenland became part of a Northern Atlantic system instead of functioning as the margin of the European world. Remarkably the Northern European dimension of the Age of Discovery has yet to be included into an insular historiographical framework and research seeks to answer a part of this dilemma. The importance of maritime connectivity and insularity can be recognized by the vast amount of research done on the maritime Mediterranean. Prominent historians such as *Annales* figurehead, Fernand Braudel, have

¹ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: a global history of exploration* (New York, 2006) 245-246.

² John Gilles, 'Island Sojourns', *Geographical Review* Vol. 97 Issue 2 (April, 2007) 275-277.

³ Henri Bresc, 'Challenging Braudel: a new vision of the Mediterranean', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Vol. 14 (2001) 419-421.

stressed that islands are inherently related to the development of maritime connectivity within a region.⁴ Insular history often focusses on the individual islands instead of portraying them in a global connective frame as argued by maritime historian Louis Sicking.⁵ Still, this theoretical framework of insular history, isolation versus connectivity, has not yet been applied to Northern Europe on a broad scale. A historiographical gap this thesis seeks to fill. Since a total insular frame already proved significant for understanding the maritime history of Southern Europe it is remarkable that a similar approach has not yet been applied to the North. Similar developments of maritime expansion took place in Northern Europe during the same period. To state that the Northern European sphere is of less importance would be incorrect since this region experienced its own processes in stimulating globalization and connection. The development of the Hanseatic League, early North-Atlantic discoveries and the never ceasing trade through the North and the East Sea testifies to an important maritime realm. These are only a handful of developments aiding the Northern European picture of a maritime society where insularity was found relevant. This leads one to believe that islands situated in Northern Europe can be exposed to similar historiographical theories and concepts of insular history as has been applied to Southern Europe.

It looks like the Northern regions of Europe, Scandinavia in particular, are unintentionally left out of the historiographical insular picture focussing on singular islands instead of approaching them collectively. This absence is linked to the medieval imaging of Scandinavia that experienced prejudices of otherness emanating from Roman scholars such as Pliny that echoed far into the medieval period. However, Northern Europe is already firmly established into the European networks in the early modern period. So the question how and when they were included arises. In which way did the Northern European maritime world connect and how did insularity function here? The answer can be found in the works of the 16th century cartographer and scholar Olaus Magnus who helped to create a better understanding of the Northern European world.⁶ Considered a true metropolitan in his time, Olaus travelled extensively through Europe in order to acquire information to construct his *magnus opus*.⁷ The map and chronicle he created encompassed almost all historical and ethnographical aspects of the Nordic societies.⁸ The exiled ecclesiastic from Uppsala, Sweden, became a known figure in European history through the creation of the *Carta Marina* representing

⁴ Peregrine Horden & Nicholas Purcell, *The corrupting sea: a study of Mediterranean history* (Hongkong, 2000) 50-55.

⁵ Louis Sicking, 'Islands and maritime connections, networks and empires, 1200-1700: introduction', *The International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. 26 Issue 3 (2014) 491.

⁶ Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif de la Méditerranée médiévale', 123.

⁷ Leena Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the northern countries by Olaus Magnus in 1539', *Belgeo; Belgian Journal of Geography* Issue 3-4 (2008) 316-317.

⁸ John Granlund, 'Introduction', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, translated and edited by P. Fisher & H. Higgens (London, 1996) xxxvi.

the Northern European world in 1539.⁹ The most important contemporary maps of the Nordic countries that existed before were those made by Claudius Clavus in 1427, Nicolaus Germanus in 1490 and Jakob Ziegler's map from 1534. Olaus believed these maps to be faulty and lacking critical information which he sought to rectify.¹⁰ In addition, political and religious struggles adorn the background of Olaus' personal life who, himself a catholic, was exiled from his homeland as Lutheranism took over in Sweden. It is remarkable that after compiling his work in Rome he still speaks highly of the Nordic peoples as he believed the nobleness of his fellow countrymen would eventually lead to their return to the Church.¹¹ This source thus provides both an inside and outside perspective as Olaus is a native Scandinavian that is very much loyal to Rome granting more global-European insights. Political messages and hidden truths undoubtedly play a part in this source, however, his perception of the maritime appears to be without prejudice as he sought to accurately depict the contemporary situation. The chronicle written by Olaus, the *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* published in Rome in 1555, has significant meaning for early modern Northern European history. Olaus' works brought the early modern contemporary view regarding Northern Europe to a more accurate and less imaginative representation. Olaus sought to lessen notions of remoteness and other biases about Northern Europe and propagated a more European inclusive view.¹² The *Historia* includes such a diverse and enormous amount of knowledge that its historiographical value for early modern European history is undeniable.¹³

The relationship between the map and chronicle is not mutually exclusive as the map is a full conceptualization of Northern Europe and his chronicle more a cultural approach. When researching this source the text must be viewed as a partial extension of the map, and not perceived as a total elaboration of it.¹⁴ The *Historia* focusses on the history of the region and discusses the growth and consolidation of Northern Europe. The formation and demarcation of the Northern European identity is pivotal in Olaus' work, seeking to add these inhabitants to other proud Christian peoples. Meanwhile the map functions as a contemporary image where the current economic situation and political affiliation is central to the information depicted on the map. For example the islands in the East Sea are of less significance to the contemporary picture of maritime Northern Europe but did enjoy more attention in the *Historia* since these islands were historically important to

⁹ Simon Mckeown, 'Reading and writing the Swedish renaissance', *Journal of the society of for Renaissance studies Vol. 23 No.2* (March, 2009) 141.

¹⁰ Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: The mapping of the Northern countries by Olaus Magnus', 308-309.

¹¹ Mckeown, 'Reading and writing the Swedish renaissance', 141.

¹² Idem, 149-150.

¹³ Barbara Sjöholm, 'Things to be marvelled at rather than examined', *The Antioch Review Vol. 62 No. 2* (spring, 2004) 246-247.

¹⁴ Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus Vol. 1 Introduction*, vertaling P. Fisher & H. Higgens (London, 1996) xliii.

the development of the region. In addition, the insular depictions on the map are most vivid when it comes to the Northern Atlantic Ocean as these islands attracted the contemporary interests of the expanding western frontier of Europe.

Olaus' obedience to Ancient authorities such as Pliny and Ptolemy did not affect the wish to accurately portray Northern Europe but places Olaus' work into the spirit of scholars of the Renaissance by acknowledging both contemporary sources and remaining somewhat loyal to ancient literary authority. By acknowledging the ancient sources and placing them within the contemporary bounds of knowledge of the early modern period these sources must be viewed as the culmination of what was known about Northern Europe. One of the prominent topics of Olaus' work is the maritime world. Olaus' understanding of the maritime becomes evident when looking at the vast amount of topics dedicated to this subject. From his twenty-two books a third of his work is dedicated to the maritime. In addition to describing maritime topics typical for Northern Europe he also draws parallels to other regions dealing with similar subjects furthering his view of Scandinavia as a worthy region not unlike other European regions.¹⁵ If Olaus' work is viewed as exemplary in the field of maritime early modern history it is established that his view on Northern European islands was very much influential during the following centuries. Thus, we have to extract Olaus' insular representation and make an effort in connecting them to the historiography of insularity shining a light on the insular representation of Northern Europe.

One scholar in particular needs to be mentioned concerning Olaus' work: John Granlund. He laid the foundations for the current accessibility of this source with commentaries and annotations of the *Carta Marina & Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*.¹⁶ Insularity in Olaus' work has been discussed by prominent scholars as Kirsten Seaver¹⁷, Birgit Sawyer¹⁸ and Simon McKeown yet once again only scrutinizing individual islands. The historiography concerning Northern Europe and Olaus Magnus' work often focusses on the medieval period while the early modern period in Northern Europe is left out. This is peculiar since this period saw Northern Europe's increasing range of political power and development. In addition, the coming of Lutheranism to the North resulting in Olaus' exile, brought significant changes. The Northern European political and cultural landscape experienced a transition which makes this source particularly interesting as a view that is centralized within a changing world.

¹⁵ Granlund, 'Introduction', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, xxxviii.

¹⁶ Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus Vol. 1 Note on the text and annotation*, translated and edited by P. Fisher & H. Higgens (London, 1996) xi-xii.

¹⁷ Kirsten Seaver, 'Pygmies of the Far North', *Journal of World History Vol. 19 Issue 1* (March, 2008).

¹⁸ Birgit Sawyer, *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000-1500*, (Stanford, 1996).

When analysing insularity in relation to Olaus' work it is vital to this research to look at the written narrative of the *Historia* and how this information corresponds with the *Carta Marina*. If an island appears depicted as less relevant on the map due to the absence of elements of maritime activity, but is discussed vividly in the chronicle, this means that Olaus seeks to underline the importance of the island concerning their role in the development of Northern Europe. Its contemporary usefulness thus is usually found on the map not in the chronicle. In this thesis, however, the analysis of islands is subject to Olaus' representation that ties the present and past together only for today's reader to distinguish which parts are relevant to the contemporary insular view. Remembrance plays an important part in Olaus' approach towards insular Northern Europe. By researching the elements that are brought forth regarding islands and being aware of their place and relevance in time Olaus' conceptualization of islands can be grasped. The elements discussed by Olaus possess meaning on different levels and must be approached by looking at the relevance to the region either in the past or during Olaus' lifetime. The chronicle thus adds the past to its range of knowledge. Those excerpts taken from the narrative and map attest to an insular society that functioned within realms of connectivity or marginality. By analysing the information that Olaus attaches to the islands the place of the island within the timeframe of Northern Europe is found. In turn this sheds a light on how the representation was formed and how these islands were consolidated and integrated as maritime societies or only functioned as the frontiers of the known world.

For this reason the chapters deal with Northern Europe dually by looking at the insular framing of the East Sea and Northern Atlantic. These maritime areas differed greatly but are encompassed as one by Olaus. The view on the newly conquered Northern Atlantic versus that of the widely discovered Baltic provides us with a framework that encompasses both the influence of closed off and open maritime areas on this representation. By approaching these two areas separately but viewing them as ultimately connected within one frame the global view of Olaus' insular representation can be unearthed. Per chapter examples from the *Carta Marina* are marked as figures. These excerpts contain symbolic imageries found on the map which locate elements of trade, maritime mobility and fiction on specific insular territories. At the end of this thesis a list with a short elaboration per example can be found. To further comprehend this insular representation we look at three distinctive aspects of insular history influencing the representation and usefulness of islands. In categorical order these aspects consist of: trade, mobility and the fictitious.

Firstly, the insular economies of the Northern European islands can help us understand why certain islands were viewed as connected and what developments and factors led up to this perception. Before participating in trade routes considered global the island first must surpass the self-sufficient characteristic of the insular economy. Once the inhabitants were provided for they

could add their surplus to the trade networks.¹⁹ The frequency and intensity of the maritime trade taking place in Northern Europe as represented by Olaus leads to the belief that regardless of the stigma of barren Northern European islands, connectivity could be maintained. How is Olaus Magnus' representation of the Northern European islands shaped by the isolative and connective aspects of trade related activities? In this chapter the trade of marine life is a central theme. The exotic products acquired from the Atlantic and the Arctic and their distribution towards Europe contributes to the common knowledge about the islands of the Northern Atlantic.²⁰ The networks of trade that can be considered remote reside in the Atlantic Ocean and they are associated with appropriation and exploitation of fish. In addition, regional and unique products such as walrus ivory and whale blubber contributed to the dynamism of the trade. In the East Sea and Baltic region a clear difference arises wherein trade on islands primarily consisted of redistributing imported goods. Such an abundance of redistribution existed in this region that we can argue that the forming of centres of trade, not unlike the Mediterranean *Emporia*, is more prevalent in this closed off maritime area. The ascribed historical value of a specific island to the development of Northern Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries will function as the assessment by which the islands are discussed. In both the western and eastern regions of Northern Europe some islands functioned as more essential to the Northern European maritime networks of trade. Olaus' affirmation of their relevance to the history of the region shows how islands both isolated and connected functioned within his narrative.²¹

Secondly, we will focus on aspects of mobility. Mobility as a concept is fairly difficult to recognize on cultural and cartographic representations. Therefore in this chapter mobility is understood in three parts: maritime mobility, mobilisation and insular mobility. Maritime mobility consisting of the growing capabilities of sailing the seas and redefining the spatiality of waterways. Mobilisation as a means to utilize these maritime areas. And lastly insular mobility which is found in the insular societies profiting from growing maritime mobility, connecting them to states and providing new economic opportunities. Moreover these forms of mobility on the *Carta Marina* are recognized by the depiction of connectivity found in the representation of the political affiliation of islands with European states. In addition, Olaus' depiction of civilization and participation of inhabitants further supports notions of a mobile insular society. Olaus' description of the utilization of insular territory further adds the importance of military maritime strategy. These elements function as a means by which Olaus views a mobile insular society. Political insular usage is viewed as an element of mobility in Olaus' work. Scholars have argued that political power and influence

¹⁹ Ramona Harrison, 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður: international exchange and local economy in medieval Iceland', *Journal of the Northern Atlantic Vol. 1 Issue 1* (2008) 103-104.

²⁰ Karin Frei, 'Was it for walrus? Viking age settlement and medieval walrus ivory trade in Greenland and Iceland', *World Archeology Vol. 47 Issue 3* (2015) 439-444.

²¹ Horden, *The corrupting sea: A study of Mediterranean history*, 225.

emanating from the mainland has a different effect on nearby islands in realizing either the consolidation or the weakening of power of nearby states.²² This makes the influence of nations relevant to Olaus' perception of these islands. Since Olaus was affiliated with the Swedish kingdom pre-exile his perspective focussed on the lands he thought relevant to his conception of the 'true' Northerners. This explains why the Danish kingdom is absent in his chronicle as he still supported the Swedish-Gothic cultural dominance over the Danish peoples. Islands are needed during times of globalization as maritime mobility and insularity appear to be intertwined. Early elements of globalisation can be found in the development of maritime mobility and thus is key for understanding Olaus' view on the role of the islands within this construct.²³

Thirdly, the dichotomy of insularity in Olaus' work can be further examined by researching the presence of fictitious elements. Since concepts of monstrous creatures, miracles and holy places are a constant throughout insular history, the degree to which the islands that are subjected to mythical descriptions and depictions by Olaus is necessarily discussed. The imaginative properties that islands possessed, whether in the form of Thomas More' *Utopia* or Atlantis, are definitively linked to the conceptualization of islands. The vertical dynamism of islands representing either utopia or dystopia, as mentioned by Frank Lestringant, grants the possibility to look at the different influences of geographical remoteness and folklore on the perception of islands.²⁴ In addition, indications of particular flora, fauna and natural marvels on these islands contribute to the realism of the insular representation.²⁵ If we utilize this approach of vertical insular dynamism, the extent of the influence of the fictitious on Olaus' insular representation explains why certain islands were more prone to mythical and thus isolative elements than others. When comparing the degree of fictitious textual information with the visual representation of insular Northern Europe the elements that can be considered to have an impact on Olaus' insular view are laid bare. The importance that Olaus attached to islands shows how their contemporary and past functions were implemented into Olaus' view and more importantly which elements he deemed important enough to portray to the viewers of his works.

Not all islands that are found in Northern Europe are discussed in this thesis as not all insular regions are discussed by Olaus, let alone their apparent functionality. This lacuna must be ascribed to Olaus' wish to represent only those islands that he considered vital in building up Northern European identity. The insular framing and the influence of isolation and connectivity on Olaus' representation thus are limited to his own interpretation. For example Britain and the Hebrides are omitted in their

²² Philip Steinberg, 'Sovereignty, territory, and the mapping of mobility: a view from the outside', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 99 Issue 3 (2009) 481-482.

²³ Horden, *The corrupting sea*, 340.

²⁴ Bresc, 'Îles et tissue connectif de la Méditerranée médiévale', 123.

²⁵ Frank Lestringant, 'La voie des îles', *Médiévales* Vol. 47. (automne, 2004) 112-115.

entirety furthermore stimulating Olaus' goal. In addition, the Danish island archipelago are absent in his representation. In this thesis the separation between the eastern and western part of Olaus' geographical analysis will consist in the west of Iceland, Greenland, Thule, the insular coast of Norway, the Faroër, Orkney and Shetland islands. And in his treatment of the Eastern region of Northern Europe within Olaus' work the focus lies on the region of the East Sea and the Baltic with the islands of Götland, Öland, Elandia, Åland and the Baltic archipelago. Since both regions have different maritime networks it is expected that Olaus' representation should differ as well. However, Olaus' thorough description and depiction of these islands will likely cast a different light on these regions as he encompasses them into one single maritime frame.

Since the Mediterranean was fully explored, its appearance to cartographers appeared less tumultuous. The region was already integrated and consolidated by the many nations traversing this sea, islands included. In the case of insular Northern Europe, the maritime area formerly deemed marginal, similar signs of prosperity through economic redistribution, exchange and connectivity are found. The East Sea already functioned as a maritime highway connecting east and west and with the inclusion of the North Atlantic into the Northern European system a new view is constructed by Olaus Magnus. So, the roles that islands are given are not only influenced by distance and marginality but by historical meaning and functionality as well. With the inclusion of the newly marked Northern Atlantic in combination with the pre-existing maritime lines of Northern Europe Olaus constructs a new maritime system. By researching Olaus' view on islands the development of early modern thoughts about Northern Europe is coming into view. Through the expansion of maritime connectivity those factors that are considered to have a decisive impact on Olaus' view can be attributed to the realms of isolation and connectivity.

Chapter 1: Northern European insular trade and economy and its influence on Olaus Magnus' insular representation.

The early modern period can be characterized by new connections made across the sea but also by the increased interaction and utilization of the maritime. Furthering economic advantage and acquiring wealth can be viewed as expressions of this interaction.²⁶ During this time of early modern maritime globalization the contemporary view on insularity changed as well. The notion of an island being viewed as connected or isolated was now open to interpretation. In Olaus Magnus' work this newly altered perception is evident as Scandinavia became more present in the European picture. Northern Europe went from being viewed as marginally important for the economic systems of Europe to a just addition to the European trade. This transition was initially realised by the success of the exploitation of fish, exotic and arctic products hailing from the North and later on through the export of bulk of grain emanating from the East Sea.²⁷ The Northern European region consolidated its place in Europe, wealth and prosperity could be similarly attained similarly in the North as in the South. In addition, the marine products of Scandinavia were redistributed across Europe through the German cities of Lübeck, Wismar and Danzig. Scholars have stressed the contribution that the arctic products provided for the inclusion of the Northern Atlantic and Northern Europe regions into networks of trade. Even the development of the commercial revolution of the early modern period can be viewed as partially influenced by this inclusion.²⁸

The abundance and variety of fish and maritime products exploited from Northern Europe is emphasised in Olaus' *Historia*. Olaus describes his visit to the markets of Venice and is clearly struck by the lack of variety in marine products in contrast to the markets of his home. *'Occasionally, I have had a look round the teeming fish market in Venice, yet I could only manage to discover four or five sorts of fish, namely pike, tench, eel, flounders, and skate, in comparison with the rich variety of different fish in the North.'*²⁹ The amount of attention dedicated to the Northern European world of trade highlights the importance of maritime trade for the formation of the Northern European identity. Successes of the Northern European medieval and early modern trade are closely linked to the maritime dimension of the trade emanating from this region. The fjords, rivers and many lakes required that the Northern Europeans had to deal with the maritime realms in order to connect and prosper. Here, the role that islands played within this economic framework will showcase how the

²⁶ Horden, *The Corrupting sea*, 124.

²⁷ Michael North, *The Baltic: a history*, translated by K. Kronenberg (London, 2015) 98-99.

²⁸ Stephen Wickler, 'The centrality of small Islands in arctic Norway from the viking age to the recent historic period', *The Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology Vol. 11 Issue 2* (2016) 4-5.

²⁹ Olaus Magnus, 'Preface', in *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XX*, translated by P. Fisher & H. Higgs (London, 1998) 1029.

insular territories of Northern Europe not only varied in terms of insular utilization but also why certain islands functioned as economic links to the mainland. In addition, the islands of the Northern European region provided the possibility of gaining foothold in the trade of both commodities and luxurious products. These options consequentially fuelled the motivations for further exploitation of the region and its specific regionally bound products.³⁰

The link between maritime trade and the development of the Northern European region becomes evident when looking at the affiliation between these Northerners and the trade in marine products. But was this connection also apparent to Olaus Magnus while he compiled his chronicle and map? The answer is yes as Olaus' fixation on the maritime trade connects to his will to establish the identity of the Nordic peoples and connecting them to their apparent maritime success. The description of the traits of maritime activity, often portrays a situation where regardless of the intensity of the trade inhabitants and insular communities were connected to economic networks existing outside the insular territory. Notions of connectivity become related to elements like distance and reachability. Yet, the geographical situation in relation to the abundance of marine products is far more important to understand than the place these islands were given in the historical narrative. Did these islands provide enough incentive for foreigners to make the trip towards regions that were considered remote? The popularity and rapid redistribution of the distinctive insular products hailing from Northern Europe attests of a form of awareness of the region's richness in terms of available products. In order to answer the question if trade was important for the formation of Olaus' insular perception we must look at the distribution and intrinsic value of products common for the islands described by Olaus.

To construct a just answer to this problem we must look towards the insular trade stemming from Northern Europe as documented by Olaus. The extent of products bartered and redistributed from the islands sketches their economic importance as well as defining their function within the maritime frame of Northern Europe. It appears that Baltic maritime activity is associated mostly with the redistribution and the creation of ports of trade, hence the strong presence of the Hanseatic League in this region.³¹ However, it would seem that in contrast to the Baltic region the islands of the Northern Atlantic region would be marked by aspects of isolation. Yet, the maritime framework of Olaus does include these islands into the same narrative as the regions considered less isolated. The roles that islands play within these two distinctive maritime areas showcases a different form of insularity where aspects of connectivity and isolation are not always unifiable. The early modern perception of these regions through the traits of trade will clarify why the perceptions of the islands

³⁰ Sicking, 'The dichotomy of Insularity' 502.

³¹ Justyna Wubs- Mrozewics, 'The Hanze game' in J.W. Mrozewics & S. Jenks ed. *Northern World: The Hanze in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2013) 18-20.

differed and how this variation can be explained by fortunate geographical location and the intensity of maritime trade. Since Olaus describes many aspects of the maritime trade in Northern Europe we must look at the variation in insular economic dynamism in relation to the region. Applying aspects of isolation and connectivity to the dynamism of insular trade in Olaus' representation plays a pivotal role in understanding this insular construct which in turn gives insight into what meaning he contributed to the early modern perception of Northern European islands.

1.1 Insular economy, isolation and connectivity in the North-Atlantic Ocean

Archaeological excavations in Gásir, situated in the northern part of Iceland, have confirmed the broad scale of products collected and redistributed from Iceland. Scholars have suggested that during the medieval and early modern period coastal-port regions functioned as more than just warehouses. A far more important role they took on was that of the final stage of the production process of walrus and whale products. Furthermore evidence for intercultural contact confirms the opening up of the Icelandic insular society to the European mainland. The possibility to both barter domestically as well as abroad provides the Icelandic society with the possibility to actively participate in the interregional systems of trade.³² Instead of being associated with a singular way of Olaus' works tells us that Iceland, regardless of the distance and geographical location also functioned as centre of trade effectively stimulating connectivity as interest in this island for its economic role was found.³³

Iceland was by far the best known island of the Northern Atlantic region. This island stood symbol for a vast amount of alterations known to the insular history of Northern Europe. In particular, as the personification of the absolute North and was considered for a period as Ultima Thule.³⁴ Even Olaus Magnus clarifies why Iceland was viewed as the 'remotest' Thule, but then how does this compare to his description of a thriving and prosperous Icelandic society? Apart from Iceland's function as stepping stone between the East Coast of the Northern Americas and the Western shores of Europe, Iceland is also recognized by its contribution to the marine markets of Europe.³⁵ Olaus confirms this addition by mentioning the struggle of foreign traders entering Iceland's waters in order to profit from the fish trade. The willingness to battle those standing in the way of this maritime monopoly of the Hanseatic League testifies that the Icelandic trade was prosperous enough to risk war. Olaus states: *'For when merchants intend to sail to that island on a*

³² Harrison, 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður: international exchange and local economy in medieval Iceland', 113-115.

³³ Harrison, 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður', 113.

³⁴ Sumarlídi Isleifsson, 'The idea of an island in the North', *Scandia Vol. 75 Issue 2* (2009) 97-98.

³⁵ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *The mortal sea: fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail* (London, 2012) 35.

profit-making voyage, they equip themselves exactly as though they expected to enter some hideous battle.'³⁶ Olaus continues by mentioning the popularity of Icelandic fish in Europe. In the Mediterranean these fish were widely known by the name of *marlucz*, or the haddock fish, and confirms the broad reach of Nordic products even finding their way to Rome. *'The highly prized fish caught there and known as marlucz by Italians and Spaniards is transported by the Spaniards and Portuguese even as far as Rome.'*³⁷ Olaus stresses Icelandic connectivity towards Europe by portraying the allure of the Icelandic marine trade in his representation of Iceland. By mentioning the wish of other seafaring nations to gain foothold within these markets international interest is established. This interest is found in the foreign traders fighting in the Icelandic bay. Although the German cities already consolidated their role in these parts, this struggle, however, appears to embody the need of European nations to do business in this region. At least Olaus' acknowledgment of this struggle negates notions of fruitlessness and economic disadvantage. Instead by portraying the variety of popular breeds of fish he sketches an island filled with possibility and prosperity. Through the representation of Iceland as an important location and distributor of Northern Atlantic fish highly valued in the markets of Europe an attempt is made to consolidate the view of Iceland as a less economically isolated island. The Icelandic economy focussed on marine life and prosperous waters lured the interest of others and so connectivity to the European mainland is represented by Olaus.

In time, the less isolationistic position that Iceland appears to take on in Olaus' representation demonstrates how important economic aspects are for the inclusion of the insular areas into a broader system of trade. Olaus' description of Iceland's economic sphere encompasses the trade in both commodities and exotic products from the region. This description of Olaus is remarkable due to the fact that insular history often relates isolated islands to the sole appropriation of exotic products.³⁸ In Olaus' representation Iceland appears to embody aspects of insular isolation and connectivity by partaking in the both distinct economic realms. Scholars of Mediterranean insular history have argued that islands which were considered isolated are to be associated with the production of specialized region bound products. In addition, mono-culture and the cultivation of a specific product are aspects ascribed to isolated islands. In the case of Iceland the trade of both common and luxurious products creates an economic situation where overseas trade is not entirely necessary to survive but essentially a way to gain more wealth.³⁹ The apparent successes of the Icelandic economic exchange are described by Olaus: *'In many places chests or casks are made of*

³⁶ Olaus Magnus, 'On the fish of Iceland', *Historia Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 3* (London, 1998) 1085.

³⁷ Magnus, 'On the fish of Iceland', 1084.

³⁸ Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif de la Méditerranée Médiévale', 4-5.

³⁹ Sicking, 'The dichotomy of insularity', 510.

sweet-smelling wood, thirty to forty feet long and four to five feet high, which they fill each year and store partly for consumption at home, but more particularly for barter with merchants'⁴⁰ and he continues by describing the import of ale: 'The Icelanders drink foreign beer imported by boat from the coastal towns of Germany.'⁴¹ Olaus is fairly optimistic when it comes to the self-sufficiency of Icelanders, notwithstanding the absence of grain prevalent in Iceland. A factuality that Olaus curiously omits. Scholars have acknowledged that imported food in early modern Iceland was beyond reach for most inhabitants. However, if Olaus views this absence of imported food as negligible it means that he is either convinced of the Icelander's capability to acquire an abundance of food or he is confident in the economic position of Iceland. The latter is more probable as Olaus views this island as a proud addition to the formation of Nordic identities. By sketching a flourishing insular society a just addition to the Northern European economic systems is propagated.⁴²

Olaus' representation of Iceland can best be understood by looking at the symbols of the insular economy situated in the *Carta Marina*. These are not only found in trade vessels situated in the Icelandic bay but are particularly recognized by the placement of products on the island. Since Olaus' map is considered an ethnographic representation the situating of particular products must be interpreted as deliberately placed symbols associated with the specific island. Firstly, the stockpile of fish confirms Icelandic export affiliation. **(Fig. 1.1)** The stocking of fish was a common practice in Scandinavia as this meant that larger amounts could be shipped and kept fresh, not unique to Iceland. Yet, on the *Carta Marina* the piles of stock fish are only found in Bergen and the gulf of Botnia where a fair amount of the Icelandic fish export ended up and made their way to Europe. Olaus' placement thus must be considered as deliberate as the latter chronicle only further confirms Icelandic superiority concerning the export in fish.

Secondly, another product that Olaus considers pivotal in the Icelandic export economy is butter. The cows that are depicted on the vignette on the chapter concerning this product match perfectly with the cows found in Iceland on the map. Further acknowledging the products that hail from this island and confirming yet another addition to the insular economy.⁴³ Although a continuation in Olaus' work is not always self-explanatory, in the case of Iceland, the products described in the chronicle are directly linked to their depiction on the map. **(Fig. 1.2)** Since the Icelandic insular economy was already consolidated during Olaus' lifetime his representation must be viewed as a culmination of past and present products intentionally leading to the belief that the

⁴⁰ Olaus Magnus, 'On the wonderful supply of butter in Iceland', *Historia Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 4* (London, 1998) 1085.

⁴¹ Magnus, 'On the wonderful supply of butter', 1086.

⁴² John Granlund, 'Notes on book XXI chapter 21', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1998) 1141.

⁴³ Magnus, 'On the wonderful supply of butter in Iceland', 1085.

varied economy of Iceland still existed and remained untouched. This is what Olaus sought to include in his representation, so that those who would view his work would realise that Iceland did in fact ultimately possess economic potential. Hence the struggle of nations in the Icelandic bay. **(Fig. 1.3)** Whether the portrayed situation obtained in the past or was present during his lifetime is conveniently left out. Iceland's role in instigating feelings of pride in Olaus' enjoys the upper hand when it comes to his view on the insular economies of Northern Europe.⁴⁴

Iceland's function as trade port for Greenlandic products is also known by Olaus. Scholars have argued that hunting walrus and trading its products permeated in the Greenland settlement since its inception.⁴⁵ Archaeological studies have already traced the route of arctic and exotic products from Greenland to Iceland and so, to the inner regions of Europe. Consequentially incorporating walrus hunting into the European insular culture of the Northern Atlantic. Since the trade of walrus products is a known factor of the economy of the Greenland colony it is remarkable that Olaus does not depict any of these walruses on Greenland neither in his map nor in the chronicle. Even more remarkable is the absence of the representation of Greenland's economy in Olaus' work. However, the rich spoils of the walrus trade are not ignored by Olaus as he describes how the hunt for walrus off the coast of Norway results in proper trade goods: *'Now that it is disabled and half-dead from loss of blood, they convert it [walrus] into rich spoil, especially its tusks, which among the Scythians, that is to say, Muscovites, Russians, and Tartars, are valued as a luxury, like ivory in India, because of their toughness, brilliance, and weight.'*⁴⁶ Although the value and meaning of these products for the identity of Northern Europe is not lost to Olaus, Greenland the location where these products before were acquired remains underexposed in this representation. This insular entity appears to exist far from the Northern European economy as Olaus only furthers notions of isolation. John Granlund points out that Olaus' information concerning Greenland is based on hear-say and that this is the reason for his omission.⁴⁷ However, Olaus' representation of Greenland is not left blank as he focusses on the battles between settlers and natives and consequentially leaving economic aspects and connections outside the picture. The fact that this side of Olaus' insular representation is left out attests to his lack of knowledge about this area as well as the loss of contact between Northern Europe and the Greenlandic Nordic settlements.

Greenland can be viewed as the most remote outpost of the medieval European expansion. Studies concerning the decline and downfall of the Norse colony on Greenland are still in dispute

⁴⁴ Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the Northern countries by Olaus Magnus', 2.

⁴⁵ Frei, 'Was it for walrus?', 442-445.

⁴⁶ Olaus Magnus, 'On the Norwegian walrus or morse', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 28* (London, 1998) 1111.

⁴⁷ John Granlund, 'Notes on book II chapter 11', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1998) 137-138.

over what caused the definitive collapse of Nordic presence in Greenland. Aside from the obvious struggles of the Norsemen with the natives of Greenland, illustrated on the *Carta Marina*. **(Fig. 1.4)** Scholars argued that the decline had to do with rivalling trade systems in Europe.⁴⁸ Kirsten Seaver points out that the economic history of the medieval Northern Atlantic often overlooks the role of Greenland. She states that this historiographical neglect is due to isolative and harsh circumstances. This is seen in Olaus' work as symbols of economy, marine products, appear absent in both map and chronicle. Although the walrus products are attached to the Norwegian coastal region, the role of Greenland within this trade is absent. Thus the decline of this colony clearly affects Olaus' representation of this as island the implementation of economy concerning Greenland is absent.⁴⁹

Another important aspect of the early modern economic insular systems of the Northern Atlantic can be found in the trade of whale products. Olaus commends the Northerners' fishermen's skill, bravery and resourcefulness in capturing these creatures. Interestingly he records that division of the spoils was only partially reserved for overseas trade. Going beyond notions of a self-sufficient insular economy to indicate that could also look outwards for trading. *'After they have put the meat and fat into vast numbers of large barrels, they preserve it in salt, as they do other huge sea-fish. They use it for home consumption according to need, or sell it to others who will export it to distant lands for the same purposes.'*⁵⁰ Scholars have pointed out how important the whaling industry was for the Faroese communities in developing a role within the economic system of the Northern Atlantic but also confirmed their limitation in natural resources due to the isolated position of these islands.⁵¹

Olaus confirms the Faroese whaling identity as he places the practice of whaling entirely on the Faroer islands. **(Fig. 1.5)** The historiographical association of an island with a monoculture comes to mind as insular monoculture is usually ascribed to marginal and smaller island groups.⁵² The focus of Olaus' description on the many uses of the whale further contributes to the isolated perception of this island due to their dependency on this regional product as nothing can go to waste on pain of starvation.⁵³ Noteworthy is the vignette adorning the chapter *'On The Method Of Capturing Whales And Other Sea-Monsters'* as it's taken directly from the depiction of the Faroer islands on the *Carta*

⁴⁸ Frei, 'Was it for walrus? Viking age settlement and medieval walrus ivory trade in Iceland and Greenland', 458.

⁴⁹ Kirsten Seaver, 'Desirable teeth: the medieval trade in Arctic and African ivory', *Journal of Global History Vol. 4 Issue 2* (2009) 271.

⁵⁰ Olaus Magnus, 'On the blubber, meat, bones, and skins of whales and similar creatures', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 20* (London, 1998) 1103.

⁵¹ Christian Keller, 'Furs, fish and ivory: medieval Norsemen at the arctic fringe', *Journal of the North Atlantic Vol. 3 Issue 1* (2010) 19.

⁵² Sicking, 'Dichotomy of insularity', 501-502.

⁵³ Magnus, 'On the blubber', *Historia book XXI chapter 20*, 1103.

Marina. The map and chronicle thus effectively bind the whaling industry and the Faroër together.⁵⁴ Moreover, the connection with the Northern European world Olaus ascribes to these islands exists primarily through trade in monoculture. However, the true extent of this participation is not as inclusive as it would appear from Olaus' works. Although he mentions the skills of the fishermen, he does not ascribe this to a general success of Northern European trade relations. Instead, the insular dynamism of the Faroër islands is credited to the identity of the islanders.

The Faroër islands in Olaus' work embody a typical concept of insular history. This concept argued by Henri Bresc, stresses that the efficiency of specialized island trade culture is related to the degree of isolation and the ties to regional identity.⁵⁵ Thus the economic dynamism of islands and the associated concept of insular representation of isolation and connectivity is dependent on the specialized island products and their redistribution. Isolation could prove to be a useful stimulant for elevating notions of quality of the specialized production but paradoxically also pushes the island towards the margins of networks of maritime trade. This is often the case for Northern Atlantic islands in medieval thought. In the case of Olaus' representation of the whaling industry and its specialized production the Faroër islands embody the adaptability of the region, less marginal than Greenland but still isolated through monoculture. The heritage of this industry and the successes of this trade meant that these islands were viewed as an undeniable part of the economic systems of Northern Europe and thus adding some sense of connectivity to the Faroër islands. Olaus confirms their unique role and addition to the economy of Northern Europe.

The Orkney and Shetland Islands, or *Hetladia* as Olaus names the latter, have furthered connections between the British islands and the Northern Atlantic world. Unlike the Shetland Islands, the Orkneys appear crowded with activity in Olaus' depiction on the *Carta Marina*. (Fig. 1.6) Remarkably the *Historia* omits the economy of Shetland as Olaus only mentions a special breed of ducks hailing from these islands.⁵⁶ Remarkable, because the Faroër islands are indeed included into Olaus' Northern European economic frame whereas both the Orkneys and the Shetland Islands and their economic background are left out. There is only one exception regarding the Orkney Islands. Although the *Historia* remains silent, in Olaus' own commentary on his map from 1535, *Ain Kurze Auslegung und Verklerung der Neuen Mappen von den alten Goettenreich und andern Nordlenden*, he describes how whaling is in fact prevalent in this insular society. Their specialization in the

⁵⁴ Olaus Magnus, 'On the method of capturing whales and other sea-monsters', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* book XXI chapter 15 (London, 1998) 1098.

⁵⁵ Henri Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif', 6.

⁵⁶ Olaus Magnus, 'On the amazing birth of ducks in Scotland', *Historia Gentibus Septentrionalibus* Book XIX Chapter 9 (London, 1998) 957.

capturing of Balena whales is commended by Olaus.⁵⁷ Studies concerning the medieval history and development of the Orkneys and Shetland islands have determined that the insular society thrived by combining export of fish with other domestic economic activities but did not stand out with any particular means of trade.⁵⁸ This explains why Olaus neglected the Shetland and Orkney Islands when representing the total scale of the insular economy in the Northern Atlantic. The economic roles of these islands adheres more to the British identity than it had an effect on the shaping of the Northern European economy. In addition, the economical connection between Northern Europe and the Orkneys already deteriorated as these islands only possessed historical value to Olaus but did not provide any economic aspects relevant enough to be included in a cultural representation of Northern Europe.⁵⁹ Scholars have argued that the insular economy of specialized exploitation opened up islands to larger networks of trade in the region. Their role is, however, still viewed as marginal and somewhat isolated by contemporaries and Olaus' omission of these islands confirms this notion.⁶⁰

Forms of isolation are present in Olaus' representation of the insular economies of the Northern Atlantic. Apart from Iceland, which Olaus views as an economically thriving island community, the islands of the Northern Atlantic appear distant. And although their products reached overseas regions the overall notion of these islands is marginal in terms of effective trade and economic exchange. The existence of both sides of the dichotomy of insularity, the concept argued by Louis Sicking, can be found in Iceland as has been recognised in Corsica and Sardinia.⁶¹ Olaus represents this region as an area teeming with natural riches and thus provides the incentive of acquiring profit. While Olaus acknowledges Iceland as a prosperous insular society fully connected to Northern Europe, its surroundings attest of an isolated position making Iceland the region where isolation and connectivity intertwined. While functioning in the same frame, exploitation of specialized products in combination with maritime commodity redistribution is evident in this region.⁶² Against the backdrop of smaller and often more isolated islands in the Northern Atlantic, Olaus depicts the varying role that islands take on within the same maritime networks of trade. The Orkney and Shetland islands are deemed less critical for the framing of maritime Northern Europe as Olaus omits any details about these insular territories let alone their economic weight.

⁵⁷ Olaus Magnus, *Ain Kurze Auslegung und Verklerung der Neuen Mappen von den alten Goettenreich und andern Nordlenden*, Online text at: <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00021693&pimage=8&v=100&nav=&l=en>

⁵⁸ James Barret, 'The pirate fishermen: the political economy of a medieval maritime society', in B. Smith & T. Williams ed. *West Over Sea: Studies in Scandinavian Sea-Borne Expansion and Settlement before 1300* (Leiden, 2007) 319-321.

⁵⁹ Barret, 'The pirate fishermen', 323.

⁶⁰ Lestringant, 'La Voie des Îles', 2-3.

⁶¹ Sicking, 'Dichotomy of Insularity', 510.

⁶² Bresc, 'Îles et tissue connectif', 6.

1.2 Insular economy, isolation and connectivity in the East Sea

Olaus experienced the period where the economy of the Baltic and the East Sea changed from redistributing the maritime products of Northern Europe to the export of bulk goods such as grain and wood. In turn, this led to the integration of the East Sea and the Baltic hinterlands into the Western European economy. During this time the Baltic region took on the role as primary supplier of wood and grain to other European nations.⁶³ An inevitable consequence was the decline of islands functioning as centres of trade. Meanwhile the coastal Baltic cities of Germany such as Danzig and Lübeck now functioned as the centres of trade of Northern Europe.⁶⁴ The role that islands played concerning the development of the Northern European economy during the intensification of trade and partnerships in Europe lessened in the Baltic from the 15th century onwards. This decline of the relevance of insular territory is seen on the *Carta Marina* as the islands here are depicted as timid and without much going on. Due to the increasing need of bulk products freight transportation overseas became important for consolidating the exports of the Baltic. Islands that before embodied connectivity now appear economically isolated, or at least less attractive for traders to utilize.

Before Olaus' lifetime the Hanseatic League existed as the leading player in the stock fish, cod and herring trade. The supremacy of the Hanseatic League on the fish market consequentially motivated traders to look towards the North Atlantic region in order to acquire the much desired whale, walrus and other maritime products.⁶⁵ Through the establishment of this league, products acquired from the Northern Atlantic region were effectively bartered and redistributed across Europe. Although the fish trade continued to exist during Olaus' lifetime, he experienced the remembrance of economic superiority rather than the defacto construction of the supremacy of the Hanseatic League. Thus, the remembrance of the Northern European inclusion into European networks of trade appears to be of particular interest to Olaus as this shaped the identity of the North. Since his work is viewed as an ethnographic representation of the North it is essential to understand Olaus' will to represent the glorious past of this region continued in a contemporary successful image. Consequently cancelling out notions of a barren Northern Europe and initiating the view of the North as a realm of prosperity and possibilities. The remembrance of the medieval economy of the Baltic is an aspect that ties in with the *Historia's* goal to describe the North in full and his ethnographical approach.⁶⁶

⁶³ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 98-99.

⁶⁴ Idem. 99-101.

⁶⁵ Bolster, 'The mortal sea: *fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail*', 35.

⁶⁶ Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the Northern countries by Olaus Magnus', 6-7.

In Olaus' representation of the economy of the Baltic a few insular regions remain absent. The Danish islands such as Sjaelland and Fyn are omitted which leads one to believe that Olaus' didn't attach importance to these islands. Apart from the apparent role that these islands have played in the Baltic networks Olaus, either intentionally or not, leaves the economic aspects of these islands out of his frame. Olaus, for the most part, only associates Sjaelland with the birthplace of the 13th century chronicler Saxo Grammaticus.⁶⁷ The insular economies of the Baltic that are in fact described deal with islands functioning as centres of trade. The way Olaus views these islands is to be associated with the formation of the Mediterranean *Emporia*. Only Öland and Götland enjoy this superior representation as successful and fruitful insular economies of the Baltic, not far from the Swedish coast. The insular production of Öland is associated with a special breed of horses which according to Olaus are much desired by both native and foreign merchants. Thus they are sold as 'marvels of nature'.⁶⁸ In contrast to the *Carta Marina* the vignette of the chapter concerning Öland or, Elandia as it is shown, shows ships, anchorages leading one to believe that Olaus depicts a homage to the former booming economy of this island. (Fig. 1.7)

Götland can be viewed as the culmination of insular connectivity in the Baltic region. Olaus' textual representation of the island confirms this concept as its prosperity and maritime centrality takes on a central place within his view.⁶⁹ The island Götland is known in Scandinavian medieval history as the insular centre of trade in the Baltic. This island stands symbol for the highway of trade between East and West in Northern Europe as its location in the East Sea makes that this island became a central node in the trade systems of the North. Very much utilized by foreign and native merchants alike. Some scholars even argued that the Hanseatic League flourished in the Baltic purely due to this island and its central position.⁷⁰ A form of insular connectivity is laid bare here. The role of anchorages next to important port cities or trade hubs is of undeniable significance in connecting the region and making maritime activity more enduring for both native as well as foreign traders helping to fuel the mobility of the region as well.⁷¹

In Olaus' representation of Götland and its capital Visby the relation between economic functions and insularity is unearthed. *'This city [Visby] was once the market town of the Götar and of many other regions, stocked with such wealth and merchandise that hardly any trading-place in Europe was reckoned its equal.'*⁷² Just as Iceland is considered by Olaus as the most prominent and

⁶⁷ Miekkaavaara, 'Unknown Europe', 4.

⁶⁸ Olaus Magnus, 'On the beauty and fecundity of Öland, an island of the Götar', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 23* (London, 1996) 120-121.

⁶⁹ Olaus Magnus, 'On the most renowned island of the Götar called Gotland', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 24*, (London, 1996) 122-123.

⁷⁰ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 54-55.

⁷¹ Sicking, 'The dichotomy of insularity', 500.

⁷² Magnus, 'On the most renowned island of the Götar called Gotland', 122.

economically prosperous island of the Northern Atlantic, Götland is represented as most important to the Baltic region and the development of the economy of Northern Europe. Although the depictions on the *Carta Marina* of the Baltic are less detailed and less eye-catching than the tumultuous waters of the Northern Atlantic, the Baltic's significance for Olaus' insular representation must be made clear. The importance of connectivity is also argued by Michael North in his research concerning the Baltic. He states that during the early stages of Hanseatic activity on Götland traders flocked to this island in order to gain a foothold in the trade with Novgorod functioning as a trade route to the East.⁷³ Moreover, the economic mobility and diversity that this island offered to traders created the situation where this island could be viewed as an *Emporia*. The centrality and insular dynamism of Götland shaped Olaus' impression of this island but also stresses its connective role for the region. Regardless of the geographical position *Emporia* usually developed on smaller islands and in already existing port cities.⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that this sentiment of economic importance in relation to existing port cities echoes through Olaus' representation of Götland. Olaus describes the capital town of Visby as teeming with life, stemming from many different nations, each with their own living quarters and streets. Attesting to a versatile and open economic society.⁷⁵ The economic diversity and historical value that this island used to possess is of such importance to Olaus that the insular economy of the Baltic is almost solely linked to this island.

During Olaus' lifetime the networks of west to east trade stemmed from Bergen passing through the Baltic Sea to Germany. Gotland's initial booming start in terms of trade and redistribution made it an area desired by the surrounding nations. Furthermore, the economic advantages that this island offered resulted in naval disputes and warfare eventually leading to the late 14th century destruction of this centre of trade in the Baltic.⁷⁶ Olaus mentions this destruction of the once proud trade island of the Swedes: *'Those who entered by land or sea found everything peaceful until the town was turned upside down by conflict, the most destructive waster of kingdoms and men, a fate that has befallen an infinite number of other nations which were originally in a flourishing condition.'*⁷⁷ Remarkably, Olaus does recall the rise and fall of the island but remains silent about the consequences for the trade in Northern Europe. And more importantly he omits to describe how the economic centres of power shifted from insular to the coastal regions of the Baltic. A probability is that his disgust at the German affiliation with Lutheranism meant that he purposefully ignored their forms of economic success.

⁷³ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 55-57.

⁷⁴ Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif', 7.

⁷⁵ Magnus, 'On the most renowned island of the Götär called Gotland', 122.

⁷⁶ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 56-58.

⁷⁷ Olaus Magnus, 'Gotland', 122.

In addition, Olaus focusses on the historical heritage of Götland in representing the conditions for maintaining maritime and economic law instead of sketching the contemporary economic situation. The normative function of maritime penalties hailing from the insular capital city of Visby is elaborated: *'These and similar penalties, and indeed heavier ones, which conform to the regulations of the ancient city of Visby in the island of Gotland. Subject by perpetual right to the dominion of the king of Svealand and Götaland, will be dealt with in greater detail.'*⁷⁸ John Granlund has pointed out that the influence of the Visby commercial and maritime law was indeed known abroad, but its extensiveness and commonality for Europe was exaggerated by Olaus.⁷⁹ It appears that the municipal and maritime law stemming from Visby had its roots in the seafaring and trading customs that developed in this region but were not exclusive to the area per se.⁸⁰ Yet, this exaggeration of Götland's functionality highlights the economic importance and influence that Götland once possessed and was remembered for, therefore playing a central part in Olaus' view on this island. According to Olaus the council of Visby was often consulted in many different disputes concerning traders and mariners. However, as John Granlund mentions, the Visby law is similar to the maritime laws instigated by Hanseatic League.⁸¹ In turn, connects with the dominance of the Hanseatic League over the area. Which in turn provided a normative civil framework wherein maritime business could be conducted without fear of extortion and unfair agreements. As Michael Pye mentions, the stock fish could be sold anywhere and was a viable means of getting money and was particularly acquired from traders in the Baltic.⁸² Here the bias of Olaus becomes clear as the now isolated centres of trade are still described as being part of the Baltic maritime systems negating a sense of isolation by ignoring the current focus on the coast.

The influence of economic and trade related aspects on Olaus' representation of the islands of Northern Europe becomes evident when looking at Götland. Although the economic relevance of islands in the Baltic declined significantly, the connection these islands provided is remembered as essential. While Gotland functioned as most important insular trade centre in the Baltic before Olaus' time, the memory of Gotland's successes reveals how this island fuelled connectivity in the region. Consequently stimulating further exploitation of the economic bonds between the Northern European communities. Olaus' description of the Götland society demonstrates the great variety of people coexisting here: *'To it streamed men from Götaland, Swedes, Russians or Ruthenians, Danes,*

⁷⁸ Olaus Magnus, 'On the punishment of mutinous seamen', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book X chapter 16* (London, 1998) 496.

⁷⁹ John Granlund, 'Notes on book X chapter 16', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1998) 518.

⁸⁰ Granlund, 'Notes on book X chapter 16', 518.

⁸¹ John Granlund, 'Notes on book II chapter 24', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1996) 143.

⁸² Michael Pye, *The edge of the world: how the North Sea made us who we are* (London, 2014) 179-180.

*Prussians, Englishmen, Scots, Flemings, Frenchmen, Finns, Wends, Saxons, and Spaniards.*⁸³ The interregional character that Olaus ascribes to these Baltic islands connected them to the rest of the world. Thus, Olaus describes the insular region as intimately connected to Europe through an economy of exchange and effectively marks the Baltic as cornerstone in the economic prosperity of the region.

This is also the case for Elandia situated next to Götland. Olaus' description of this island shows that he is aware of the importance of geographical centrality and anchorages, and that this openness provides economic possibility not possible elsewhere. Olaus acknowledges the importance of this island when discussing the shores and its importance for traders coming from the East: *'Certainly on its eastern shores, which lie facing the open sea, there are many picturesque harbours that voyagers from overseas are in habit of coming to look at as much from curiosity as from need.'*⁸⁴ Furthermore this excerpt portrays Olaus' awareness of insular connectivity and its influence on the prosperity of the island. Not only does he represent how this island's popularity derives from the natural beauty of this island but also confirms its key position in attracting foreigners for doing business, effectively opening up the island to interregional connectivity.

The trade of the Baltic integrated into European networks of trade on multiple fronts. The role of Baltic islands within this network connected mostly to centres of redistribution and relied on cross regional exchange in order to thrive. Although not an island, the Gulf of Bothnia and the coastal towns in this region experienced similar developments where redistribution became primary focus of the society. Olaus describes how the inhabitants of this region could barter for almost any product since their cod and stock fish was so highly sought after. This can be perceived as an example of the economic maritime success of the Baltic.⁸⁵ (Fig. 1.8) Although Olaus did not experience any of the economic successes of these islands himself, the remembrance of these events and the influence on the economic consolidation of the region is most important. The contemporary inhabitants are described as simple folk focussing on animal husbandry on the islands of the Baltic.⁸⁶ Olaus' description of islands in the Baltic adheres more to the insular concept of connectivity than to the concept of isolation. However, this representation is not entirely truthful. The memory of a once flourishing insular centre of trade is established as the main theme in Olaus' insular representation of the Baltic while these islands were definitely isolated from the economic routes they once were a part of.

⁸³ Magnus, 'Gotland', 122.

⁸⁴ Magnus, 'On the beauty and fecundity of Öland', 121.

⁸⁵ Olaus Magnus, 'On the crowned rock and the abundance of fish', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 6* (London, 1996) 99-100.

⁸⁶ Olaus Magnus, 'On rams and young sheep', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XVII chapter 1* (London, 1998) 842.

The representation of islands in Northern Europe by Olaus Magnus has certainly been influenced by the trade. Although the insular economies and their effect on the Nordic societies differ greatly per island, the influence of the role of trade on Olaus' perception is evident since remembrance of economic successes and their part in the formation of Northern European economies are key in his representation. With the exception of Iceland, the islands of the Northern Atlantic were mostly represented as isolated due to their monoculture. The association of the Northern Atlantic islands with specialized means of production and the redistribution of regional products further connects with this concept. Scholarly research concerning Mediterranean islands tends to show that further exploitation of remote insular areas did in fact contribute to the perception of isolation.⁸⁷ However, the marginalization of these islands became less apparent as they were incorporated in economic maritime systems. This is the case for the Faroër and Orkney Islands as the integration of whale and walrus products into European networks of trade made sure that these now also functioned as nodes instead of only margins. Furthermore Olaus' focus on past economic successes instead of depicting the current insular situation connects with the changing economic situation where the German coasts instead of the Baltic islands embodied pivotal roles. Thus, Olaus' representation is not only shaped by trade but includes the diversity of isolated and connected islands effectively functioning in the same maritime network. It becomes clear that insular connectivity was already established and now in decline in the Baltic since Olaus omits their current use for the economy of the North. The islands that are considered isolated in terms of trade take on specialized insular production not unlike the agrarian and mining specializations of 'isolated' islands in the Mediterranean.⁸⁸ Instead, Olaus' insular representation of early modern Northern Europe is dually influenced. In the newly booming region of the Northern Atlantic the islands are more easily described as mostly thriving. Yet, the islands that were once economically prosperous in the Baltic are described as an important part of the economic history of the region without including their current use. And thus Olaus particularly associates the islands of the North with a rich past in the east and a bright economic future in the west.

⁸⁷ Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif', 6-7.

⁸⁸ Lestringant, 'La voie des îles', *Médiévales Vol. 47* (Automne, 2004) 5.

Chapter 2: Maritime mobility present in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of Northern Europe

Islands are just as susceptible to the projection of power by states as territories situated on the mainland. A characteristic of early modern times as states sought to consolidate their influence on newly discovered lands and mark their territory before anyone else could. Cartographers sought to include the affiliation of these islands with the result that the early modern conceptualization of islands is influenced by notions of statehood. In the case of insular representation, islands existing as unique geographical territories, are represented on early modern maps as extensions of political states.⁸⁹ Olaus' map follows this tradition as well since the statehoods of Scandinavia were defining their borders. Political boundaries expanded alongside the lines of expansive waterways that could be consolidated and mapped. Effectively broadening the locations from where control could be issued. No longer did distant islands solely function as margins of society. Instead, the spatiality of the ocean was perceived as enclosed, conquerable and teeming with possibilities, stimulating notions of maritime mobility. Maritime mobility is an important factor for the insular historiographical discourse, as an island that was considered mobile also represented opportunities. Greater maritime mobility helped to broaden connections across the sea by taking part in political and economic systems consequently shifting islands towards a more political inclusive role. Mobilized insular territories embodied functions both strategic as well as military. For example islands could be viewed as beacons aiding naval traffic but also marine military strongholds. Insular mobility and the way these islands were used also links to notions of isolation and connectivity. To clarify further, insular representations are influenced by the extent of mobility ascribed to the island. In the case of Olaus Magnus, there is a differentiation of mobility concerning the insular territories of Northern Europe. Olaus' own view on the spatiality of the maritime world is closely linked to possibility and limitation of the islands he describes. Since Olaus dedicates a fair amount of his chronicle to aspects of maritime mobility such as boatbuilding and the utilization of the sea, it is of importance to see how mobility influenced Olaus' insular representation of Northern Europe.

The *Carta Marina* shows symbols of political affiliation through the addition of statehood emblems of the nations of Northern Europe.⁹⁰ (Fig. 2.1) Interestingly, this is also the case for the islands on this map making this map fit into early modern cartographic traditions. In particular the islands of the North Atlantic are of interest to political actors as they resemble the western frontier. However, the representation of Northern European islands in Olaus' work is not as politically exclusive as with other 16th century maps. The versatile position of islands in the Northern Atlantic

⁸⁹ Philip Steinberg, 'Insularity, sovereignty and statehood: the representation of islands on portolan charts and the construction of the territorial state', *Geografiska Annaler Vol. 87 Issue 4* (2005) 253-254.

⁹⁰ Leena Miekkaavaara, 'Unknown Europe: The mapping of the Northern Countries by Olaus Magnus', 4-6.

tells a different story from the situation of the Baltic islands. The Baltic region and its islands were far more integrated into political and military dimensions unlike their western counterparts. Although the Northern Atlantic islands were part of the maritime systems, their political and military functions appear more or less isolated. Furthermore, the role of isolation and connectivity concerning insular mobility is less homogenous in the Northern European representation of Olaus than in the case of the insular economy. Olaus describes the islands of both regions in a similar manner without making a specific distinction of their political relevance to Northern Europe. Since no definitive demarcation concerning insular political influence and mobility is made we must approach these aspects by looking at the established functions of the islands. Once again we must be aware of the *Historia's* focus on the past. So, it must be noted that not only isolation and connectivity attach to mobility and thus influence Olaus' view. But instead, the opportunities of insular mobility, in past and present are essential for understanding his insular representation. The framework that is portrayed is one where some islands are considered less important to the power projection and consolidation of states. Consequentially this influences the degree of mobility per region as most of the islands were already tied to political territories. Thus their functionality within the region is most important to help understand the way Olaus' represented aspects of insular mobility.⁹¹

The maritime realms became a space that connected more than they separated. With this development insular mobility goes hand in hand.⁹² Mobility as a historiographical notion is hard to unearth from a map, let alone an ethnographic representation existing in both text and image. Thus this thesis tries to seek out the visual elements representing mobility in three parts. First by looking at markings of political affiliation. Secondly by looking at visual representations of how people reconnected and transported across the insular area and in what way military advantage was perceived. And finally if the island possessed any function that could enhance its mobile position in the form of beacons, defensive mechanisms and safe havens. How certain islands and their natural environment were used to the advantage of either the aggressor or defender showcases how specific islands were included into defensive mechanisms and thus became significant part of Northern Europe confirming a mobile landscape.⁹³ In order to research notions of mobility in Olaus' work it is important to note that the age of exploration during this early stage was focussed on the projection of power and not the defacto consolidation of it on the islands.⁹⁴ Yet, during Olaus' time consolidation became the norm. As he intertwines the historical and contemporary period we must be aware of his mixture between projection and consolidation.

⁹¹ Sicking, 'The dichotomy of insularity', 507.

⁹² Philip Steinberg, 'Sovereignty, territory and the mapping of mobility', 468.

⁹³ Bresc, 'Îles et tissue connectif', 9.

⁹⁴ Sicking, 'The dichotomy of insularity', 509.

As Philip Steinberg argued, statehoods and territorial boundaries were now also applied to the Oceans and so, also to the islands. This meant that marginalization of borderlands declined and earlier frontiers were now pulled towards a central cosmology of political power.⁹⁵ States were able to mark certain maritime routes as their own, as we have seen in Olaus' representation concerning the dominance of the Hanzeatic League in the Icelandic bay. This is just one example of how greater maritime mobility led to wider territorial expansion and so more fluid insular allegiances to economic and political systems of early modern Northern Europe.

Remarkably, the islands that already possessed connectivity in the past, especially in the Baltic, appear more isolated in a political sense.⁹⁶ The significance of the Baltic islands was already established in the medieval period. With this mobility achieved their importance as connectors of the region slowly deteriorated and remembrance became the most relevant to Olaus. One would expect this decline to influence the degree of mobility presented in Olaus' insular representation. However, this means that the expected outcome of mobility in relation to Olaus' representation would be of isolation in the west and connectivity in the east.⁹⁷

2.1 Maritime mobility, isolation and connectivity in the North-Atlantic Ocean

In response to Braudel's theory of 'routes et villes', the theory that argues that mobilizing factors were primarily initiated from the main roads and villages, scholars Horden and Purcell have pointed out that development of mobility and connectivity did not only take place alongside the central nodes of predestined highways of communication and redistribution. Instead these lines of connection also existed at micro levels within the hinterlands that were steadily included into the global networks through trade and politics.⁹⁸ The inclusion of micro regions to these routes of mobility and how they participated with the regional systems helps to understand how connectivity was maintained by the mobilisation of marginal regions and linking them to the bigger picture. In the case of the Northern Atlantic we must analyse Olaus' descriptions and depictions that focus on the functional properties of the islands. These properties can help us understand whether Olaus considers these islands as figureheads of mobility situated in a tumultuous ocean. How did mobilisation form on these islands and could the inhabitants profit from their connection as micro region to the European systems?

⁹⁵ Philip Steinberg, 'Sovereignty, territory and the mapping of mobility', 469-470.

⁹⁶ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 101.

⁹⁷ Steinberg, 'Sovereignty, territory and the mapping of mobility', 482.

⁹⁸ Horden *The corrupting sea*, 123-124

The archipelago of Norway can be considered as a micro region functioning as a marginal territory in the Northern European world. The first form of the maritime mobility in remote regions can be found in Olaus' description of fishermen hailing from the archipelagos of Norway. The success of the Northern European fish trade was known throughout Europe and fuelled the motivation of participating in fishing expeditions in the North.⁹⁹ Olaus appears to confirm this notion as he describes how inhabitants of remote insular territories made their way to these expeditions which granted them the means to participate at broader levels: *'Many thousands of fishermen live in the most distant communities of Norway, namely Andanes, Trondenenes, Duvanenes, Gamlavik, Nyavik, and other places round Vardohus, that is to say the castle, or house, of the garrison for that entire realm.'*¹⁰⁰ The places mentioned here by Olaus consist of islands situated between Bergen and the northern extremity of the Norwegian coast ending with the Vardohus stronghold located at the Varangerfjord. **(Fig. 2.2.)** By pushing the remote origins of these fishermen to the front, Olaus acknowledges the mobilizing factor that resides on these island archipelagos, namely labour. Furthermore the representation of this region as isolated yet connected to Northern Europe through trade showcases how mobility shaped marginal territories into participating parts of society, albeit only for the inhabitants. Maritime mobility is essential for the continuation of the insular and coastal economies of Norway. Olaus' representation of the fishermen and the acknowledgement of the widespread area of redistribution that these isolated fishermen had access to, links to his view of these islands as connected to Europe while situated at the border of the dangerous open ocean.¹⁰¹ **(Fig. 2.3)**

Olaus' argument for the existence of maritime mobility in the Norwegian archipelago continues by mentioning the profit of their spoils against the backdrop of fighting sea monsters in the Norwegian Ocean: *'Even if these monsters appear in their nets beside desirable fish [...] they are thrown overboard as useless, while the choice fish are kept in the boat and sold at a high profit, sometimes in the district where they are taken, sometimes in neighbouring countries, and even in the farthest reaches of Germany.'*¹⁰² John Granlund confirms the novelty of Olaus' addition as before undocumented insular regions had their continued existence influenced and made possible due to maritime mobility.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Bolster, *The mortal sea: fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail*, 34-36.

¹⁰⁰ Olaus Magnus, 'On dangerous fishing in the Norwegian Ocean', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 1*, 1082-1083.

¹⁰¹ Wickler, 'The centrality of small Islands in arctic Norway', 172-173.

¹⁰² Olaus Magnus, 'On the danger to fishermen and the nature of the fish', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XXI chapter 2* (London, 1998) 1083.

¹⁰³ Granlund, 'Notes on Book XXI Chapter 21', *Historia*, 1140.

Moreover, it is pointed out how Olaus views a maritime connection between the coast of Vardohus, Norway and the eastern shores of Greenland: *'The eastern parts of Greenland with the rock Hvitsark, already mentioned, lying between, face Norway, and stretch towards Vardöhus, the unconquerable fortress of the king of Norway; but towards the north and the westward parts extend lands and waters with no known limit.'*¹⁰⁴ Although the reality of this connection is far from profitable and the truth its mention shows that Olaus' viewed two rather isolated regions as connected to each other and thus drawing a mental line of mobility and connection between the two extremities.

The apparent remoteness that islands alongside Norway's coast were associated with was abandoned in Olaus' insular representation of this region. Olaus represents the micro regions now actively taking place alongside broad lines of mobility in Northern Europe. Although geographically marginal these smaller islands had the means to connect to the mainland and to keep this link maintained; although the origin of these lands is viewed as remote their connection to Northern European systems confirms their connectivity. It appears that physical mobility of people being able to live in remote areas and yet be able to participate in broader systems of trade has influenced Olaus' perception. Although his view of this area is evidently a more tumultuous one, seeing the natural horrors surrounding these parts, an isolated view would be expected but Olaus' description downplays these elements and focusses only on the essence of mobility: participation.

Once again Iceland enjoys the most attention to detail in Olaus' work. A full chapter is dedicated to the military and strategic prowess of the Icelandic society. Olaus describes how horses are used to quickly mobilize the Icelandic people in order to move themselves to any part of Iceland that needed defending. *'Another of their practices is the hiring of horsemen for high pay, in order to curb the excesses of traders who, because of the inexpressible profit that can be made, stream thither every year from different parts of Germany and especially from Lower Saxony.'*¹⁰⁵ Although Olaus' possesses some knowledge about the Icelandic military, he is biased as confirmed by John Granlund.¹⁰⁶ Olaus' mention of the hiring of horsemen refers to the German governor whose personal troop was indeed waging war against the English. Not, however, to protect the Icelanders but to maintain monopoly of the Icelandic fish trade. The relatively small Icelandic horses were primarily used for transport and travel and did not possess the strength to carry knights in full armour. Making Olaus' depiction of knights on the map somewhat misplaced.¹⁰⁷ **(Fig. 2.4)**

¹⁰⁴ Olaus Magnus, 'On shipwrecks off Greenland', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 10* (London, 1996) 104.

¹⁰⁵ Olaus Magnus, 'On the defence of the Icelandic coast', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book VII chapter 23* (London, 1998) 341.

¹⁰⁶ John Granlund, 'Notes on Book VII Chapter 23', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1998) 347.

¹⁰⁷ Granlund, 'Notes on book VII chapter 23', 347.

Yet, the inclusion of the representation of military strategy concerning Iceland shows how influential insular mobility and strategy was for Olaus' contemporary view on the island. The text in the *Historia* refers to his own time and not to past events, unlike other topics in the chronicle. Olaus describes the will to defend the Icelandic peoples from fraudulent and evil merchants which in turn represents notions of mobility: '*Measures are taken beforehand by deploying strong detachments of armed horsemen among them, to see that no violence is done to anyone either on the seashore, in harbours, or out in the country, or that, if such an act is committed, it does not remain unpunished.*'¹⁰⁸ This is an example of how insular micro regions were managed and defended. Olaus' inclusion of this story shows that he viewed this island as a symbol for a mobilized insular society capable of defending itself as well as maintaining a successful economy. Protection from unwanted solicitors while actively participating in systems of trade and politics effectively portrays the island as a beacon of mobility.

The rather successful economic position that Iceland embodied in the Northern Atlantic is highly sought after by German and English actors. To consolidate Iceland's affiliation with the North the royal emblem of the dynasty of Norway is seen on Iceland on the *Carta Marina*. **(Fig. 2.5)** Projection of power and the marking of territory is found here. Political consolidation on maps is part of the cartographic traditions of the early modern period resulting in the binding of insular territories to maritime regions furthering the influence of those regions.¹⁰⁹ As Henri Bresc argued, a thalassocracy is difficult to establish purely based on insular territory. This is exactly the case with Northern European islands as differences on political and geographical levels are too great to unite under a single banner. The domination and execution of naval power concerning islands is often limited to how important the island was deemed. Was it mobile enough and was it relevant to include into state territory?¹¹⁰ These questions symbolize how Olaus approached these islands. This does not mean that notions of insular mobility are only influenced by strategic importance ascribed to the island. Instead it means that within the larger territorial frame of states the extent of the consolidation of power is subject to the importance of the insular region. In the case of Iceland, power projection can be recognized in Olaus' focus on the struggle of European nations for their economic connection with Iceland. The military organization and the many connections that emanated from this island shows that Olaus viewed it as the most important node in the maritime system of the Northern Atlantic, proclaiming it a mobile society and one gaining, sometimes hostile, interests from other nations tying it to the European systems of trade and political power like other European territories.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Olaus Magnus, 'On the defence of the Icelandic coast', *Historia*, 341.

¹⁰⁹ Steinberg, 'Insularity, sovereignty and statehood', 258.

¹¹⁰ Henri Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif de la Méditerranée médiévale', 10-11.

¹¹¹ Seaver, 'Desirable teeth: the medieval trade in Arctic and African ivory', 287-288.

Olaus' depiction of Greenland's forms of mobility on the *Carta Marina* is shown by the girdle of shipwrecks that surround the island suggesting that at one time mobility and connectivity existed. **(Fig. 2.6)** He mentions how other seafaring nations headed toward this part of the world but who were then easily discouraged due to their lack of knowledge about the weather and Greenlandic natives. *'Spanish and French ships have also been driven by ferocious winds and, having landed against their will on these inhospitable shores, have suffered a double hardship, for they did not know how to converse in the language of those people, nor had they any evidence of their trustworthiness.'*¹¹² Greenland's surroundings do not actively further the connectivity between the island and Europe. Christian Keller has argued that Greenland's ultimate lack of participation in Northern European systems during Olaus' time had to do with a delay in trade that developed in the Northern Atlantic during the medieval period.¹¹³ In addition, the Northern Atlantic ivory trade became less relevant and so connectivity declined further once the initial successes of the settlements were over. Any sense of mobility is left out of the picture and it becomes apparent that the lack of information concerning the rest of the region is responsible for the remoteness Olaus attaches to this region. Mobility influenced Olaus' perception in the sense that he considered it barely evident and having little to no influence on Northern European society.¹¹⁴

Olaus' fixation on the struggle between Nordic settlers and indigenous inhabitants concerning Greenland further relates to the lack of knowledge concerning the Greenland colony and its downfall. Moreover, this shows how distance and declining relevance between the farthest Northern Atlantic Island and the European mainland resulted in an insular representation that solely focusses on the hardships instead of any past successes. Remarkably this is in strong contrast to descriptions of other islands that are less relevant to Olaus' contemporary picture, mainly the Baltic islands.¹¹⁵ Greenland appears to be viewed literally as the margin of Northern Europe and arguably not even a part of that realm. This leads to believe that the absence of mobility on this island adheres to his view of Greenland functioning as the isolated border of the Northern European world. The lack of mobility represented on Greenland by Olaus affirms the isolated perception.

The island groups of the Faroër, Shetland and Orkney are barely present in Olaus' insular representation of the Northern Atlantic, thus notions of mobility concerning these islands are expected to be omitted as well. However, aspects of mobility can be recognized in Olaus' representation of the Orkney and Faroër islands. Firstly, the royal emblem of Norway is clearly placed near the island formation of the Orkneys consequently adding the region to Norway's political sphere

¹¹² Olaus Magnus, 'On the pygmies of Greenland, and Hvitsark rock', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 11* (London, 1996) 104.

¹¹³ Keller, 'Furs, fish and ivory: medieval Norsemen at the arctic fringe', 15-17.

¹¹⁴ Idem. 18.

¹¹⁵ Olaus Magnus, 'On the most renowned island of the Götär called Gotland', 122-123.

of influence. A small form of power projection can thus be recognized in Olaus' representation. Secondly, by the representation of the Monk's rock on the Faroër Islands. The island is mentioned as functioning as beacon for aiding naval traffic and essentially marking the Faroër Islands as waypoint to escape from dreadful maritime conditions.¹¹⁶ 'Near Faroe Island,¹¹⁷ there is a mountain that rears up from the Ocean, which seamen call by the apt name of the Monk. [...] Together with the faculty of sustaining and comforting in complete security all who seek refuge there during a dreadful storm.'¹¹⁸ The Faroër Islands can be viewed as a micro region within the Northern European world. In one way the Faroër are indeed an example of a connected back area as they consist of a recognizable point amidst isolated waters. However, any strategic function remains absent as Olaus adheres to a lack of the development of mobility on the Faroër. The result is a representation of partial isolation and limited connectivity.

Descriptions of the Orkney and Shetland islands are non-existent in Olaus' chronicle. Although they are clearly visible on the *Carta Marina*, notwithstanding the short description in Olaus' introduction to his map *Ain Kurze Auslegung*,¹¹⁹ the role of these island groups is absent. This gap can be explained by Olaus' focus to include the Northern European nations and their sphere of influence. Olaus shows little interest in these functions of those islands situated so close to the British sphere of influence let alone to ascribe to them maritime mobility. Instead, the focus remains on the insular territory possessing the most strategic and economic opportunities for the Northern European world, Iceland.

2.2 Maritime mobility, isolation and connectivity in the East Sea

Maritime mobility and the political development of the Baltic region experienced a transition during Olaus' lifetime. The 16th century saw a revolution in communication and the reconnecting of peoples across Scandinavia. With the coming of Lutheranism to Northern Europe, language barriers were surpassed making the exchange and transferability of ideas possible and globalizing the region. Michael North refers to the consolidation of states during this period that ensured that the Nordic

¹¹⁶ Louis Sicking, 'The dichotomy of insularity', 496.

¹¹⁷ Although the Faroër are an island group Olaus Magnus represents them as a single island following the tradition of his predecessor Jakob Ziegler (see. John Granlund's notes on Olaus Magnus' *Historia* book II chapter 5)

¹¹⁸ Olaus Magnus, 'On the sea rock named the Monk', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* book II chapter 5 (London, 1996) 98.

¹¹⁹ Olaus Magnus, *Ain Kurze Auslegung und Verklerung der Neuen Mappen von den alten Goettenreich und andern Nordlenden*, Online text at: <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00021693&pimage=8&v=100&nav=&l=en>

countries were developing themselves as principalities consolidating their political influence.¹²⁰ With this in mind Olaus' work becomes even more relevant for understanding mobility in early modern Northern Europe due to defining of Nordic territories and their political affiliation.

During the 16th century the focus of the Baltic economy, and so the influence and power in the region, shifted from the seas and islands to the coastal towns and ports.¹²¹ No longer did redistribution function as the primary economic source consequently making the insular centres of trade obsolete. Therefore when researching Olaus' insular representation in relation to maritime mobility it must be noted that his descriptions concerning the Baltic already focussed on the past. The remembrance of the supremacy that the region once held is most important to Olaus in his representation of the territories of the East Sea. However, elements of mobility concerning this region are found in the form of strategic and military representation. Olaus devotes a large amount of his chronicle to warfare on sea and ice. The skill in utilizing and mobilisation of the maritime realms is ascribed to the East Sea and Baltic in particular.¹²² So, it appears that although maritime mobility was very much present in the region while Olaus compiled his work the defacto usage of insular territory concerning mobility is in steady decline. Notwithstanding the struggles between the Nordic nations in establishing and expanding their often Lutheran dynasties.¹²³

The most renowned island of the Baltic region, Götland, had little military and strategic significance in the 16th century. After its capital Visby was sacked and taken over by the Danish, the island, although essentially loyal to Sweden, remained under Danish influence until it was returned to Swedish dominion in the mid-17th century. Olaus takes sides in this struggle of power projection as he mentions how his Danish predecessor Saxo Grammaticus confirms the Swedish ties to Götland: '*Saxo Grammaticus, the famous historian of the Danes, affirms without hesitation in many of his writings that this island belongs to Sweden.*'¹²⁴ Remarkably Olaus does not add symbols of Danish and Swedish dominance over the island, especially since he ascribed so much importance to Götland the absence of his own sense of justice about whom this island belonged to raises questions. **(Fig. 2.7)** Why did Olaus choose to only elaborate this insular power struggle in his chronicle and why is it left out of his map? The answer can be found once again in Olaus' purpose of remembering the important position the islands in the Baltic once held. By omitting their current political dominion he conveniently leaves the political state out of his frame.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Michael North, *The Baltic: a history*, 88-89.

¹²¹ Idem, 99.

¹²² Olaus Magnus, 'Preface', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book X* (London, 1998) 475-476.

¹²³ Justyna Wubs- Mrozewics, 'The hanze game' in J.W. Mrozewics & S. Jenks ed. *Northern World: The Hanze in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2013) 18.

¹²⁴ Olaus Magnus, 'Gotland', 123

¹²⁵ Miekkaavaara, 'Unknown Europe: The Mapping of the Northern Countries by Olaus Magnus in 1539', 5.

Although Olaus refers to Götland as the cradle from which the noble Goths expanded across his beloved Sweden, the contemporary use of the island for increasing mobility and defending the region remains absent. Instead, the focus lies on the influence of Visby on maritime law as this is likely the only contemporary remnant of the once influential Götland insular society.

Olaus' view on military struggles over Götland's favourable position is personified in his discussion of the injustice this island suffered while being fought over by Swedes, Goths and Danish.¹²⁶ The uncertainty of an insular society torn between different political actors is a notion common to insular history. Philip Steinberg has argued how a single island could be viewed inherently as separate islands functioning under one roof due to their political affiliations.¹²⁷ The unification of insular territories was always subject to regional power struggles and this is also the case for the political consolidation of Götland. John Granlund mentions that the situation concerning Götland was disputed over during the early 16th century and that no consensus was found resulting in the island being bartered between political actors over a period of time.^{128 129} However, a slight mention of the once strategically advanced maritime position is made: *'When Albrecht, king of Sweden, was asked by the princes of Low Germany to rid their sea of those powerful buccaneers, the Vitalians, he pawned the island Gotland to the Grand Master of Prussia for twenty thousand doubloons.'*¹³⁰ It appears that what Götland once embodied in the field of maritime strategy is so important to Olaus' representation of the region that its central position still held its purpose in his description. The acknowledgment of a once highly mobile insular society appears the most important factor in Olaus' representation of Götland. The political struggle for dominance over this island in times past highlights the once important role it possessed in Northern Europe.¹³¹

The islands such as Gotland, Elandia and Öland do possess some functionality concerning mobility within the region. Olaus' describes the natural beauty of these islands and confirms their once important position and omits their contemporary political use. The once glorious strategic position that Gotland, Öland and Elandia possessed are still viewed as the symbol of insular territories that connected the region. The aspects of mobility, however, are omitted in Olaus' description of the islands. Only Öland's beacon function is commended by Olaus: *'Its lofty towers are still used, as if they were a beacon to give the bearings of winds and havens, by those who are sailing far out on the Baltic Sea, especially the English, Scots, Sjaellanders, and Dutch, for whom it is*

¹²⁶ Magnus, 'On the most renowned island of the Götar called Gotland', 123.

¹²⁷ Steinberg, 'Insularity, sovereignty and statehood', 261.

¹²⁸ The political actors in dispute during Olaus' lifetime concerns the struggle between Albrecht, king of Sweden and the princes of Lower Germany.

¹²⁹ Granlund, 'Notes on book II chapter 24', *Historia*, 143.

¹³⁰ Magnus, 'Gotland', 123.

¹³¹ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 63-65.

*particularly necessary to be able to recognize well-known localities on that sea’.*¹³² However, the contemporary situation is that these islands do not embody the same level of connectivity as they used to. Instead it appears that apart from a holiday location for Nordic nobilities these islands lost their important military strategic function. During the medieval period the strategic location was highly functional as Olaus describes: *‘In peacetime the kings of the Götar and Swedes used to pass their summers on this island because of its outstanding attractiveness and to indulge in hunting. Another reason was that by a passage over the neighbouring waters princes from overseas could more conveniently join them there to settle difficult issues.’*¹³³ By mentioning that princes could join their lords whilst on vacation to settle disputes the central position of the island is highlighted as well as the notion making a quick mobilization of the nobility possible. Yet, the role of the islands experienced a decline in activity resulting in a less mobile insular region.

During the 16th century the waterways of the Baltic already functioned as the primary lines of communication tying the region together across the many lakes and rivers. Although the Baltic hinterlands reconnected through inland trade routes they still remained in bad shape. Consequentially forcing lines of mobility across the sea instead of across the land.¹³⁴ The Baltic region had one particular important area made up of insular and coastal networks that stimulated mobility, the passages situated between Finland and the Baltic states. Here, a network of rivers, lakes and archipelagos functioned as roads furthering connections and instigating mobility especially when these waterways froze. This natural phenomena is well known to the Northern Europeans and Olaus confirms this by dedicating an entire chapter to warfare on ice. The struggles between Russians, Moscovites, Finns and Swedes is for the most part tied to this form of maritime warfare: *‘We find in the chronicles of northern lands that, in both old and recent times, extremely bitter contests have often been waged between the Ruthenians and the Swedes or Finns, for different though always momentous reasons, both at sea and land, on flat ice and in thick depths of snow; and that, by the chance of war and changeable fortune, these engagements tossed the hard-won victory now to one side, now to the other, as so often happens.’*¹³⁵ Olaus continues by describing the different ways people utilized the waterways and how they mobilized themselves during wars. Although technically not an island by singular terms, the coastal regions of the Finnish-Baltic area are littered with tiny island archipelagos that are fully incorporated into the defensive systems of the region.

¹³² Olaus Magnus, ‘On the beauty and fecundity of Öland, an island of the Götar’, 121.

¹³³ Magnus, ‘On the beauty’, 122.

¹³⁴ Mikko Huhtamies, ‘Labyrinth of war: archipelago fleets and society in the Gulf of Finland 1520-1809’, *The International Journal of Maritime History Vol. 26 Issue 3* (2014) 601-603.

¹³⁵ Olaus Magnus, ‘Of warfare on ice’, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XI chapter 1* (London, 1998) 523.

The *Carta Marina* portrays these events exactly on their place of origin affirming the contemporary role of mobility attached to the region.¹³⁶ (Fig. 2.8)

Notions of mobility concerning islands are evident in Olaus' work, not only through the description of warfare but especially by the knowledge about how to manipulate maritime territory.¹³⁷ Maritime mobility is found in Olaus' representation of the manipulation of the waterways. He describes that by protecting the shoreline and coastal islands maritime mobility is ensured and free movement maintained: *'The force of the wind on the shores of Germany opposite the northern kingdoms is so huge that, as the waves crash unceasingly in their flood and ebb, it breaks up and tears apart as if they were the tow [...] For that reason the coastal governors and harbour masters [...] have an enormous number of logs, held together by means of wickerwork or netting, and with empty tubs or barrels fixed underneath them, brought floating, by the toil of many hands and at great expense, to the place where the embankment has been eaten away.'*¹³⁸ The skill and knowledge Olaus describes concerning the defence of harbours not only against hostile states but especially against nature's power must be viewed as the culmination of the execution of mobility.

Mobility can be recognized due to Olaus' representation unifying Baltic island archipelagos as one maritime territory. Moreover, by ascribing a singular construction to the outside space, meaning the maritime regions of the Baltic, this region is perceived as one territory capable of instigating mobility across the region. This view fits into the theory propagated by Steinberg of the construction of the outside space relating to the establishment of political territories.¹³⁹ Instead of utilizing the pre-existing waterways of the East Sea and the rural roads of the mainland a new area is constructed purely based on regional and geographical knowledge of the Baltic peoples and the know-how of manipulating the natural surroundings. These micro regions functioning as primary nodes again seem in contrast to Braudel's routes en villes theory.¹⁴⁰ Due to the utilization of maritime areas the inner regions of the Baltic were reconnected. For example the markets on ice demonstrate the adjustability of the inhabitants in ensuring the mobility of the region.¹⁴¹ *'I must tell you that it is by a fixed sign and at an invariable time that all the peoples of the North and the neighbouring races are in the regular habit of holding such markets. [...] The wares which are handled there, following the wishes and customs of the merchants, are of every kind [...] Indeed, there are several places where at*

¹³⁶ Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the Northern countries by Olaus Magnus', 2.

¹³⁷ Huhtamies, 'Labyrinth of War: archipelago fleets and society in the Gulf of Finland 1520-1809', 603.

¹³⁸ Olaus Magnus, 'On breakwaters set up on the shore against the waves of the sea', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book XII chapter 18* (London, 1998) 603.

¹³⁹ Steinberg 'A view from the outside: the mapping of mobility', 489.

¹⁴⁰ Horden, *The corrupting sea* (Hongkong, 2000) 123.

¹⁴¹ Olaus Magnus, 'About markets on the ice', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book IV chapter 6* (London, 1996) 202-203.

*the middle of end of May troops of horsemen advance the widespreading frozen waters, with peaceful or warlike intent.*¹⁴² Essentially, the military-strategic possibilities that this region possesses shows that mobility functions as connector that fuelled the connections using the insular coastal regions.

Olaus' loyalty to his own country of Sweden and belief in its historical weight within Northern Europe appears to result in the exclusion of Danish insular territory.¹⁴³ However, this omission of mobility concerning these islands can also be explained by the intensified use of routes of trade passing through the coastal cities of the Baltic instead of moving through the Danish isles. Denmark's rise and central position are curiously not included.¹⁴⁴ Olaus' only depiction of mobility regarding these lands are recognized through their royal emblem. The symbol for the kingdom of Denmark is visible but its absence from the rest of the map adheres to Olaus' focus on the Nordic lands he deemed more important to the contemporary worldview.¹⁴⁵ **(Fig. 2.9)** It is not an easy task to recognize aspects of isolation and connectivity in Olaus' insular representation of Denmark since they are entirely absent. With the dissolving of the Kalmar Union Olaus focusses his attention only on his homeland. In addition the successes of Lutheranism in Denmark undoubtedly fuelled his motivation to further exclude the Danish in his work. His view on the Danes is biased and he appears somewhat disgruntled by excluding their history from his Nordic ethnographic approach. History has shown that the silences in the works of early modern cartographers are purposefully made and Olaus fits right in this tradition.¹⁴⁶

Olaus appears very much disgruntled after the Swedish and Danish kingdoms separated especially after his own homeland Sweden entered the period of Reformation. This appears to have strongly influenced Olaus' mapmaking considering that Norway, Sweden and Denmark appear as separate dynasties. He depicts a clear historical superiority of the Swedish Goths over other nations and tribes, which further affirms Olaus' dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Reformation in Northern Europe.¹⁴⁷ Although townships, the royal family and Danish regions are represented in the same manner as their Swedish counterparts, no extra effort is made to underline the position of Denmark. The remembrance and heritage of this rivalry thus influenced Olaus' representation so that no elaboration of any Danish maritime success is made on the map and in the chronicle.

¹⁴² Magnus, 'About markets on the ice', 202.

¹⁴³ Miekkaavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the Mapping of the Northern Countries', 5-6.

¹⁴⁴ North, *The Baltic: a history*, 64.

¹⁴⁵ Although an entire chapter is dedicated to the representation of the early history of the Nordic region, including Denmark's heroic origin through the kings Ragnar and Starkather. (See Olaus Magnus' book V 'On Giants') Olaus' knowledge about contemporary Denmark is by far less represented than other Northern lands.

¹⁴⁶ J.B. Harley, 'Silence and secrecy: the hidden agenda of early modern cartography in early modern Europe', *Imago Mundi Vol. 40* (1988) 59.

¹⁴⁷ Kristoffer Neville, 'Gothicism and early modern ethnography', *Journal of the History of Ideas Vol. 70 Issue 2* (2009) 218-220.

Let alone any focus on the insular territories of Denmark.¹⁴⁸

The Baltic region is an example of how maritime mobility and the utilization of the maritime have influenced Olaus' insular representation. Not only do the chapters that deal with maritime warfare almost entirely focus on the Baltic, Olaus' depiction of the skillsets needed to further mobility are depicted solely in the Baltic on the *Carta Marina*. Olaus ascribes connectivity to the region by sketching the variety of mobilization here. Ways of utilizing frozen lakes and rivers, and their archipelagos, made connections possible and stimulated the transfer of knowledge and trade in regions before far apart. This meant that the Baltic continued to function as highways for economic exchange between east and west. Although the role of islands in the Baltic marginalized due to the focus shift to the coast the once mobile position these islands held are especially highlighted in the *Historia*.

How was Olaus' insular representation of Northern Europe influenced by aspects of mobility? Olaus' *Carta Marina* and *Historia* contain many examples of remote regions that are represented as connected through trade and political territoriality thus ensuring mobility. Moreover, the projection of statehood and consolidation of power on insular regions are evident as Olaus makes an effort in marking statehood affiliation on overseas territory. The connection of coastal Norway to the economic routes of Northern Europe is an example of how regions that were considered less mobile, now participated in the systems of Northern Europe and are thus relevant to Northern Europe so that Olaus sought to include their mobilizing function. In addition, this maritime micro region was included into the Northern European system Olaus sought to represent. By describing how the inhabitants took part in more global systems mobility is represented, as their functionality was no longer limited by isolation. This isolation is still present when viewing the map as the islands situated along the Norwegian coast are filled with sea monsters and maritime tempests. However, the connectivity these islands embodied is not fully ignored as fishing vessels can be seen further attesting to their contemporary mobile position. As with other insular cases in Olaus' work the map catches the eye with its fabulous monsters but the chronicle is there to undermine the metaphysical and to stress the historical, economic and political aspects of the islands.

In Olaus' work concerning the Northern Atlantic, Iceland still enjoys the most attention in terms of the representation and the degree of implementation of his knowledge. This special role is further accredited by Olaus in his depiction of military and strategic mobility on the island. Although not entirely truthful concerning the role of the Icelandic knights, Olaus' representation of the defence of Iceland adheres to notions of connectivity since a defence against outsiders was needed in the first place. The importance that Olaus ascribes to this island is reflected through the struggle of

¹⁴⁸ Harley, 'Silence and secrecy', 66-67.

nations wanting to take part in Iceland's maritime markets. Olaus' focus on the versatility of the island due to its favourable position in both the economic as well as the military sphere shows how his conception of this island was not only influenced by aspects of mobility, but that these aspects took on pivotal roles in shaping Olaus' representation of Iceland. An island standing symbol for connecting the region and overcoming premonitions of isolation while being located in the tumultuous ocean.

The smaller island groups of the Faröer, Shetland and Orkney islands do not embody mobility in the same sense as Iceland. Apart from the beacon function of Monk's rock in this part of the Northern Atlantic, the Faroer islands take on a smaller role in Olaus' work as this beacon is the only example of their insular mobility. The silence about maritime strategy concerning these islands is remarkable due to their favourable strategic position above the British Isles. Olaus limits this insular representation to the power projection of the Nordic states and the marking of their territories. The case of Greenland remains an interesting one since Olaus, when it comes to notions of mobility, appears to view this island as remote in both map and chronicle while this island did embody some form of mobility in the past. He focusses primarily on the struggles between the Nordic settlers and indigenous people, thus only military struggles adorn his representation of Greenland. Although shipwrecks are scattered around Greenland, attesting to a degree of mobility existing in the past, the contemporary role is omitted.

Olaus' insular representation is influenced by aspects of mobility, however, not as strongly as it was influenced by trade and economy. Yet, power projection and the defining of territorial statehoods are evidently present in Olaus' insular representation. Mobility is recognized through the connecting of regions and the provision of military strategic opportunities for the consolidation of power of Nordic nations. One thing becomes clear, when an insular territory appears to be somewhat isolated the full extent of information remains absent in Olaus' work and one has to look towards the hidden meaning behind its omission. In some cases the contemporary situation appears to be of little significance to Olaus while the remembrance of past insular glories are widely elaborated.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Andrew Hadfield, 'The idea of the North', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance Vol. 1 Issue 1* (2009) 1-2.

The insular representation of Olaus concerning mobility is subject to the relation of the island with the Northern states and their territories. The relevance of the specific island to the development of the region differs greatly. Olaus' insular representation can be viewed similarly as other geographical representations of the early modern period, subject to different layers of vision but in Olaus' case to stress the importance of Nordic peoples. However, his view of islands of Northern Europe existing between connectivity and isolation is not homogenous. The Baltic, the region considered more connected, is more or less the victim of a decline in mobility if we follow Olaus' representation and so a decline in insular connectivity. Meanwhile islands that are situated in the isolated waters of the Northern Atlantic appear to attest of a form of developing mobility and decreasing isolation as the waters to the west open up. A view rather fitting, since the upcoming exploration and exploits of the lands beyond the West of Europe was at hand, the Northern islands no longer functioning as the margins of the Atlantic Ocean.

Chapter 3: The influence of fictitious elements on Olaus' insular representation

The discourse of insular history is linked to projections of metaphysical feats, creatures and events. Although in decline during the 16th century, this form of imaging still played an important role in the construction of early modern insular knowledge. Creators of maps and chronicles thus needed to be aware of any discrepancies and tales concerning islands. A true consensus did not exist defacto as islands embodying mythical properties were not tied down to particular regions and thus were open for debate.¹⁵⁰ Imitating reality is the term best used to describe the early modern cartographic world. Knowledge about islands was based on both truth and fiction and subjective to the author's cartographic or literary purpose. Often mythical elements were ascribed to the margins and frontiers of the known world. However, during the early modern period the representation of islands focussed more on the island's functionality as part of the naval systems and thus fiction slowly made way for accurate imagery. Yet, the imagination, whether intentional or not, still held cartographers in its grip as the fantastical and mythical still had to reside somewhere and since it wasn't in the islands discovered so far this meant that the location was only pushed further away.

Medieval and early modern insular imagination is often associated with unpredictability, otherness and transformability.¹⁵¹ The result is that an island becomes susceptible to the myths and the metaphysical features from the past. But at the same time could embody contemporary imaginations and hopes. The islands of Northern Europe experience a similar development that can be predominantly recognized in the form of the mythical island Ultima Thule. First described by the Romans this island was personified as the ultimate North, barren, barbaric and estranged from the distinguished cultures of the European mainland. In medieval times Iceland was associated with Thule. Every island situated in Northern territories was thought to be this fictitious island. Since Olaus' works are loyal to ancient literary authority it is remarkable that Olaus separates Thule from Iceland definitively. Although the imagery of devilry, purgatory and evil spirits is persistent in Iceland's ethnographic history Iceland was considered inhabitable and not fictional at all.¹⁵² **(Fig 3.1)** Those islands possessing elements of the untameable fuelled the imagination of seafarers and cartographers alike adhering to the concept of 'Divine Grace'.¹⁵³ This concept showcases how islands stood symbol for both possessing elements of the holy and unholy. As scholars have argued, mystification and placement of supernatural phenomena on islands are linked to this insular approach. Due to the trials islands could personify, people sought to overcome these hardships. In

¹⁵⁰ Harley, 'Silence and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Early Modern Cartography', 66-67.

¹⁵¹ John Gilles, *Islands of the mind: how the human imagination created the Atlantic world*, (New York, 2004) 26-27.

¹⁵² Isleifsson, 'Ideas of an island in the North', 98.

¹⁵³ Bresc, 'Îles et tissue connectif', 2.

search of coming closer to God, initial mobility to smaller islands started with pilgrims seeking isolation, and in other cases to test their mettle and explore.¹⁵⁴

Olaus' work has often been consulted by historians for his representations of the metaphysical world. With the goal of Olaus' work in mind, to accurately represent the Northern lands of Europe, it is remarkable that in both his map and chronicle aspects of fiction and empirical truths are intertwined and it is important to fully scrutinize the fictitious aspects in order to understand Olaus' insular representation. Our understanding of early modern representations of Northern European islands relates to the consolidation of knowledge as given by Olaus. This means that specific depictions of fictitious creatures and spaces are symbols of insular elements that were accredited by medieval and early modern scholars. Yet, obedience to ancient authorities was to be included in 16th century mapmaking which makes one wonder if the fictitious was a continuation down the line of medieval chroniclers or an intellectual nod to the descriptions of Pliny and Ptolemy. In any case Olaus' view on insular representation needs to be approached as only partially biased as the presented image he constructed was meant to inform and to take away existing presumptions regarding Northern-Europe.¹⁵⁵

The *Carta Marina* and *Historia* can be viewed as prime example of how mythical properties and factual knowledge are woven together and presented as the culmination of knowledge about an area. Olaus' representation of the islands ties these maritime entities to the states of Europe through trade and political influence.¹⁵⁶ However, the islands still possessed some form of otherness effectively altering the perceptions of the islands which presented them as isolated or connected. To fully comprehend Olaus' insular representation and the influence of the role of isolative and connective elements it is vital to study the placement of fictitious elements. With the first two chapters focussing on the role of trade and mobility, the total historiographical image can only be made clearer by researching the metaphysical in insular history. Why were certain islands approached through a more syncretistic and religious lens and what do the ascribed notions tell us about early modern knowledge concerning Northern European islands? The island could be viewed as a passageway to new lands but could also embody the frontier of a certain area.¹⁵⁷

Horizons of knowledge were still expanding and thus insular representations were still susceptible to

¹⁵⁴ John Gilles, 'Taking history offshore: Atlantic islands in European minds 1400-1800', in R. Edmond & V. Smith ed., *Islands in History and Representation* (New York, 2003) 21-22.

¹⁵⁵ Genevieve Carlton, 'The world drawn from nature: imitation and authority in sixteenth-century cartography', *Intellectual History Review Vol. 24 Issue 1* (2014) 21-22.

¹⁵⁶ Miekavaara, 'Unknown Europe: The mapping of the Northern Countries', 10.

¹⁵⁷ Lestringant, 'La Voie des îles', 5-6.

tales of folklore. More importantly these tales stuck on certain islands embodying the fantastical and imaginary while other insular entities developed a role based on their realistic functionality.

3.1 Myths and imagination in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of the Northern Atlantic

Views on islands in 16th century cartography are associated with the placement of fantastical lands. However, during this same century the significance of the imaginary islands lessened as the focus shifted towards more economic and strategic profitable islands aiding explorative movement.¹⁵⁸ This development is often found in late 16th century mapmaking and makes Olaus' work just more interesting due to his early focus on both fact and fiction. The fictitious elements of the Northern Atlantic are found in the sea monsters. Olaus' placement of these creatures is either to scare off travellers or to acknowledge the untameable waters. Evidently this absence of mythical lands in the Northern European waters could also mean that these islands were already considered 'European' and that the search for paradisiacal islands was now placed in the discoveries made towards the American continents.¹⁵⁹

Thus the search for monsters and Utopia that islands embodied during the medieval and early modern period looks to be surpassed in the case of the Northern Europe. Still, Olaus acknowledges and ascribes some supernatural aspects to insular Northern Europe in accordance with his time. Especially his attention to sea monsters residing in the Atlantic resulted in a colourful depiction that influenced perceptions of marine life as Olaus' sea monsters appeared on many notable globes and maps in the following centuries.¹⁶⁰ The *Historia* elaborates further on these creatures and discusses them in the same manner as other marine life showing that his knowledge concerning sea monsters was limited. Since these creatures, and thus the fictitious elements, are approached in the same manner as he describes the insular utilizations of economy and mobility it appears that Olaus suggests that the addition of the metaphysical served the purpose of characterizing an island's location. Olaus ascribes holy and unholy elements to his insular frame which can be recognized similarly in the insular historiography of the Mediterranean where sacred places such as caves and groves actively shaped the way the island was utilized.¹⁶¹ The formation of 'Divine Grace', or the absence of this historical concept can be viewed as contentious. This is because the discussion concerning Olaus' work in relation to religion shows that he in fact did implement myths. However, due to his clear purpose of representing the truth his implementations of religious

¹⁵⁸ Gilles, 'Taking history offshore: Atlantic islands in European minds 1400-1800', 19-20.

¹⁵⁹ *Idem*, 26-27.

¹⁶⁰ Chet van Duzer, *Sea monsters on medieval and renaissance maps*, (London, 2013) 134-135.

¹⁶¹ Horden, *The corrupting sea*, 425.

figures and symbols, both pagan and Christian, must be viewed as a historical nod and homage to Northern European culture.¹⁶²

Yet, if his truth concerning the Northern Atlantic is sought it is essential to note that when looking at this work the islands themselves appear quite habitable and are far from exploding with demonic or angelic forces. Instead, the surrounding maritime areas are responsible for the housing of horrid creatures and their battle with seafarers. Olaus' representation of Iceland functions as example of the ambivalence of early modern perceptions. Olaus' work clearly tries to showcase the economic and political properties of the island and assessing its worth pertaining to the Northern European states. Iceland, however is not free from metaphysical aspects that were usually ascribed to isolated insular areas. A remnant of Iceland's history as the fictitious island Ultima Thule is visible as Olaus states: *"Praise is due to this island for its unusual marvels. [...] It is believed that a place of punishment and expiation exists there for unclean souls. Undoubtedly the spirits or ghosts of the drowned."*¹⁶³ Olaus' acknowledgment of a form of physical expression of an afterlife is in accordance with early modern notions of purgatory, concepts of fire and brimstone that were clearly visible to the naked eye.¹⁶⁴ **(Fig 3.1)** However by stating that this island houses forms of metaphysical evil it strongly contrasts his earlier notions of a peaceful area. Here, the depiction of an isolated island embodying Divine Grace contrasts with the connectivity ascribed to it.

The contrast in isolative and connective properties can further be recognized in Olaus' view on Thule, which is for the first time definitively separated from Iceland. Although mentioning that the name belonged to Iceland, the historical significance of the concepts of Thule outweighed his drive to combine the two islands in his work. Olaus' map clearly shows Iceland and Thule as two separate islands as he states: *"Iceland is an island lying beneath the celestial Arctic Pole; it is mainly exposed to the wind Circius and close to the Sea of Ice. For this reason it deserves the name Ice Land (terra glacialis) or remotest Thule which none of the ancients has failed to mention."*¹⁶⁵ **(Fig 3.2)** By acknowledging ancient authority Olaus appears to accredit their ignorance concerning Thule as due to their lack of knowledge of Iceland. Noteworthy is Thule's geographical location towards the Western frontier of the Atlantic. This development is a characteristic of the early modern period as the fantastical no longer was placed east but focussed on the ever expanding horizons in the West, towards a New Jerusalem and Utopias.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, by pushing Thule to the west Olaus effectively places this island one step ahead of the current discoveries, and so does not break with

¹⁶² John Granlund & G. Crone, 'The Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus', *Imago Mundi Vol. 8* (1951) 41.

¹⁶³ Olaus Magnus, 'On the apparitions of drowned men', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 3* (London, 1996) 96.

¹⁶⁴ Lestringant, 'La voie des îles', 4.

¹⁶⁵ Magnus, 'On the apparitions of drowned men', *Historia*, 95.

¹⁶⁶ Gilles, 'Gilles, 'Taking history offshore: Atlantic islands in European minds 1400-1800', 22.

earlier traditions. Only implying that the real Ultima Thule has yet to be discovered.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly the combined image of these two islands continued to exist until the 19th century and the association with a dark and cold land appeared to be consolidated through history.¹⁶⁸ This insular divide implies two aspects important to this thesis. Firstly, although Divine Grace is added to Iceland the full extent of mythical tales is pushed towards the borders of the island with a special focus on the maritime area. Secondly, Olaus highlights Iceland's functionality inside the economic and political systems of Europe and so actively limits any fables and premonitions that might describe the Icelanders as barbaric or as 'others'. By lessening these fictitious aspects Olaus appears to seek out the connections of this island with the Northern European world instead of seeking the elements that might cause more of a divide.

As was shown before in this thesis the roles of the Orkney, Shetland and the Faroër islands appear limited in Olaus' work. The comparison of these insular groups as Ultima Thule was long removed after these islands were first integrated by the early mobility of monks and pilgrims seeking out the isolated islands.¹⁶⁹ The status of these islands is related to the extent of circulation of religious piety as well as the holiness ascribed to the territory. Moreover, these smaller island groups sometimes functioned as safe havens but could also represent the dangerous side of naval traffic. Just as Henri Bresc pointed out, it is to be discussed whether an island possessing forms of Divine Grace was given this status through the early mobility of pilgrims or that these pilgrimages created the situation wherein sailors accredited the islands to be holy or unholy.¹⁷⁰ Travel logs and stories of pilgrims seeking out 'holy' islands¹⁷¹ were popular during the medieval period and insular territory became linked to the primal but raw natural beauty.¹⁷² Olaus' chronicle does not elaborate further on these islands and this leads one to believe that he deemed them isolated from Northern Europe and again more under the influence of British islands than their Northern counterparts.¹⁷³ Ultimately, the fictitious aspects surrounding these islands on the *Carta Marina* can only be recognized in the tumultuous Northern Atlantic Ocean, which is in great contrast to the seemingly calm waters of the Baltic (**Fig 3.3.1 & 3.3.2**)

¹⁶⁷ Gilles, 'Island sojourns', 278.

¹⁶⁸ Isleifsson, 'Ideas of an island in the North', 98 -100.

¹⁶⁹ Umberto Eco, *De geschiedenis van imaginaire landen en plaatsen* (Amsterdam, 2013) 223.

¹⁷⁰ Bresc, 'Îles et tissu connectif', 8-9.

¹⁷¹ The voyage of St Brendan in the 6th century was a popular work translated in many languages from the 12th century onwards inciting European imagination of heroism and piety projected on the small insular territories of Europe.

¹⁷² Gilles, 'Taking history offshore', 22.

¹⁷³ Granlund, 'The Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus', 40.

Olaus' representation of Greenland concerning the degree of fiction pushes the island further towards isolation due to its less than favourable geographical location. "For the wind [...] is so violent in northern waters, especially when it coincides with the full moon, that all who are sailing there must fear its horrifying and lethal effects." Olaus relates the harshness to the geographical situation and remains silent about any cultural notions concerning Greenland. His account focusses mostly on the dwarf-like natives and links them to specific tribes of Pygmies but omits demons and monsters.¹⁷⁴ In addition, mentioning these pygmies appears to be a form of literary authority as his statements about these 'other' people fits in with earlier chroniclers writing about Greenlandic natives.¹⁷⁵ To state that Olaus' account of Greenland isn't influenced by fiction would be a mistake since his knowledge about this island is in no way based on actual accounts. Although he represents Greenland without monsters, usually to be found in these kind of places, these barren outposts in his own view adhere to that of a 'normal' island not necessarily marked by the supernatural, but isolated enough to be depicted as such. Olaus' representation of Greenland meant that Nordic interest in these lands continued to exist and through his depiction the remnant of overseas territory stayed alive in the minds of Northern Europeans, which appeared to be his primary goal.¹⁷⁶

Due to the fairly detailed representation of the ocean the islands appear as a system of connectivity. The spatiality of the waterways in between however, showcases Olaus' imaginative abilities unleashed on the Ocean encompassing marine life and sketching a tumultuous area. Yet, it appears that behind this representation another purpose is hidden. Recent research by Chet van Duzer shows that the *Carta Marina* in relation to sea monsters are a concoction of loyalty to the information of ancient authorities combined with his own imagination.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the intimidating depictions of different kinds of marine life meant that Northern European waters appeared as volatile. This could also explain why Olaus described so many of the large beasts attacking ships. Although some of these creatures are adorned with horns and other unique extremities Olaus' representation is fairly accurate. Interestingly historians have theorized that the placement of sea monsters in the North Atlantic was to prevent foreign fishermen in entering the economical wealth ponds of Northern Europe.¹⁷⁸ The islands within these sea monster infested waters appear to become less mythical and more practical. This appears to be in accordance with Olaus' will to purposefully show that the Northern European islands possessed similar values as other

¹⁷⁴ Magnus, 'On the pygmies of Greenland, and Hvitsark Rock', *Historia*, 104-105.

¹⁷⁵ Seaver, 'Pygmies of the far North', 86-87.

¹⁷⁶ Vivian Etting, 'The rediscovery of Greenland during the reign of Christian IV', *Journal of the Northern Atlantic Issue 2* (2010) 151.

¹⁷⁷ Duzer van, *Sea monsters on medieval and renaissance maps* (London, 2013) 82-83.

¹⁷⁸ Luigi de Anna, 'Mostri e alterità in Olao Magno', in Carlo Santini, ed., *Atti del convegno internazionale Roma-Farfa 'I fratelli Giovanni e Olau Mango'*, (Rome: editrice 'Il Calamo', 1999) found in Chet van Duzer's *Seamonsters*, 207.

insular entities in Europe. The *Historia* discusses the sea monsters but within these descriptions no specific link to insular territories is established.¹⁷⁹ The notion of the island as an isolated stretch of land is changing during the 16th century. Olaus' insular representation fits this early modern development as an island surrounded by water was a new way to understand this territory as well as finding a way to conceptualize them in maps and chronicles. The ocean was no longer bound by barriers but was steadily being viewed as a space connecting different maritime regions, within Olaus' sea of islands the ocean represented both connectivity and isolation.¹⁸⁰

Essentially fictitious elements did influence Olaus' representation but he did not solely add hellish or paradisiacal elements in this region. Remarkable is that Iceland embodied both the metaphysical as well as the realistic properties of insular territories but those properties deemed fictitious are mostly due to natural marvels such as caves and volcanoes. This form of imaging resulted in a particular insular representation. Namely, that the conceptualization of insularity in Olaus' work had less to do with isolation, barriers and locality and more with the stimulation of notions of maritime connectivity, exchange and openness in Northern Europe.¹⁸¹ The outcome of these elements adhere to newly thought of concepts of insularity and the imaging of spatiality of maritime realms; thus instead of glorifying the mythical properties of any island their connectivity was presented as more evident than in times before.¹⁸²

3.2 Myths and imagination in Olaus Magnus' insular representation of the East Sea

The role of the fictitious concerning insularity is less present in the inner regions of Northern Europe. Yet, in Olaus' work the region was still ascribed similar descriptions concerning the role of supernatural elements.¹⁸³ In Olaus' chronicle the representation of islands of the Baltic is essentially centred around their past. One of the more obvious fictitious elements to be found in the Baltic islands is recognized in Olaus' description of an evil wizard imprisoned on a Swedish island, this is the only description given by Olaus of its existence as the island is not drawn on the map. *“Among the Eastern Götar is a very large fresh-water lake called Vättern [...] with a pleasant, longish island at its very centre, containing two parish churches; under one of them is found a cavern [...] Their chief purpose in doing this (entering the cave) is to gaze at a certain wizard named Gilbert who, by means of magic, from which sprang his own ruin,, was in very ancient times overcome and bound fast by his*

¹⁷⁹ Duzer van, *Sea Monsters*, 85.

¹⁸⁰ Gilles, 'Taking history offshore', 27-28

¹⁸¹ Gilles, 'Taking history offshore', 96-97.

¹⁸² Gilles, *Islands of the mind*, 84.

¹⁸³ Idem, 26.

*master, Kettil.*¹⁸⁴ Although Olaus doesn't literally point out the advantages of trapping a magical being on an island, his text implies that the natural boundaries this island offered functioned perfectly as a prison. Therefore possessing similar elements of the concept of Divine Grace propagated by Horden and Purcell.¹⁸⁵ **(Fig 3.4)** Olaus continues by comparing the odours emanating from the cave, which are apparently lethal when one inhales them, with a similar phenomenon as described by Strabo. One particular aspect does stand out which could portray the degree of influence of fiction on this insular concept. Not unlike the Mediterranean isles with their remnants of temples, this island enjoyed a similar form of piety and pilgrimage.¹⁸⁶ Olaus mentions that a lot of people still visit the island in order to be mesmerized by the ancient churches residing on the island and especially to experience some of the former prowess and folklore tales of the dark myths.¹⁸⁷

In Olaus Magnus' work it appears that the shift from the islands to the coastal archipelagos of the Baltic influenced the view by which the insular Baltic was approached. In contrast to the sea monsters in the Northern Atlantic the East Sea is peaceful and bereft of these creatures. Apart from the imagination that Olaus applied to the Northern Atlantic his depiction of similar minded circumstances is only visible on the mainland of the Baltic and this becomes particularly clear when looking at lesser information given concerning these monsters as almost the entire chapter is dedicated to the North Sea and Northern Atlantic. The once economically important islands of Götland and Elandia are not accredited with any metaphysical circumstances. Instead the peace and quiet these islands offered to contemporaries meant that Olaus' insular representation was focused on the remembrance of the past. It's not surprising that the final resting place of Nordic nobilities was situated here: *"This island Visingsö, then, bears a high reputation as a pleasant and safe abode of kings who have afterwards died and buried there."*¹⁸⁸

There is, however, one more description that focusses on insular metaphysical events in the Baltic and this concerns the island Öland. Olaus mentions: *"It is said that at certain seasons of the year a coven of northern witches assembles on this mountain to try out their spells. Any who comes at all late to this devil-worship undergoes a dreadful chastising."*¹⁸⁹ Since Olaus describes it as a perfect island it is likely that he ascribed its advantageous centrality to not only the Christian inhabitants but also to metaphysical creatures. John Granlund points out that the churches on Öland all possessed central towers which were also used as strongholds and that Olaus was the first chronicler to include

¹⁸⁴ Olaus Magnus, 'On the bound magician', *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* book III chapter 20 (London, 1996) 178.

¹⁸⁵ Bresc, 'Îles et tissue connectif', 1-2

¹⁸⁶ Idem, 7-8.

¹⁸⁷ Miekkavaara, 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the Northern Countries', 2-3.

¹⁸⁸ Magnus, 'On the bound magician', *Historia*, 179.

¹⁸⁹ Magnus, 'On the beauty and fecundity of Öland, an island of the Götar', *Historia*, 122.

the folklore of the 'black peak' associated with witches and their Sabbaths.¹⁹⁰ Thus, Olaus' insular representation of the Baltic did include some form of fictitious elements. However, it is striking that these supernatural aspects in the Baltic are absent from the sea and are only found on two smaller islands where one is even omitted from the map. It looks as if Olaus' placement of mythical elements is reserved for the vastness of the Northern Atlantic Ocean which was less explored and documented than their eastern counterparts.

Insular history is undeniably tied to the formation and projection of ideas, based on reality and the imaginary. Olaus Magnus' work showcases a rather unique approach to insularity where a mixture of important and lesser important islands functioned together. Olaus is influenced by the difference in maritime spatiality concerning the Baltic and Atlantic. In wanting to accurately map the Northern European lands he surpassed the 16th century drive to search for dystopia and utopia on insular territories.¹⁹¹ Indeed Iceland appears as a hybrid large island possessing state-like functionality but at the same time possessed fictitious marvels due to its unique geographical territory. Olaus' representation of sea monsters in the west marks his appreciation of and perhaps intimidation by the dangerous waters of the sea. The influences of the metaphysical, however, in the form of creatures and natural circumstances on Olaus' insular representation are limited, especially when viewing the Baltic region. This maritime realm is depicted as calm and any fictitious elements are situated on the smaller insular territories.

To state that the fictitious did not influence Olaus' representation at all would be incorrect, the placement of folklore, the influence of weather and the situating of metaphysical forces all are present in this work. They are, however, pushed towards the margins of his narrative and in some cases they are literally pushed towards the edge of the Northern European world. Olaus acknowledges and implements these supernatural aspects but is cautious in dealing with these features. In the case of insularity, his focus is only partially seen through a mythical lens as the inclusion of practices concerning the de facto development of an insular region was far more important to Olaus' approach in describing and depicting the islands of Northern Europe. Thus, connectivity and isolation are not as mutually exclusive as would've been expected. The elements of the dichotomy of insularity instead adhere more to the islands' purpose concerning economy, statehood and political relevance.

¹⁹⁰ John Granlund, 'Notes on book II chapter 23', in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (London, 1996) 142.

¹⁹¹ Gilles, *Islands of the mind*, 47-48.

Conclusion

It is remarkable that in the historiography of Olaus Magnus the link between early modern notions of insularity and this source has not yet been researched. The 16th century is considered a turning point in defining the spatiality, reach and perceptions of the maritime. Olaus' work stands example for this process. Aspects of isolation and connectivity were now less dogmatically applied to islands as the western frontier of the Atlantic Ocean was reached and a maritime frame could be established. Islands managed to keep the early modern minds curious as insular territory still embodied the imaginary and fuelled the urge for discovery. The way islands were conceptualized is pivotal for the understanding of maritime explorative movements as well as how European states implemented insular territory. How they consolidated political power and included their economies into European systems all influenced perceptions of early modern cartographers and scholars alike.

The *Carta Marina* and *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* grants an interesting view of early modern insular Northern Europe. Olaus' work can be viewed as the last historical map of Northern Europe that depicted Iceland and Greenland but did not yet include North America. This makes this source interesting due to its focus on Northern European lands, even excluding the British islands. Unlike other cartographers and ethnographers of the late medieval and early modern period was Olaus' mixture between depictions of contemporary and past times. The bias found in the historical depiction of Olaus' insular concepts means that the end result is heavily influenced by the historical weight and relevance Olaus ascribed to Northern Europe. While stating to write the factual truth it appears that this source has its own political and cultural opinion integrated, whether this was a fully conscious choice is open for debate. The distinction between the Baltic and North Atlantic region was necessary in order to construct an accurate image of the secluded maritime area versus the open seas and the roles of islands within these frames. The Baltic enjoyed a prosperous time where islands such as Götland, Elandia and Öland functioned as important nodes within the Baltic maritime system. This helped transform the region into a society focussed on export. In the west, Iceland symbolized the fictitious Ultima Thule and embodied the premonitions of barren and fruitless insular societies. Instead, Olaus represents Iceland as a strong insular economic entity with deep ties to the European world separated from the mythical Thule and now consolidated as a true European region. The same can be argued for the Faroër islands where specialization and monoculture meant that these islands functioned as beacons as well as providing economic opportunities for those willing to traverse the rough Ocean. Olaus chiefly ascribes European identity to the islands of the North. These weren't barbaric and remote islands with weird customs that stood far from European standards, these were proper Christian regions that should've been approached with the same dignity as was done with the islands of Southern Europe.

In discussing Olaus' approach of insular Northern Europe in relation to concepts of isolation and connectivity, three aspects are essential for understanding this representation. The influence of the insular economy and the intensity of trade show how isolated territories could still function within a broad economic systems attesting insular connectivity. Isolation deals more with the variety of products and foreign interest than the defacto reachability of the island in his representation. Trade and economic prosperity in Olaus' work is influenced by successes in the past. The islands depicted by Olaus in the Northern Atlantic appear economically isolated through their appropriation of monoculture. Apart from Iceland which is depicted as prosperous, he applauds the Northern Atlantic islands' self-sufficiency as they're still considered marginal in terms of economic influence on Europe. Yet, the exploitation of walrus and whale products hailing from the Northern Atlantic islands shows how the previously thought of marginality made way for specialized trade and skill unique to the Europe. The islands of the Baltic during the 16th century were no longer economically relevant. The centres of trade that were found on islands such as Götland were no longer functioning and Olaus' detailed descriptions of these islands show that the remembrance of the economic superiority of the region is much esteemed by him. Remembrances of the superiority of insular territories in the East Sea are the most commonly present in Olaus' representation. Earlier economy and trade thus influence the ascribed importance of the island for the region and do not attest to its current economic state. The contemporary status of the Baltic islands appear isolated but Olaus celebrates their importance for the economic development of the region and so remembers them as inherently connected.

The degree of maritime mobility present in and around the Northern European islands shows how insular areas were viewed in relation to their capability and transformability by utilizing the maritime and consolidating political power while gaining interest from states on the mainland. The Baltic region was already known to possess many forms of maritime mobility and Olaus confirms this by discussing how archipelagos, islands and frozen waterways helped to connect areas and to instigate a sense of mobility in the region. Micro regions found in the hinterlands were mobilized through insular connectivity, inhabitants of islands could now easily participate in the systems of Northern Europe.

The Northern Atlantic, appearing very chaotic, still shows signs of lines of communication through the depiction of the different states sailing towards Iceland for trade. Furthermore, although isolative factors are evident alongside the Norwegian coast the mobility Olaus depicts suggests that the inhabitants of the small archipelago islands of Norway could actively participate in trading, acquiring and redistributing marine products. Apart from the description of the Icelandic knights patrolling the island no other military mobility in the North Atlantic is found. Strategic and political power projections can be recognized by the placement of political emblems on these lands.

However, Olaus' primary focus on Iceland shapes his representation in such a way that the smaller island groups of the Orkney, Shetland and Faroër barely take part in mobilizing the region furthering their insular isolative conceptualization.

Finally, understanding insular history is related to the imaging of the metaphysical. Olaus' loyalty to Ancient authorities and his homeland provides his work with an interesting mixture of historical and contemporary notions implemented in his work. Islands still provided people with a mental and physical location to project their political and religious thoughts onto. The Northern Atlantic Ocean once again shows aspects of isolation through the rough waters and horrid creatures assaulting naval traffic. Remarkably, Olaus does not place monstrous creatures or events on these islands which would often be the case in medieval and early modern cartographic and ethnographic history. Instead, it appears that the role of these monsters was to consolidate the influence of Nordic states and discourage other nations from participating in the region. The Baltic has little to none of the fictitious elements concerning the insular territories, but to fully deny the influence of the metaphysical on Olaus' view of the Baltic would be false. Descriptions of sea witches and wizards are placed on the islands of the Baltic but only to a small extent as they attest to the local folklore and not to implementations of the grand myths. The mythical plays a smaller role in the representation of the maritime East than in the West.

One would expect to find isolation in the places where the metaphysical reigned supreme. However, Olaus' views on isolative properties are not influenced by fictional tales but rather by their values to the Northern European systems. The identity of Northern Europe stands central in this work and perceptions of connectivity versus isolation are subject to Olaus' will to grant meaning to the islands he deemed a part of the Northern European society. Olaus pushes notions of the imaginary towards the margins of his narrative instead of giving them a decisive role in his conceptualization. Olaus Magnus' works are an essential source for the understanding of early modern insular and maritime Northern Europe. He provides a unique view where ethnography and cartography intertwined. He provides the historian with an inside view on the importance of maritime connectivity and portrays notions of insularity that are vital for our understanding of the development of an expanding early modern European society.

Olaus' work must be acknowledged as the first historical assessment that viewed the North as equally important to the expanding European society. The visions of islands of Northern Europe, ever ambivalent and fluctuating, were now consolidated in an historical view that encompassed past and contemporary visions. Furthermore Olaus' insular representation paved the way for future cartographers and ethnographers in viewing the island as a place where isolation and connectivity intertwined and so shaped an image where insularity should be approached by being aware of all historical factors without excluding parts of them.

Registry & List of Figures edited from the *Carta Marina*

Index of figures edited from the online version of the *Carta Marina* (1539)

Rights reserved by Pablo Romero published on 4-02-15 by fineartamerica.com

Online source, link available click at: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/carta-marina-map-of-scandinavia-by-olaus-magnus-1539-pablo-romero.html>

Chapter 1:

- **Fig. 1.1** The piling & drying of cod and stock fish on Iceland. The placement of stock fish symbolizes the affiliation of Iceland with its success concerning the export of fish.
- **Fig. 1.2** The depiction of cows and butter casks on Iceland as mentioned in the *Historia* confirms the contemporary knowledge about these products as well as their origin situated on Iceland.
- **Fig. 1.3** Naval struggle between English & German traders in Icelandic bay. Underneath the drawings of the ships the affiliated states are found that show interest in participating in the trade with Iceland.
- **Fig. 1.4** Depiction of 'pygmies' battling Nordic settlers. The struggle depicted here portrays that Olaus' knowledge concerning Greenland is limited as the only symbolization he seems fit to implement here focusses on the decline in contact. Hence, only battle is seen here in a contemporary light. Also pictured is the 'Hvitsark Compass Island', a non-existent insular territory. For further research on the role of this compass see: Kirsten Seaver's article 'Olaus Magnus and the 'compass' on Hvitsark *Journal of Navigation Vol. 54 Issue 2* (May, 2001)
- **Fig. 1.5** The hauling and skinning of whales is depicted solely on the Faroër Islands. This effectively ties this island to the whaling industry of the North-Atlantic as this island chiefly thrived through the exploitation of whaling.
- **Fig. 1.6** Limited activity surrounding Orkney, the ducks from OM's *Historia* to be viewed on bottom right corner. Norway's royal emblem is found here as well suggesting a Norwegian influence close to the British islands.
- **Fig. 1.7** Vignette of the *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus book II chapter 23* 'On the beauty and fecundity of Öland, an island of the Götar'. In contrast to *the Carta Marina's* depiction, the island is represented as crowded with maritime activity ascribing the economic value it once possessed to the region.
- **Fig. 1.8** Marine products redistributed from Gulf of Bothnia solidifies the function of the East as centre of trade. A similar stack of fish as seen on **Fig 1.1.** can be found here suggesting the linearity and function of redistribution of fish from Iceland to the inner regions of the East Sea.

Chapter 2:

- **Fig. 2.1** Family & Tribal emblems marking political affiliation per region as well as the tribal origin of the specific region. Fairly important to establish the Gothic ancestry of Swedish territory.
- **Fig. 2.2** Varangjerfjord & Vardohus, most northern extremity of Norway facing Greenland according to the *Historia*. The boat in the water suggests some form of maritime mobility as well as its connection to the Northern Atlantic. The depicted creature climbing out of the water represents another form of walrus.

- **Fig. 2.3** Norwegian coastal tumult, serpents and maelstroms adorn the coast. The islands alongside the coast are those insular territories mentioned by Olaus from where fishermen stemmed from and participated in broader exploitation of marine life. The large amount of ships situated here further confirms this argument which Olaus wilfully includes in his representation.
- **Fig. 2.4** Depiction of patrolling troops of Icelandic knights officially viewed as defending against foreign traders seeking to usurp the Icelandic economic position. Suggesting foreign interest in dealing with this island.
- **Fig. 2.5.1 & 2.5.2** Different shipwrecks and crashing boats depicted around the Greenlandic coast implying isolation and harsh natural circumstances.
- **Fig. 2.6** Norway's royal emblem marking Iceland as its own property.
- **Fig. 2.7** Depiction of Götland without too much going on suggesting the somewhat isolated position the island embodied during Olaus' lifetime.
- **Fig. 2.8** Depictions of the defacto mobilisation of this region. The utilizations of ice found here symbolizes the increase of mobility across the Baltic maritime region. Ice skating and knights travelling across the frozen plane indicate an increase of movement across the waterways.
- **Fig. 2.9** Apart from the placement of a Dutch ship sailing in the North Eastern corner, most likely representing the Dutch trade of bulk across the East Sea, Denmark is depicted in a similar fashion as the islands of the East Sea: not much going on in terms of trade and maritime activity.

Chapter 3:

- **Fig. 3.1** Depiction of the Icelandic volcanoes dubbed 'chaos' standing symbol for the ambivalence of the Icelandic landscape. Iceland resembles isolation and connectivity by situating churches and towns amongst tumultuous landscapes. Still Olaus views this island as the most functional concerning maritime mobility in the Northern Atlantic due to its capability of participating in economic systems of Europe.
- **Fig. 3.2** The mythical island Ultima Thule is placed in the west, separating its conceptualization from the existing Northern Atlantic islands, mainly Iceland. While it is surrounded by sea monsters Olaus placement of this island to the west suggests that Thule is in fact an existing island but is yet to be discovered.
- **Fig. 3.3.1 & 3.3.2** Comparison between the Northern Atlantic Ocean filled with creatures and ships with the Baltic Sea appearing rather calm and isolated.
- **Fig. 3.4** Vignette of the *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* book III chapter 20 'On the bound magician', depicting the wizard imprisoned on the island beneath the church. Although not present on the *Carta Marina*, this island embodies the isolated properties of insular territory. In this case functioning as a prison for the supernatural as the natural boundaries are determined to keep evil from leaving.

1.1



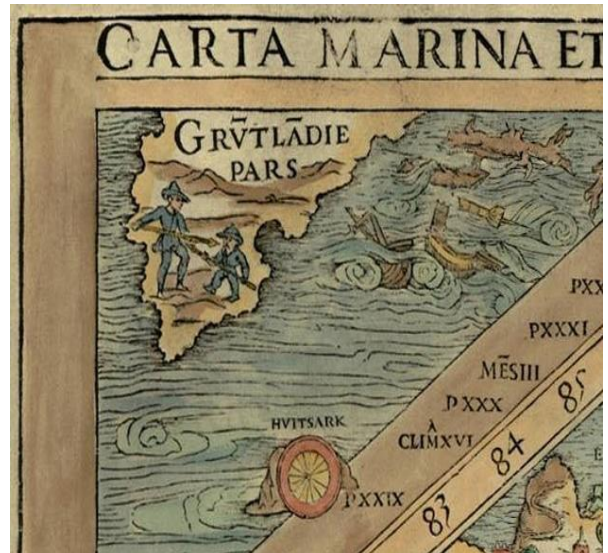
1.2



1.3



1.4



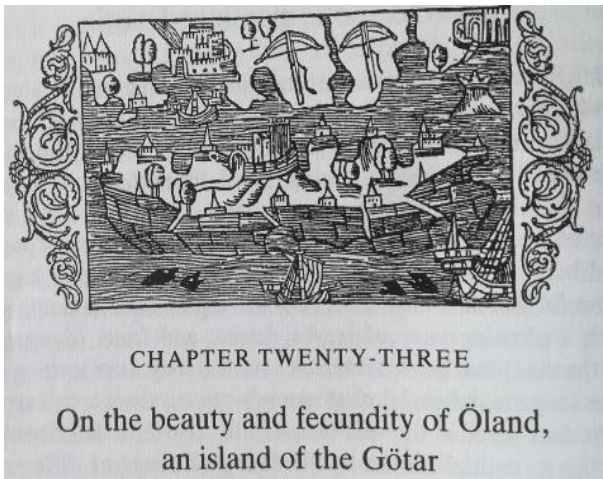
1.5



1.6



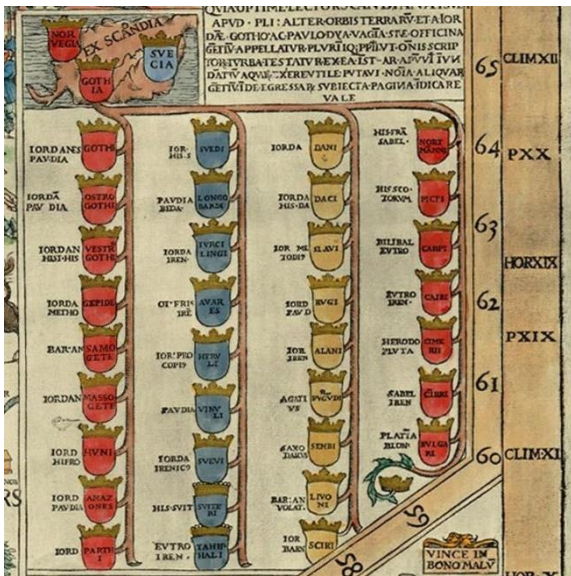
1.7



1.8



2.1



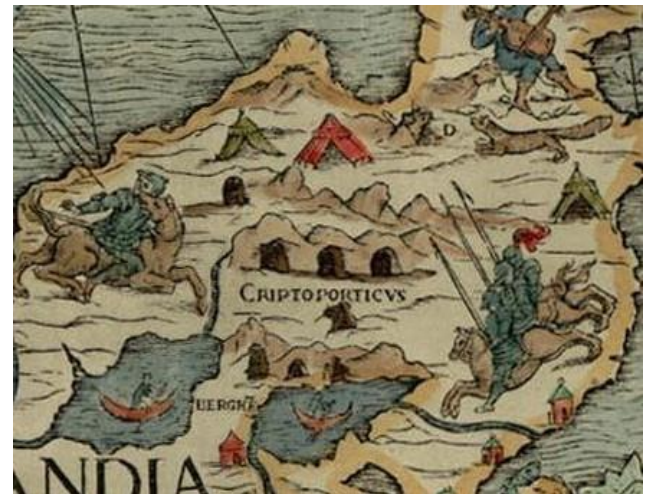
2.2



2.3



2.4



2.5.1



2.5.2



2.6



2.7



2.8



2.9



3.1



3.2



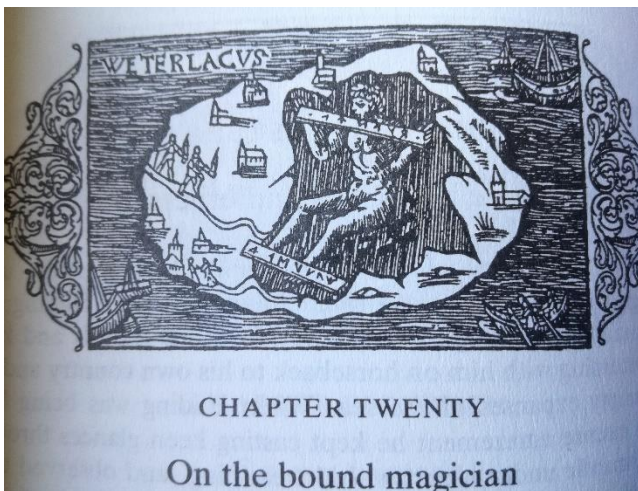
3.3.1



3.3.2



3.4



Bibliography

Primary sources:

- Olaus Magnus, *Ain Kurze Auslegung und Verklerung der Neuen Mappen von den alten Goettenreich und andern Nordlenden*, Online source published by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Link available click at: <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00021693&pimage=8&v=100&nav=&l=en> (last accessed on 01-08-17)
- Olaus Magnus, Carta Marina; maritime map of the early modern Northern European countries (1539) Title page picture also taken from this source. Rights reserved by Pablo Romero published on 4-02-15 by fineartamerica.com online source link available click at: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/carta-marina-map-of-scandinavia-by-olaus-magnus-1539-pablo-romero.html>
- Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern peoples Rome 1555 Vol. 1 Hakluyt Society Edition Second series No. 182*, books I - V translated by P. Fisher & H. Higgens ed. P. Foote with annotations derived from the commentary by J. Granlund (London, 1996)
- Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern peoples Rome 1555 Vol. 2 Hakluyt Society Edition Second series No. 187*, books VI - XV translated by P. Fisher & H. Higgens ed. P. Foote with annotations derived from the commentary by J. Granlund (London, 1998)
- Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern peoples Rome 1555 Vol. 3 Hakluyt Society Edition Second series No. 188*, books XVI – XXII translated by P. Fisher & H. Higgens ed. P. Foote with annotations derived from the commentary by J. Granlund (London, 1998)

Secondary sources:

- Barret, J., 'The pirate fishermen: the political economy of a medieval maritime society', in B. Smith & T. Williams ed., *West over sea: studies in Scandinavian sea-borne expansion and settlement before 1300* (Leiden, 2007) 299-330
- Bresc, H., 'Challenging Braudel: a new vision of the Mediterranean', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* Vol. 14 (2001) 419-453
- Bresc, H., 'Îles et tissu connectif de la Méditerranée médiévale', *Médiévales* Vol. 47 (automne, 2004) 123-138
- Carlton, G., 'The world drawn from nature: Imitation and authority in sixteenth-century cartography', *Intellectual History Review* Vol. 24 Issue 1 (2014) 21-37
- Duzer van, C., *Sea monsters on medieval and renaissance Maps* (London, 2013)
- Eco, U., *De geschiedenis van imaginaire landen en plaatsen*, translated by Y. Boeke & P. Krone (Amsterdam, 2013)
- Edmond, R. & Smith, V., *Islands in history and representation* (London, 2003)
- Fernández-Armesto, F., *Pathfinders: a global history of exploration* (New York, 2006)
- Frei, K., 'Was it for walrus? Viking age settlement and medieval walrus ivory trade in Iceland and Greenland', *World Archaeology* Vol. 47 Issue 3 (2015) 439 – 466
- Gilles, J.R., 'Island sojourns', *Geographical Review* Vol. 97 Issue 2 (April, 2007) 274-283
- Gilles, J.R., *Islands of the mind: how the human imagination created the Atlantic world* (New York, 2004)
- Gilles, J.R., 'Taking history offshore: Atlantic islands in European minds, 1400-1800', in R. Edmond & V. Smith ed., *Islands in history and representation* (London, 2003) 19-31
- Granlund, J. & G. Crone, 'The Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus', *Imago Mundi* Vol. 8 (1951) 35-43
- Hadfield, A., 'The idea of the North', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* Vol. 1 Issue 1 (2009). Online source click at: <http://www.northernrenaissance.org/the-idea-of-the-northandrew-hadfield/>
- Harley, J.B., 'Silences and secrecy: the hidden agenda of cartography in early modern Europe', *Imago Mundi* Vol. 40. (1988) 57-76
- Harrison, R., 'Gásir in Eyjafjörður: international exchange and local economy in medieval Iceland', *Journal of the Northern Atlantic* Vol. 1 Issue 1 (2008) 99-119
- Horden, P., & Purcell, N., *The corrupting sea: a study of Mediterranean history*, (Hongkong, 2000)

- Huhtamies, M., 'Labyrinth of War: archipelago fleets and society in the Gulf of Finland 1520-1809', *The International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. 26 Issue 3 (2014) 600–621
- Ísleifsson, S.R., 'The idea of an island in the North', *Scandia Journal* Vol. 75 Issue 2 (2009) 97-101
- Jeffrey Bolster, W., *The mortal sea: fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail* (London, 2012)
- Keller, C., 'Furs, fish and ivory: medieval Norsemen at the arctic fringe', *Journal of the North Atlantic* Vol. 3 Issue 1 (2010) 1–23
- Lestringant, F., 'La voie des îles', *Médiévales* Vol. 47 (automne, 2004) 113-122
- McKeown, S., 'Reading and writing the Swedish renaissance', *Renaissance Studies* Vol. 23 Issue 2 (March, 2009) 141-150
- Miekkaavaara, L., 'Unknown Europe: the mapping of the Northern countries by Olaus Magnus in 1539', *Belgian Journal of Geography* Vol. 3-4. (December, 2008) 307-324
- Neville, K., 'Gothicism and early modern ethnography', *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 70 Issue 2 (2009) 213–234
- North, M., *The Baltic: a history*, translated by K. Kronenberg (London, 2015)
- Pye, M., *The edge of the world: how the North Sea made us who we are* (London, 2014)
- Sawyer, B., *The frozen echo: Greenland and the exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000-1500* (Stanford, 1996)
- Seaver, K., 'Desirable teeth: the medieval trade in Arctic and African ivory', *Journal of Global History* Vol. 4 Issue 2 (2009) 271–292
- Seaver, K., 'Pygmies of the far North', *Journal of World History* Vol. 19 Issue 1 (March, 2008) 63-87
- Sicking, L., 'The dichotomy of insularity: islands between isolation and connectivity in medieval and early modern Europe, and beyond', *The International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. 26 Issue 3 (2014) 494-511
- Sicking, L., 'Islands and maritime connections, networks and empires, 1200-1700: introduction', *The International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. 26 Issue 3 (2014) 489-493.
- Sjöholm, B., 'Things to be marvelled at rather than examined', *The Antioch Review* Vol. 62 No. 2 (spring, 2004) 245-254
- Smith, B., Taylor & Williams, *West over sea: studies in Scandinavian sea-borne expansion and settlement before 1300* (Leiden, 2007)
- Steinberg, P.E., 'Insularity, sovereignty and statehood: the representation of Islands on Portolan charts and the construction of the territorial state', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* Vol. 87 Issue 4 (2005) 253-265

- Steinberg, P.E., 'Sovereignty, territory, and the mapping of mobility: a view from the outside', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 99. Issue 3 (2009) 467-495.
- Wickler, S., 'The centrality of small Islands in arctic Norway from the Viking age to the recent historic period', *The Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* Vol. 11 Issue 2 (2016) 171–184
- Wubs- Mrozewics, J., 'The Hanze game' in J.W. Mrozewics & S. Jenks ed. *Northern World: The Hanze in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2013) 149–181