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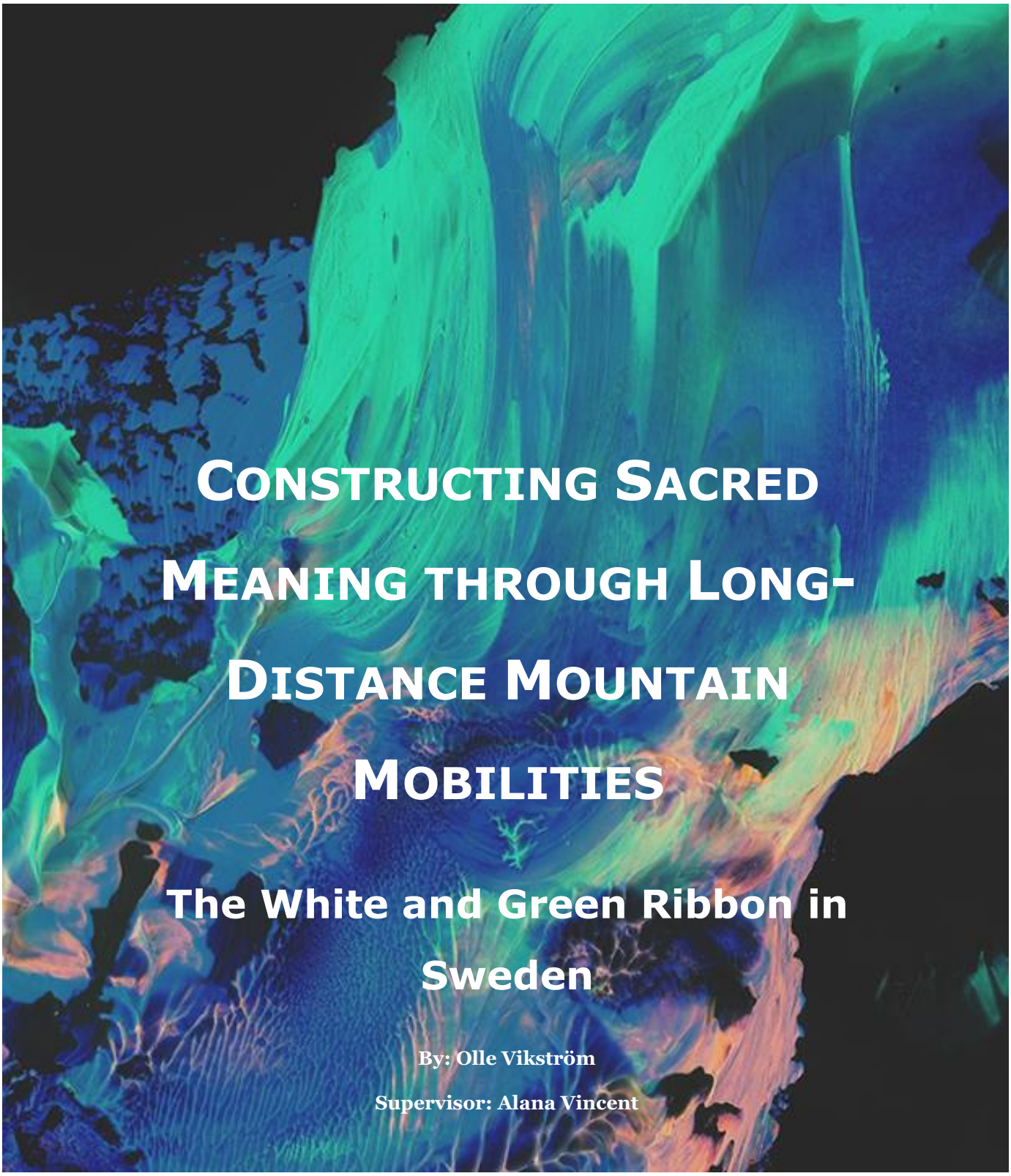

Constructing Sacred Meaning through Long-Distance Mountain Mobilities

The White and Green Ribbon in Sweden

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Magisteruppsats i Religionsvetenskap, 15 hp

Institutionen för Idé och Samhällsstudier

HT 2025

Abstract

Long-distance hiking and ski touring in the Scandinavian mountain range have become salient arenas for existential reflection in contemporary Sweden, a context often described as secular yet marked by ongoing negotiations of what may be treated as sacred. While research on pilgrimage, spirituality, and outdoor life has shown how nature and mobility can become sites of sacralisation, it has tended to foreground established pilgrimage routes or everyday outdoor practices. Prolonged, self-organised Nordic mountain traverses remain comparatively under-examined, limiting understanding of how moral orientations and sacred-like significance are constructed. Drawing on eight semi-structured interviews with finishers of the Green Ribbon (summer hiking) and the White Ribbon (winter ski touring), this thesis examines how participants narratively construct and legitimise meaning that carries moral weight and sacred significance. The material is analysed through reflexive thematic analysis within a constructionist epistemology. The analysis is guided by the theoretical perspectives of implicit religion, the secular sacred, and liminality. Across three interrelated themes (recreating community, sacralisation, and implicit religion) the findings suggest that Ribbon mobilities become intelligible for many participants as a form of secular-sacred mobility. Meaning is stabilised through separation from ordinary life, communitas, ritualised finishing practices, portable symbols, and boundary work around authenticity and profanation. The thesis therefore provides a grounded account of how sacred-like moral gravity is produced and negotiated beyond institutional religion in a Swedish post-institutional context.

Keywords: *sacralisation, implicit religion, liminality, meaning-making, post-secularity*

Contents

Preface

This thesis was written as part of the Magister thesis course in Religious Studies at Umeå University during the academic year 2025–2026.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Alana Vincent, for valuable guidance, constructive criticism, and support throughout the research process. I also want to thank the seminar group for insightful discussions and helpful comments.

I am particularly grateful to the individuals who participated in the study and generously shared their experiences. Without their contributions, this thesis would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and those close to me for their patience and encouragement during this work.

Arvidsjaur, January 2026
Olle Vikström

Introduction

Sweden is often described as one of the world's most secular societies, but at the same time nature seems to occupy a paradoxical position in relation to this statement. As institutional religiosity has declined, forests, lakes and mountains have emerged as central arenas for existential reflection, identity work and the search for meaning. Religious scholars such as Thurfjell (2020) have for example observed that natural landscapes increasingly function as a place where individuals find higher values, comfort, and even experiences like encounters with "the sacred." However, this form of sacrament is not necessarily articulated in strictly religious terms. Instead, sacralisation is embedded in practices, commitments, and emotions that develop in the rhythms of- and appreciation of outdoor life.

A particular example of such meaning-making can be found in the long-distance challenges of the Green and White Ribbon (Gröna- och Vita Bandet in Swedish), in which participants traverse through the Scandinavian mountain range by their own power. It is often done on foot in the summer and on skis in the winter. The journey stretches about 1,300–1,400 kilometres from Grövelsjön in the south to Three-Country Cairn (Treriksröset) in the far north. Unlike a race or guided expeditions, these hikes are self-organised, non-commercial, and are largely conducted alone, with minimal infrastructure but maximum investment. Participants often spend weeks or months in the mountain landscape.

Although many people, at first glance, frame their decision to embark on the journey in practical terms such as curiosity, challenge, a desire for solitude, this study directs attention toward how participants narrate meetings, commitments, and moments that are not easily reduced to purely practical concerns. In these narratives, expectations of transformation, including shifts in moral orientation, form a crucial point of analytical interest. Similarly, encounters with strangers and engagements with particular landscapes are approached in ways that suggest heightened significance, sometimes articulated through language that resonates with vocabularies commonly associated with spiritual traditions.

The forms of meaning-making examined in this study are neither straightforwardly religious nor easily dismissed as trivial. Rather, they raise questions that intersect with what scholars have described as *implicit religion*, that is, seemingly secular

practices that function in ways comparable to religiosity through commitments, integrated foci, and moral orientation (Bailey, 1997; Stewart, 2022). At the same time, participants' narratives also invite comparison with what has been conceptualised as the *secular sacred*, referring to values, places, and relationships that are treated as unconditional and morally binding despite lacking institutional or theological grounding (Lynch, 2012).

This constellation of features gives rise to an analytical challenge that motivates the present study. Long-distance mountain trips can be approached as forms of meaning-making that do not fit neatly within established categories of either religion or secularity. On the one hand, they may be interpreted as implicitly religious practices embedded in Swedish outdoor culture; on the other, they may be understood as expressions of secular sacralisation. This ambiguity is further complicated by the fact that participants themselves often resist labels associated with religiosity, even while articulating experiences that carry deep symbolic, moral, and identity-shaping significance.

Despite extensive research on pilgrimage, spirituality and outdoor life, Sweden's long-distance mountain mobilities are still empirically underexplored and seldom theorised. Studies on modern pilgrimages have tended to focus on established routes such as the Camino de Santiago, while studies of Scandinavian outdoor life have primarily examined everyday outdoor practices rather than long, self-chosen endurance journeys (e.g..Nilsson et al, 2016; Thurfjell, 2020) The winter version, the White Ribbon, is absent from the academic literature, which leaves open the question of how skiing as mobility shapes meaning making in a different way than walking.

Against this background, this study examines how participants in the Green and White Ribbon construct and legitimise meaning during and after their travels in qualitative semi-structured interviews. The analysis is guided by three overarching thematic concerns: how moral weight and forms of sacred significance are articulated; how social relations and distinctions are drawn and negotiated; and how narratives of commitment and transformation are mobilised in ways that resonate with, challenge, or complicate existing theories of implicit religion and secular sacredness.

In this way, the study does not directly attempt to determine whether the Ribbon "is" religious or "is" sacred in any essential sense. Instead, it examines how sacrament is produced in a secular context and how hikers and skiers talk about what matters to them in what they do, and how these trips speak to a broader dynamic of meaning-making in contemporary Sweden.

Aim and Research Question

The aim of this study is to examine how participants in the White and Green Ribbon narratively construct and legitimise meanings of moral and sacred significance when reflecting on their completed long-distance Ribbon journeys.

To anwser this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are communities, boundaries, and distinctions created and maintained within Ribbon mobilities, and how do these processes contribute to meaning-making?
2. In what ways do participants' retrospective accounts display processes of sacralisation?
3. How can participants' narratives of Ribbon mobilities be analytically understood as implicitly religious forms of meaning-making?

Terminology and Usage

This study uses several terms that are specific either to the Swedish mountain context or to the communities surrounding the Green and White Ribbon. This subsection briefly outlines how I understand and use these terms throughout the thesis.

The Ribbon / The Green Ribbon / The White Ribbon: The terms the Green Ribbon (summer, predominantly on foot) and The White Ribbon (winter, predominantly on skis) refer to the two traverses of the Scandinavian Mountain range. When the distinction between the two is not relevant, I use *The Ribbon* as a collective shorthand for both versions.

Ribboner / Finisher / Participant: Ribboner (*"Bandare"* in Swedish) refers to individuals who have completed either the Green or White Ribbon in a culturally recognised sense. Completion is not necessarily understood here as a single uninterrupted traverse, but rather as a flexible and processual achievement that may involve staged or multi-season attempts. In this respect, Ribboner identity is negotiated through practice, commitment, and retrospective recognition rather than through strict formal criteria alone. All interviewees in this study are individuals who have completed the Ribbon in such a sense. The term *finisher* is therefore used descriptively and interchangeably with Ribboner when referring to interviewees unless further specification is analytically required. When distinctions of mobility are relevant, I use *hiker* or *skier*. When such distinctions are not central, *participant*, *Ribboner*, *Ribbon traveller*, and *finisher* are used as overlapping descriptors.

Mobilities / Ribbon mobilities: The term mobilities is used in line with the broader mobilities literature (discussed in further detail in the literature review) to denote embodied, affective, and meaning-laden movements through space. In this thesis, Ribbon mobilities primarily refers to the combined practices of long-distance hiking and long-distance skiing associated with the Green and White Ribbon. While the physical mode of movement differs, both are treated as variations of the same overarching mobility phenomenon unless otherwise specified.

Method and Research Design

This section outlines the methodological approach of the study. It describes the empirical material, the recruitment of participants, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. The study is based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews with former participants of the White and Green Ribbon, analysed using reflexive thematic analysis within a constructionist epistemological framework. The section also addresses issues of reflexivity, positionality, and ethical considerations relevant to the research process.

Recruitment and Participants

Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling within the Green/White Ribbon community, an approach commonly used in qualitative research when studying small and bounded social fields (Bryman, 2018). Initial access to the field was facilitated through the Fjällfararnas Vita & Gröna Band organisation (the official body overseeing the Ribbon challenges). A key contact person within the organisation functioned as a gatekeeper by introducing the study to the community, lending it legitimacy and encouraging members to participate. Gaining access through established insiders or gatekeepers is widely recognised as an important strategy in qualitative and ethnographic research, particularly when trust and social legitimacy are central to participation (Bryman, 2018; Fangen, 2005). Following this introduction, an invitation post (see Appendix 4) was shared in the closed Facebook group for “Ribbon” alumni, briefly outlining the research purpose and inclusion criteria (individuals who had completed either the Green or White Ribbon). Interested individuals were invited to contact me directly.

This recruitment process yielded a pool of eight volunteers. All interviewees had completed at least one Ribbon challenge, including two who had completed the White Ribbon. The final sample consisted of five women and three men, ranging in age from their mid-twenties to early seventies. While not statistically representative, the variation in age and experience provided a breadth of perspectives suitable for a qualitative analysis (Bryman, 2018). Prior to the interviews, all participants received an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 1) outlining the study’s aims,

ethical considerations and their rights, including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024).

Since all interviewees in this study are individuals who have completed the Green or White Ribbon, the empirical scope of the analysis is confined to retrospective accounts of completion. The study does not aim to represent all individuals who attempt, aspire to, or disengage from Ribbon-related practices. Rather than statistical generalisation, the study pursues analytical generalisation by identifying and arguing for recurring patterns of meaning-making across narratives of completion.

Data Collection

The study is based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews with eight former Ribbon participants (five women and three men), ranging in age from their mid-twenties to early seventies. All participants had completed either the Green or the White Ribbon and were therefore able to reflect retrospectively on their journeys and the meanings they associated with them.

To explore participants lived experiences and meaning-making processes, I conducted in-depth interviews guided by an open-ended interview schedule (see Appendix 2). The interviews were designed to encourage participants to articulate their motivations, experiences, and interpretations of their journeys in their own words (Bryman, 2018). This approach generated narrative data concerning how the mountain environment was experienced and constructed as meaningful.

Interviews were conducted during the spring of 2025 and took place one-to-one via video call (Zoom), reflecting the participants' wide geographical distribution across Sweden. Each interview lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. The interview guide covered topics such as motivations for undertaking the Ribbon, memorable moments during the journey, challenges encountered and overcome, reflections upon completion, and how participants characterised the personal significance of the mountains during and after the journey. While the guide provided structure, it remained flexible; participants were encouraged to tell stories freely and introduce issues they considered important, with follow-up probes used to elicit clarification or elaboration.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Brief notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to capture initial impressions. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim in Swedish and cross-checked against the audio files for accuracy. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym at the transcription stage, and potentially identifying details were omitted or generalised in the transcripts.

Reflexivity and Positionality

A reflexive stance was maintained throughout the research process, acknowledging that the researcher's background can shape the inquiry. I grew up in Undersåker, a village in the Jämtland mountains of northern Sweden, near to some sections of the Ribbon routes. I am also an experienced mountain hiker and skier myself. This personal background gave me a degree of *"insider"* understanding of Swedish outdoor culture. For instance, I am familiar with the ethos of *friluftsliv* (outdoor life) and the practical realities of multi-day treks. Such familiarity proved useful in building rapport with interviewees; for me, they treated me as someone who could understand their references to trail life.

At the same time, I was conscious that my insider status could introduce biases. I might unconsciously share some of the same romanticism about the mountains or assumptions about the value of solitude that my participants hold. To manage this insider/outsider dynamic, I tried to engage in reflexive practices: I tried to take note of my reactions after interviews, I discussed my positionality with my supervisor, and at times I tried to deliberately ask participants to explain their feelings in detail rather than assume I understood.

In alignment with constructionist epistemology, I assume that the meanings expressed by participants are *co-constructed* in the interview context, thus a product of their (our) experiences, cultural discourse, and our interaction, rather than a direct window into objective truth. This perspective also aligns with Braun and Clarke's (2006) notion that researchers should actively acknowledge their role in theme development (themes do not simply *"emerge"* on their own). Throughout the thematic analysis, I sought to recognise myself as an *active interpreter* of the data, even though I may use passive voice occasionally during the written report.

Data analysis

The data were analysed using the procedure outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) on how to do reflexive thematic analysis. This approach was chosen for its flexibility in identifying patterns across qualitative data, and how, Braun & Clarke argue, a general educated audience usually easily understands the written reports of thematic analysis.

The analysis proceeded in these stages (as proposed by Braun and Clarke):

1. Familiarisation: I immersed myself in the data by reading interview transcripts in full. I made initial notes on recurring ideas or striking phrases via timestamps. This engagement helped me begin noticing connections across accounts.
2. Generating Initial Codes: I highlighted segments of text and assigned preliminary codes to summarise their content. Each meaningful unit (a sentence or passage touching on a distinct idea) was given equal attention and a brief code label.
3. Searching for Themes: Next, I examined how different codes might group together into broader themes. I collated all coded excerpts and used mapping (with NVivo) to cluster related codes. For instance, codes like “meaningful meeting,” “longing for company” and “relating to other hikers” were grouped under a tentative theme about *Community*. This phase involved reflection on the relationships between codes; some clusters formed clear candidate themes, while others remained miscellaneous.
4. Reviewing Themes: I then reviewed and refined the candidate themes against the data. At Level 1, I checked that all excerpts grouped under a theme coherently related to a central idea. At Level 2, I considered the themes about the entire dataset, asking whether the thematic structure adequately captured the most salient patterns in participants’ narratives. During this iterative process, some themes were merged, split, or discarded. I revisited certain transcripts to verify that the interpretations held to the raw data.
5. Defining and Naming Themes: Once the thematic structure felt somewhat solid, I articulated each theme and assigned them names. I wrote notes for

each theme, describing *what* it encompassed and *how* it related to the overarching research aim. For example, one theme was defined around the idea of *Sacralisation*, which I characterised how participants ritualise and formalise their practise with certain "sacralising" acts and what that entailed for participants. The themes then informed and shaped the research questions. The research questions are therefore set to reflect the themes.

6. Producing the Report: Finally, the themes were written in narrative form to answer the research questions in the findings and analysis section. In writing up the analysis, I tried to select quote excerpts to illustrate each theme and demonstrate the claims. Throughout the write-up, I aimed for a balance between analytic commentary and participants' voices by letting the readers see concrete examples while interpreting those examples considering relevant literature.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted by the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2024) and standard practices in human-subject research in the social sciences. Participants provided informed consent after being fully informed about the study's purpose, what participation entailed, and how their data would be used. In the recruitment phase, the informational post and consent form emphasised that participation was voluntary and that individuals could decline or withdraw at any point without any consequence. Before each interview began, I confirmed that the participants understood the conversation would be recorded. All eight participants agreed to the terms and consented to be recorded.

To protect participants' identities, I replaced their names with pseudonyms in all transcripts and written results. I also removed or masked specific details that could inadvertently identify someone, for example, exact years of completion (since lists of finishers by year are public), unusual personal background details, or names of companions. In the thesis and any publications, quotes are attributed to interviewees using their pseudonym or a generic descriptor (e.g. "female, Green Ribbon hiker") rather than any real name.

Literature Review

This literature review aims to explore (selected) themes in literature broadly relating to the White & Green Ribbon as journeys and challenges. I seek to connect concepts from religious studies, environmental humanities, anthropology and sociology, and mobility studies. The review is set narratively (Bryman, 2018) in that the literature has been selected based on its perceived relevance to my topic. I therefore attempt to intertwine the themes in the literature to weave a "narrative" of key areas to be familiar with when exploring the experiences of White and Green Ribboners.

Some comparative perspectives from outside the Nordic region (e.g., Camino de Santiago, the Appalachian Trail) are included to show similarities and differences. Also, gaps in research (notably the absence of studies on long-distance Nordic skiing as an existential pursuit) are discussed.

Post-Secularity

Modern sacred mobilities, such as long-distance hiking or skiing, illustrate what many scholars term the post-secular condition: a context in which boundaries between the secular and the religious become porous. Rather than marking a clear decline of religion in the wake of modernity, the post-secular lens can show us how spiritual expressions persist, re-emerge, and evolve in ostensibly secular contexts (Gorski, 2012, pp. 3–4; Mendieta, 2012, p. 312). While Jürgen Habermas may have popularised the term "post-secular," noting that even highly secular societies retain vibrant religious and spiritual vocabularies, Peter L. Berger laid the foundational groundwork for much of this discussion. Berger asserts that modernity leads not to secularisation, but to pluralisation: a proliferation of competing worldviews, both religious and secular (2014).

Berger observed, for instance, that individuals navigate a plural landscape of meaning, drawing from what he called "many altars of modernity". In The Many Altars of Modernity (2014), he argued that most modern people do not face a stark choice between religion and secularity; instead, they combine elements of both in fluid and personal ways. For Berger, this reflects not a decline in religion per se, but a transformation in how sacred meaning is sourced and expressed.

Berger's shift from a secularisation paradigm to a pluralisation paradigm aligns closely with the post-secular "thesis." Both frameworks recognise that religion has not disappeared but instead operates under new conditions of negotiation and reflexivity. The emphasis lies on how individuals, within a pluralistic world, craft narratives of meaning. These narratives may be grounded in religious traditions, secular ideologies, or hybrid spiritualities.

This resonates with observations from Nilsson (2016) on contemporary pilgrimage, such as the Camino de Santiago. Nilsson describes how many modern pilgrims blend traditional Catholic rituals with individualised quests for meaning. Such pilgrims continually negotiate what is "sacred" and "profane," often shifting between tourist-like and seeker-like behaviours (Nilsson, 2016, p. 30). The rise of alternative endpoints like Fisterra, beyond Santiago de Compostela, exemplifies what Nilsson calls "post-secular authenticity": a search for deeper, personally resonant experiences beyond institutional religion (Nilsson, 2016, p. 63). Thus, the post-secular framework captures a crucial shift in modern spirituality: from institutional religiosity toward individual and eclectic modes of sacrality.

Nature as Quasi-Religion

The blurring of boundaries between secular life and sacrality is evident in Scandinavia. As highly secular societies, Scandinavian people sometimes sacralise nature as an alternative source of spirituality. As the saying goes, "the forest is my church," a common expression in Sweden and neighbouring countries speaks of nature using religious or sacralising vocabulary (Thurfjell & Remmel, 2024). David Thurfjell's work on contemporary Swedes (including his book *Granskogsfolk*, 2020) illustrates how Swedish nature has effectively become the nations, or for many, religion. Thurfjell discusses nature as a place for "deep existential experiences" and renewal (p. 212). In an article, Thurfjell and Remmel (2024) document how love of nature carries quasi-religious overtones in Northern Europe (Namely Sweden and Estonia): Many secular individuals describe entering the forest or mountains with reverence, finding solace, awe, and even guidance there (Svarstad, 2010, p. 103, Thurfjell & Remmel 2024). This could be viewed as an unexpected by-product of secularisation as institutional religion wanes and people redirect spiritual yearning toward wilderness or nature (ibid.).

Historical currents like Romanticism and nationalism primed this worldview by casting Nordic landscapes as sublime and even sacred symbols of cultural identity (Thurfjell, 2020). For instance, 19th-century romanticism of nature imbued wild landscapes with a sense of the holy, while national movements in Sweden and Norway promoted outdoor life as part of the national soul (ibid.).

On the same theme, Svarstads study discusses how Norwegian hikers often described feeling an “original bond” with the land, narrating how they feel they walk in the footsteps of ancestors (such as “cultures of gatherers, hunters, nomads and “primitive” agriculturalists”) and thereby reconnect with a more authentic way of life (2010, p. 104). In Norway, too, trekking in the mountains is tied to cultural heritage: many Norwegian hikers report feeling a historical connection to the landscapes they traverse (ibid). This inherited bond with nature serves, for many, as a counterweight to a sense of alienation in modern urban life (ibid., p. 107).

Furtherly, Kirchhoff (2023) argues that sacralised views of nature are not limited to isolated subcultures but influence mainstream attitudes in modern Western societies, or Europe to be more precise. His research demonstrates how even scientific, and conservationist discourses often carry implicit reverence for nature, treating it as inherently valuable and morally untouchable. Nature thus function as a site where modern European individuals locate ultimate values, ethical meaning, and a sense of the transcendent (ibid).

In other international parallels, national parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone have long been described as "America’s cathedrals," sacred spaces for reflection and patriotic renewal in the United States (Bremer, 2023; 2021; ch Ross-Bryant 2013). Visitors often speak of these landscapes in spiritual terms, and rituals like pilgrimages to the Grand Canyon or the reverence for wilderness heroes like John Muir reflect a civil religious ethos. The U.S. National Park Service itself acknowledges the spiritual and moral significance of these sites, underlining how sacralised nature plays a vital role in national identity (ibid). In Japan, the Shintō tradition illustrates another model of sacralising nature. Forests, mountains, and waterfalls are considered dwelling places of kami, spiritual beings, and Shintō shrines are typically embedded in natural settings (Manabu, 2017). Even among non-religious Japanese citizens, these sites are reported to evoke feelings of awe and reverence (ibid).

Sacred Mobilities

But what are participants "doing" when they hike the length of Sweden or ski across its winter mountains? Increasingly, scholars use the language of *mobilities* to describe such undertakings (E.g., Maddrell 2015, Salazar & Jayaram 2016). Rather than pigeonholing them as either "tourism" or "pilgrimage," the concept of *sacred mobilities* recognises that journeys carry layered meanings. Avril Maddrell and others argue that pilgrimage is best seen as a broad, flexible category of mobility, thus a category that is bodily, spiritual, and emotional, often rooted in specific landscapes (Maddrell 2013, 2016, 2022; Maddrell & della Dora 2013, della Dora 2012, Grau 2012). In this view, walking itself can be a form of devotion or meditation, and movement through space becomes a meaning-making practice.

Current definitions of pilgrimage have expanded to include not only traditional religious treks, but any transformative journey undertaken for meaning or growth (Maddrell 2015, pp.4-5). This includes explicitly religious travels and ostensibly "secular" adventures like long-distance hikes (ibid.). Indeed, the line between secular hiking and sacred pilgrimage has become increasingly blurred (ibid. pp. 2-3). Researchers have documented myriad forms of "pilgrimage" in modern life from religious bicycle journeys to sporting events framed in sacred terms (ibid. pp. 71ff).

In the case of thru-hiking, participants and observers note parallels to classic pilgrimages. Hitchner et al. (2018), for example, examined the 340-km John Muir Trail (JMT) in California and explicitly characterised thru-hiking it as a *modern pilgrimage*. They found that even when hikers set out with no religious intent:

> Their journeys to and within these natural areas, even when conducted with non-religious motivations, resemble religious pilgrimages in that they are transformative experiences undertaken by individuals or groups for the purposes of spiritual or emotional benefit (p. 2).

The study of 26 JMT travel blogs revealed hikers frequently described feelings of renewal, heightened awareness, escape from worldly pressures, and even moments of worship in nature (ibid. p. 92). A few explicitly dubbed their trek a pilgrimage (ibid. p. 91). Similarly, Appalachian Trail hikers have been observed to treat reaching certain peaks or vistas with reverence, as if entering a temple (Bratton, 2012). These findings reinforce Maddrell's point that sacred mobilities can take many forms: one

person's outdoor adventure may be another's spiritual quest. In a post-secular age, "spirituality" on the move may manifest in diverse ways.

Transformation and Liminality

Undertaking a weeks- or months-long trek through the wilderness may often come with expectations of *transformation*. Many hikers and/or pilgrims speak of being changed by the journey (Hitchner et al. 2019; Andriotis 2011; Maddrell 2013). However, research cautions against oversimplifying this change as a single dramatic epiphany or instant conversion. Instead, transformation is usually described as a gradual, cumulative process; a slow-burning introspection, ignited by the routine of the trail (Basil 2022). In an analysis of thru-hiker memoirs, Basil found that personal change on trails like the Camino de Santiago or Pacific Crest Trail unfolded in subtle stages rather than sudden revelations (ibid, p. 290). One pilgrim, for instance, described the Camino as a constant internal dialogue, a meditative walking practice that repeatedly (metaphorically) posed the question "who are you?" (ibid.). The physical act of walking becomes a moving meditation, each step part of an ongoing reconstruction of identity. In this sense, the hike serves as an existential workshop and thereby an extended period to reflect, shed old identities, and try out new ways of being.

The learning and personal growth from such treks often translate back into the hiker's everyday life. Littlefield & Siudzinski (2012), studying Appalachian Trail hikers, noted that long-distance hiking functions as a form of "serious leisure" that fosters life skills and self-reliance (p. 476). Hikers often emerge with greater confidence and independence; the challenges on the trail teach resilience and resourcefulness that carry over beyond the wilderness. Some even credit the trail with improving their roles back home. For instance, some resolved to becoming a better parent or friend after the perspective-shifting experience of living with only a backpack for weeks (Hitchner et al. 2018, p. 93). One JMT hiker reflected that before his trek, he "had worried too much about trivial things" and hoped the journey would help him refocus on what truly matters in being a good husband, father, and friend (ibid.). Such testimony underscores how these journeys invite hikers to reevaluate priorities and potentially re-enter society transformed.

Central to this process is the concept of *liminality*: the state of being "betwixt and between" normal roles and places. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) used liminality to describe the middle phase of rites of passage, when participants are no longer what they were, but not yet what they will become. Long-distance hikes and pilgrimages could very well be understood as liminal experiences. The trail itself becomes a threshold space, removed from ordinary social structures (Thurfjell, 2018). In the literature on sacred mobilities, specific sites along the journey (a mountain pass, a chapel, or a vista) are often described as threshold places where inner change feels palpable (e.g., Maddrell 2016, 2013, Hitchner et al. 2018). In Celtic lore and pilgrimage, some more numinous places are regarded as "thin places" where the veil between the divine and the mundane/profane is considered and experienced to be thinner (Maddrell, 2016). These are places or stretches where the chance of getting close to divinities is higher.

Contemporary sacred mobilities, such as long-distance treks and modern pilgrimage, often accentuate liminality through physical hardship, endurance, and bodily exertion. While medieval pilgrims may have walked barefoot or fasted to heighten their separation from everyday life, today's long-distance hikers and pilgrims (whether in the Manx landscape or on the John Muir Trail) often describe how the physical rigor of their journey itself creates a sense of detachment from ordinary life (Maddrell, 2016, p. 2; Hitchner et al., 2018, p. 5). The repetitive rhythm of walking (or skiing), combined with the elements of solitude and sustained effort, contributes to a liminal state where identity and priorities are reconsidered (Maddrell, 2013, p. 8; Hitchner et al., 2018, p. 5).

Present-time hikers likewise find that the "rhythmic and meditative" act of walking day after day induces an altered state of consciousness, a reflective mindset different from daily routine. Studies of Celtic pilgrimages (e.g., on the Isle of Man) note that the very exertion of the journey helps induce introspection and a feeling of being outside normal time (Maddrell 2013, p. 5). On the John Muir Trail (JMT), Hitchner et al. (2018, p. 5) observed that many hikers explicitly cherished the trail as a time apart from the stress of modern life. They enter a "liminal bubble" where they can temporarily escape societal expectations and "reset" themselves.

This liminality can be positive, offering clarity and renewal, but it also has a bittersweet side. Re-entry into ordinary life after such an intense liminal period can be challenging. Some long-distance hikers report a form of *post-trail depression* where a sense of emptiness or loss of direction takes hold once the adventure is over (Hitchner et al. 2018). This may be dubbed the "post-hike blues" or "post-pilgrimage crisis" as individuals struggle to reconcile the profound freedom of the trail with the constraints of home and work. All told, liminality may be a double-edged sword: it facilitates transformation on the trail yet makes returning to *normal* potentially disorienting.

Authenticity and Embodiment

A recurring motivation for people tackling sacred mobilities is often the pursuit of *authenticity*. Authenticity is here understood as a desire for a more "real" or meaningful mode of living than what one finds in everyday society. Studies on long-distance hiking, outdoor life, peak-bagging, and climbing suggest that many participants frame their journeys as an escape from artificiality and a return to an authentic self (e.g., Rickly-Boyd, 2012, p. 5; Svarstad, 2010, p. 10). Long-distance trekking, with its minimalism and direct engagement with nature, promises, for example, for many Norwegian outdoor enthusiasts, in a discourse of the "simple outdoors", a mode of existence that contrasts with the structured, commodified, and often digitalised rhythms of modern life (Svarstad, 2010).

Scholars have explored how hikers and outdoor adventurers construct authenticity through highly embodied practices and simplified lifestyles. For example, the subculture of lifestyle climbers (often called "dirtbag" climbers) is built around a hyper-mobile, minimalist way of life, meant to maximise climbing time and freedom. In this lifestyle, authenticity is tied to a rejection of conventional work schedules, consumerism, and material excess that reinforces a sense of self rooted in movement and direct engagement with the landscape and "the world" (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Similar patterns emerge among long-distance hikers, who often take pride in carrying only what they truly need by developing a sort of ethos of minimalism and self-sufficiency as part of their identity (Littlefield & Siudzinski 2012).

Rickly-Boyd's ethnographic study of these climbers describes how living out of a van, owning little more than gear and essential supplies, grants them a feeling of "spontaneous freedom" and authenticity (2012, p. 92, 100). This placelessness (dwelling on the road, in campsites, constantly between conventional places) is itself experienced as liminal and liberating, a rejection of consumerist norms in favour of a more *genuine* existence (ibid. p. 95). There are parallels to this to long-distance hiking: many may take pride in carrying only what they truly need on their backs, revelling in a simpler existence. The hike may become a practice of *embodiment,* where one's body and senses are fully engaged. In such full-body engagement with the landscape, hikers may report feeling more alive and authentic.

This sense of authentic living resonates with what Nordic trekkers describe as reconnecting to an ancestral bond with nature (Svarstad 2010). The physical hardship of blisters, muscle aches, cold, and heat among modern pilgrims' further grounds the journey and experience in the body: "For others, the surfaces of their bodies were inscribed by their journey and these markers served as 'souvenirs' of experience: blisters, scratches, suntan, relaxed demeanour" (Maddrell & della Dora 2013, p. 1120). Unlike everyday life, where comforts may be more abundant, on the trail, one becomes keenly aware of the body's capabilities and limits, which can be both humbling and empowering.

Authenticity in these journeys is also tied to an ethos of simplicity and sometimes sustainability. Some Scandinavian outdoor enthusiasts deliberately use traditional or low-tech equipment (e.g., wooden skis, wool clothing) as a statement against modern over-reliance on technology (Svarstad 2010). By embracing older, time-tested gear, they feel connected to past generations and to a more sustainable, authentic way of living on the land. A similar ethos is found among long-trail hikers in the U.S., where the lightest or most multi-functional gear is prised not just for efficiency but as part of a minimalist ethos. Littlefield and Siudzinski (2012, p. 13) observed that as hikers gain experience on the Appalachian Trail, they often carry less weight, honing their equipment to only the most essential items. This paring down of material possessions is an integral part of the hiker's identity formation and community norms. Choosing the right gear and learning to do more with less becomes a rite of passage that signals one's integration into the long-distance hiking community (ibid.). At large, material

minimalism becomes a source of authenticity: the hiker's credibility and sense of self are reinforced by how *embodied* and self-sufficient they can be in nature. Beyond gear, authenticity is reinforced through direct sensory immersion of things such as tasting wild water, feeling every weather change, and losing oneself in the landscape. These embodied encounters often carry spiritual connotations or, at the least, are regarded as deeply existential and essential, and "real." Some hikers, for example, describe moments of awe on the trail (sunsets, wildlife encounters, panoramic views) that feel transcendent, giving rise to a sense of connection with something larger than oneself (Bratton 2012, Hitchner et al. 2018).

Gaps in Research

Despite the selected themes in literature, there are notable gaps in the scholarly understanding of long-distance hiking and skiing in the Nordic region. While general literature on pilgrimage and hiking is abundant, little, if any, academic research has focused explicitly on experiences like the White or Green Ribbon. David Thurfjell's work has illuminated the sacralisation of Swedish nature broadly, but even he only briefly touches on the high mountain environment (mentioning the Swedish fells in passing) (e.g., 2018, p. 67-68). This leaves room for exploration of how the Scandinavian Mountain chain itself, with its tundra, sometimes harsh weather, midnight sun, and polar night, might hold a unique significance for those who traverse it. The wilderness experience in these long Nordic treks could have unique elements (e.g., a sense of isolation or a bond with Arctic ecology) that merit study.

Another gap is the near absence of research on long-distance skiing as a (quasi-) spiritual or existential practice. All studies of transformative walking journeys focus on pilgrims on foot, but skiing journeys are rarely examined through the same lens. This is intriguing, given that the White Ribbon (the winter counterpart to the Green Ribbon) offers a parallel experience on skis.

Why has academic attention "skipped over" skiing? It could be due to assumptions that skiing is more sport-oriented, or the shorter history and fewer practitioners worldwide compared to hiking on established hiking trails. Nonetheless, the question remains: *What may be the significance of snow for mobility and meaning making?* A ski expedition introduces different embodied challenges: gliding movement, cold

management, and avalanche/storm risk, which could shape the experience in distinctive ways. Do skiers find a similar meditative rhythm and liminal space as hikers do, or does the mode of travel alter the reflective quality of the journey?

Additionally, the social dimension of winter travel might differ Winter travel in the far north may mean even greater solitude (fewer fellow travellers on the route), potentially intensifying the introspective aspect. Or it might foster stronger camaraderie among the rare winter "pilgrims" who do meet along the way, analogous to expedition partnerships in mountaineering. Without dedicated studies, we can only speculate. Filling this gap by studying White Ribbon skiers could expand our understanding of sacred mobilities to include not just foot pilgrims but also those who *ski* toward transcendence and meaning.

Finally, more comparative work could enrich the cultural understanding of Swedish/Scandinavian outdoor life. While we see overlaps between Nordic long-distance hikers and those on, say, the Camino or Appalachian Trail, cross-cultural research could highlight how local cosmologies and traditions inflect the journey. For example, how might the concept of *friluftsliv* (Scandinavia's ethos of open-air life) imbue the White/Green Ribbon experience with meanings that a North American trail lacks? Conversely, what can Nordic journeys learn from the ritualised frameworks of ancient pilgrimage routes?

Theory

This section outlines how the analytical concepts are employed to interpret the empirical material. It clarifies how these concepts are used as interpretative tools to address the research aim, that is, to examine how participants in the White and Green Ribbon narratively construct and legitimise meanings of moral and sacred significance when reflecting on their completed long-distance Ribbon journeys.

Implicit Religion

The analysis seeks to understand how participants' commitment to hiking or skiing in the Swedish mountain chain may be interpreted not as explicitly religious, but rather as implicitly religious. The concept of implicit religion raises the question of whether we can interpret seemingly secular practices and commitments as implicitly religious, even if they are not described in such terms by practitioners themselves (Bailey 1998).

One way to explain the concept is to consider an objection to it. Imagine a participant being told that their Ribbon journey could be understood as an implicitly religious act or commitment, even though they would never describe it in such terms. They might even actively distance themselves from the word "religious," or even view religion as harmful. The implication of implicit religion might then appear to be that participants do not fully know themselves, or cannot fully recognise their own motivations, and they may rightly feel offended or "trapped" in a category they do not accept (Bailey 1998). This raises the critical question: can one ever truly avoid being categorised as "religious"?

Bailey proposes a solution to this problem in that we should, as far as possible, understand "religion" in implicit religion in a value-neutral way (1998, p. 10). For example, the concept should not imply that someone is implicitly *Christian* (which would carry a normative/Christocentric implication), nor that someone is implicitly *irrational* (a negative evaluation). Ideally, the concept helps us to think beyond the world-religions paradigm by not necessarily linking religiosity to a monolithic religious tradition. Bailey also stresses that the concept should not carry a hidden agenda of "revealing" that participants are "really" religious, even if they deny it

themselves. Rather, the intention is to invite discussion on whether we can interpret seemingly secular lives and practices as containing religious dimensions.

Taken more constructively, IR provides an analytical language for identifying implicit religious dimensions in practices such as the White and Green Ribbon. This is typically done through three analytical sub-concepts: commitments, integrating foci, and intensive concerns with extensive effects.

Commitments refer to the forms of dedication an individual or group makes (or falls back on in times of crisis) (Stewart, 2022). These commitments should be seen as sufficiently extensive that the sacrifices they entail are accepted as necessary (ibid.). In the case of the White and Green Ribbon, the journey spans a long distance (about 1,300 km), requiring significant sacrifices of everyday comfort, it may be fair to assume. Participants may ski against headwinds, struggle with cold and wet conditions, and yet persist. It is this perseverance that signals a form of commitment that suggests that what we usually expect of "religiosity," such as devotion, is not strictly unique to explicitly religious or non-secular activities.

Integrating foci are "points" that connect broader parts of life into a meaningful whole (Bailey 2010; Stewart, p. 5, 2022). In practice, this means asking: what do people do to connect their commitments to the rest of their lives? (Stewart, 2022). Does mountain-travel, for instance, permeate everyday life in ways comparable to religious practice? This might involve regular training, studying maps, planning menus, reading travel accounts, daydreaming about new adventures, or dedicating savings and vacation time to the mountains. Integrating foci thus gives insight into how seemingly separate practices are woven into larger aspects of everyday life.

Intensive concerns with extensive effects form the third sub-concept within IR. These concerns are relevant to people's moral or value-oriented dimensions. They can be understood as that which prevents individuals or groups from being isolated from the wider social world (Stewart, 2022). This is what gives a practice social significance. A guiding question in uncovering this is: what emerges from commitments that shape values, attitudes, or opinions? (ibid.). The "intensive" and "extensive" quality of such concerns distinguishes them from passing trends, as they affect one's worldview in a more fundamental way (ibid; Bailey 2010).

Taken together, IR and its associated sub-concepts provide tools for examining the boundary between the secular and the religious in the case of the White and Green Ribbon. It encourages comparison of qualities that can be said to be taken for granted within religion (such as commitment, integration into life, and moral orientation) with qualities found in secular practices. In this study, IR will be used to examine participants' narratives of the White and Green Ribbon considering these tools.

Clarifying the use of "religion" in this thesis

Following work on implicit religion, this thesis approaches religion as an analytic category concerned with how persons and communities orient themselves toward what is experienced as morally significant and non-trivial. Rather than treating implicit religion as a fixed set of criteria, I follow Stewart's understanding of it as a flexible analytical toolkit that invites conceptual supplementation where the empirical material demands it (2022).

While Bailey's triad of commitment, integrating foci, and intensive concerns with extensive effects provides a crucial point of departure, the present study found that experiences of liminality offered a more precise lens for capturing the implicitly religious dimensions of Ribbon mobilities. Participants' narratives emphasised processes of separation, threshold experiences, temporary suspension of everyday norms, and reorientation of self-understanding, rather than sustained doctrinal commitment. Liminality thus functions in this study not as an alternative to implicit religion, but as a concept that clarifies *how* implicitly religious orientations are generated and experienced within a post-institutional, non-confessional context.

In this study, religion is not treated as a bounded institution, belief system, or self-ascribed identity, but as an analytic category referring to how persons and communities come to orient themselves toward what is experienced as *non-trivial, morally significant, and set apart from the ordinary*. More specifically, I use "religion" to denote processes through which practices and experiences are framed as carrying non-contingent value, legitimised through narrative, and protected from trivialisation or profanation.

Empirically, such orientations are not primarily identified through sustained doctrinal commitment or long-term moral regulation, but through liminal processes: periods of separation from everyday structures, intensified embodiment, suspension of ordinary norms, and subsequent reorientation of self-understanding. Religion, as used here, names a *mode of meaning-making* rather than a classificatory label Religion is therefore understood a "mode" that becomes visible when experiences are narrated as transformative, morally weighty, and identity-shaping, even in the absence of explicit religious language.

Accordingly, this thesis does not argue that Ribbon mobilities "are" religious, but that they are analytically intelligible as sites where religious-like orientations are generated and negotiated within a post-institutional, secular context.

The Secular Sacred

What does the secular sacred add? According to Gordon Lynch, this concept directs attention to the sacred as something not necessarily opposed to the secular. In Lynch's sociological perspective, the sacred can be found in the norms and values that structure social life and give it a moral dimension (2012). In other words, the sacred denotes the moral dimension of social life. It is what people take to be unquestionably "good" or fundamentally important, even in seemingly non-religious contexts. Much like implicit religion, this perspective raises the question of what individuals and communities regard as the good in their lives (cf. intensive concerns with extensive effects).

Lynch emphasises that what counts as sacred is relative to context: for one group, the sacred may lie in the inherent value and dignity of everyone, while for another it may lie in the purity and honour of the nation (2012). The sacred, like "religiosity" in IR, must therefore be understood in a neutral analytical sense. Different societies and groups sacralise different ideals, attributing value and meaning to various objects or principles depending on their social practices and historical perspectives. In the study of the White and Green Ribbon as a commitment, this is helpful because the interpretive framework of sacrality becomes more open.

Lynch thus defines the sacred sociologically rather than ontologically. He cautions against assuming that the sacred is grounded in some metaphysical or religious

essence. Instead, he offers a formal definition of the sacred as *"that which people take to be a non-contingent reality which exerts an unquestionable moral claim over social life,"* with sacred forms being the specific instantiations of such realities within a given culture. This compares to how we should think about IR as well in that "religion" should not be essentialised in that we should view religion in more culturally and historically relative terms. Applied to the long-distance journeys of White and Green Ribbon, this approach is aimed at expressions of moral framing in participants' *narratives*. Even though these expeditions are not part of institutional religion, participants could describe certain values, experiences, or relationships in sacralising terms -- that is, as carrying ultimate significance that they do not question.

Distinctions

In this thesis I separate "religion" as an emic social category from "religious" as an analytic description of a mode of meaning-making. As a social category, "religion" is understood as historically and culturally contested, with boundaries negotiated and circulated through institutions, discourses, and everyday language. Even where "religion" might be invoked in etic or functionalist traditions, this study does *not* operate with an analytic concept of religion as such. As an analytic category, instead, I use "religious" to describe how persons and communities orient themselves toward what is experienced as non-trivial, morally significant, and in some sense set apart from the ordinary, often expressed narratively as transformative and identity-shaping, even in the absence of explicit religious language.

This distinction matters for how I use the sacred. Following Lynch, I use "the sacred" to refer to perceived non-contingent realities that exert binding moral claims within social life. Sacred forms may be articulated through explicitly religious traditions, but they may also emerge in contexts where actors reject religious identification. In other words, the sacred is not reducible to what is socially labelled "religion," and religion (as a label) does not exhaust what can function as sacred.

This also clarifies what is at stake analytically. A sociology of religion can examine what is regarded as "religion" in each context (and how that category is used, contested, or avoided), while a sociology of the sacred examines absolute normative

forms wherever they arise. Statements such as “children are inviolable” or “the nation is worth dying for” are examples of sacred-like normative claims, but they are not synonymous with “religion” as an emic category.

The relationship between IR and the secular sacred is therefore not simply cumulative. Implicit Religion helps trace patterns of commitment, integration, and moral orientation in participants’ accounts. At the same time, IR can risk a kind of *functionalist drift*: by describing how commitments integrate and extend into social life, it can begin to resemble a general theory of how “religion” works and thereby risk re-essentialising the category. To guard against this, I keep participants’ narratives as my grounding focus and use IR primarily as a descriptive toolkit for how practices are organised, legitimised, and experienced, without thereby declaring them to constitute “a religion” in the emic sense.

Lynch’s account introduces a different analytical emphasis. The sacred foregrounds non-contingency, normative demands, and boundaries of profanation (the possibility of violating what is held sacred), rather than functional integration. In my analysis, these approaches do not build on each other straightforwardly; they remain in productive tension. IR helps illuminate the contours of commitment and religious-like orientation in participants’ accounts, while the concept of the sacred helps specify when such orientations crystallise into normative forms with binding moral force. Holding this tension is methodologically useful, as it helps avoid both (1) collapsing “religion” into whatever matters deeply to people, and (2) treating sacred forms as present only where the category “religion” is explicitly invoked.

Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the thematic analysis and addresses the study's overall aim: to examine how participants in the White and Green Ribbon narratively construct and legitimise meaning through accounts of completed long-distance mountain mobilities.

The analysis is organised around three overarching themes (1. Recreating Community in Ribbon Mobilities, 2. Sacralisation, and 3. The Implicit Religion of Ribbon Mobilities) each of which addresses a research question. Each theme is introduced at a general level and then developed through a set of empirically grounded codes, presented in italics, which exemplify and elaborate the ways in which participants articulate, negotiate, and legitimise significance in their narratives.

Recreating Community in Ribbon Mobilities

Long-distance hiking or skiing in the White and Green Ribbon may appear to be a solitary pursuit, but participants in the White and Green Ribbon consistently emphasise the social dimensions of their journey. In the interviews, meeting other people emerged as some of the most cherished aspects of the Ribbon, even though most travel alone under their own power. This finding was unexpected. What I assumed to be an intensely personal or inward experience was frequently described in terms of interpersonal connection: "One might think it's a nature experience, but above all it's a lot of meetings" (Green Ribbon hiker, male). The dynamic between periods of solitude and moments of sociability is therefore important in how Ribbon participants make meaning of their experience. Participants value the time by themselves in the wilderness, yet those very stretches of aloneness make each human encounter more special.

Nearly every participant recounted encounters with other people (often fellow Ribboners, but also locals or other wilderness travellers) as highlights of the journey. These meetings were described as rewarding: "You are on the move so much by yourself that these encounters become all the more special" (Organiser and White Ribbon finisher, male). Another White Ribbon finisher echoed this sentiment:

> I felt happy from the meetings [I got] precisely when I was alone… I wouldn't want to go two months without meeting anyone. You feel happy when you do meet people in

> limited numbers. Then those meetings become very precious. It's something that all Ribboners say – the meetings are among the greatest [things], that people are so incredibly kind (White Ribbon finisher, female).

Companionship is sporadic and therefore it takes on heightened value. The rarity of meeting another person gives even brief chats a sense of significance.

The Ribbon community also often actively cultivates encounters. The organisation behind the White/Green Ribbon hosts an annual mountain meetup (fjällträff) where everyone who is interested and have ambitions of doing one of the Ribbon journeys, or who has completed one can gather to meet others. At these events, finishers receive their diplomas, which could be understood as reinforcing a sense of communal accomplishment. Several participants described the Ribbon meetups and online groups as something that extend and solidify the bonds formed on the trail. For example, one participant recounted the "little bank of people" they gained, that is, fellow Ribboners whom they barely knew beforehand but now could invite on joint adventures, much thanks to the trust that "they know the mountains" and share the same passion (Green Ribbon finisher, female). Another hiker similarly observed that after doing the Ribbon,

> You get a social circle of people you normally would never have come in contact with… all ages, from all parts of the country, and yet you have so much in common, you always know what to talk about (Green Ribbon finisher, male).

In daily life these individuals' paths would likely never cross, but the Ribbon experience bridges across typical social boundaries of age, occupation, or background. The sense of *communitas* might be appropriate to recall here, meaning the intense fellowship that can arise among those who share a liminal journey (Turner, 1960). While the hikers themselves may not have used that term, many speak of feeling an immediate rapport with other Ribboners they meet. "It didn't matter what [our] background was. We were both here and now… We immediately fell into an engaging conversation and were clearly on the same wavelength." (White Ribbon finisher, female). Others also noted that conversations on the trail quickly turn to existential questions rather than small talk, as if the usual social filters are "peeled off" in that stripped-down environment (Green Ribbon finisher, female).

The moral tenor of these trail relationships is notable. Participants celebrate virtues like hospitality, generosity, and mutual aid, which are all qualities that take on an

almost “sacred” status in their accounts. For example, the Ribbon community has even institutionalised recognition of kindness through an award called “Årets fjällfararvän” (Mountain Hiker’s Friend of the Year). One organiser described how a man in the small village of Olden made it his mission to welcome every Ribboner passing by: offering them coffee and sandwiches, a place to dry wet tents, and a warm greeting by name (Organiser and White Ribbon finisher). His selfless dedication became “a really important life task for him,” one that locals came to appreciate as it “spread ripples on the water” and he was eventually honoured with the said award. Such narratives demonstrate the prosocial and community recreating dimension surrounding the Ribbon.

Social Media

Social media has emerged as a crucial extension of the Ribbon community before, during, and after the journey. Many participants prepared for their journey by looking into online resources like blogs of past hikers, following Ribboners on Instagram, or reaching out in Facebook groups. One pair of hikers recalled how, when the idea of doing the Green Ribbon first took hold, they started “following some people on Instagram who were going to do it” to get inspiration and gather tips. They had found “so much use in other people’s posts on social media” while planning, so when it was their turn on the trail, they felt compelled to “carry that torch forward” by sharing their own route choices and experiences online (Green Ribbon finisher, female).

Posting updates was an important part of the journey for many participants. Aside from posting on social media as a service to future Ribboners, social media was also used as a diary “for ourselves and for our family and friends, so they felt like they were following along” (Green Ribbon finisher, female). This sentiment was common: hikers used social media to keep family and others involved in their progress. Technology helped minimising the distance between the lone hiker and their social world at home.

Social media also facilitated peer connection among Ribboners themselves. Because not all thru hikers travel at the same time or pace, much of the Ribbon “community” exists virtually. Instagram was mentioned as a platform where current and aspiring Ribboners congregate. “We hadn’t realised that everyone communicated on

Instagram," admitted one participant (who had completed the Green Ribbon with his partner) discovered that the app served as an informal bulletin board and meetup coordinator for those on the trail.

Hikers would post their locations or plans, and when they came into a town or rest stop with connectivity, they could see who else might be nearby. This often led to intentional meetups:

> When you come to places where you have rest days, it's very good to connect with other Green Ribboners. It is a really fun part of doing the Green Ribbon – you get these gathering points where you meet, sit and talk (Green Ribbon finisher, male).

Through Instagram and Facebook groups, Ribboners arrange shared meals, joint overnight stops, or simply know who is ahead/behind on the trail. The digital community reinforces the sense that "we're in this together," even if spread out by days of walking; community identity is recreated. One hiker noted that seeing others' Instagram updates gave a comforting rhythm and sense of belonging to the journey, as if the whole network of Ribboners was connected.

At the same time, participants exhibit a conscious effort to keep social media and digitally mediated self-presentation in its proper place. Several interviewees were wary of letting platforms such as Instagram or other blogging services turn their journey into a performance. One hiker recounted how her personal social media account, which was initially intended just to update family, grew a large following of strangers interested in her journey. She "got so many requests" to follow that she eventually opened it up but remained "very careful that it never became a goal in itself" (Green Ribbon finisher, female). She did not want the hike to devolve into chasing likes or creating content for an audience: "My Instagram must never become something like, 'now I have to produce content that my followers will like.' I've tried not to censor myself." At one point, when she noticed follower numbers fluctuating (some people unfollowing as new ones joined) and she caught herself feeling a concerned: "I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel, like, 'huh, why are they leaving?'", but her next thought was relief: "Good, then I really don't need to worry about it… Those who don't think this gives them anything can unfollow. I don't need to care if they find me boring."

The concern and relief the participant is describing illustrates a desire to keep the experience authentic and intrinsically motivated, rather than letting social media validation dictate. Maintaining that attitude becomes part of the moral of being a "true" Ribboners; the hike is done for personal and communal meaning, not for fame or external approval. The same female Green Ribbon hiker later reflected on why her unfiltered sharing still resonated with so many:

> I'm not Renata Chlumska [a famous adventurer], I'm a normal working person, not super fit, nothing special. But I realise many have followed me because they can identify with that: I'm just an ordinary person who dared to carry out a dream. And many have been inspired by it, which I'm incredibly happy and humbled by.

By being authentic about her highs and lows, she became a source of inspiration for others who imagined "if she can do it, maybe I can too." This outcome reinforces the social significance of the Ribbon journey. Through blogs and social media, individual stories turn into collective inspiration, which I argue further sacralises the endeavour as something that inspires and unites beyond the individual level.

Tourist – Us and Them

What was salient in the interviews is the distinction participants draw between themselves and tourists. In talking about others on the trail, Ribbon travellers often use "tourist" as a contrastive term, thus referring to casual vacationers or day-trippers whose presence throws the Ribboner's own identity into relief. This "us vs. them" dynamic serves to reinforce the authenticity and specialness of the Ribbon experience. By subtly (or overtly) positioning Ribboners as non-tourists, participants affirm that what they are doing is *more* meaningful, *more* committed, and even (even if secularly) *sacred* in its intent.

One way this dynamic appears is in route choices and attitudes toward crowded areas. Kungsleden (the King's trail), a famous and popular trail in northern Sweden, frequently comes up as a symbol of mass tourism. Several interviewees noted that many Ribboners avoid Kungsleden or hurry through it to escape the crowds of casual hikers. "If you don't go on Kungsleden, there aren't that many people – and I don't think I'll do [Kungsleden] much in my life again," one female Green Ribbon finisher remarked, saying she prefers lesser-known trails or off-trail ("frivandring") routes in the future.

Another hiker remarked that "many Ribboners sort of wrinkle their noses and think the King's trail is just for tourists," recalling jokes that it's like walking in a lemming line, though in her own experience it was not nearly that crowded (Female Green Ribbon finisher). The sentiment was echoed by others in that "most [Ribboners] actually try either to get through [crowded sections] very fast or go around these heavily populated areas" (Green Ribbon finisher, male). There is a sense that true Ribboners seek out solitude and wild terrain, whereas the well-trodden tourist paths are almost tainted by ease and accessibility. One participant described deliberately choosing a more remote alternate trail (Padjelantaleden) because it promised "fewer people and seemed like a fantastic place to visit," away from where "tourist" tends to hike (Female Green Ribbon finisher).

Implicit in these choices is a valuing of authentic wilderness and challenge, i.e. the feeling that "real" long-distance hikers distinguish themselves by going where the tour buses and large guided groups do not. This distinction becomes especially pronounced at significant landmarks. The goal of many Green Ribbon hikers is Treriksröset, the three-country cairn at Sweden's northern tip, which is ironically also a popular tourist destination (accessible by a short walk from a boat landing). Interviewees who reached Treriksröset often mentioned encountering day-tourists there, and their reactions underscore the us/them dynamic. One Green Ribbon hiker recounted arriving at the cairn to find "a whole boatload of people" who had just been ferried in for a quick excursion. Her and her hiking partner were glad they had gotten there ten minutes earlier and had a moment alone: "We had just taken our pictures and packed up when the boatload came… I was so happy we'd been there before them, and that was fun." Another participant held back and hid briefly to avoid finishing in the company of tourists:

> When I finally got there, there were some other people around… I sat down on a stone, a bit hidden by some bushes, and waited until they were done. Because I wanted to go there by myself. It was an important moment for me, to go there and be alone, not in some tourist group. (Green Ribbon finisher, male)

This decision speaks to how Ribboners separate their achievement from the tourist sphere. For him, stepping onto the final endpoint alongside a crowd of casual sightseers would have diluted the meaning of that moment. The cairn was in a sense treated like an altar that was needed to be approached alone and in reflection. By

waiting until he could claim the space alone, he preserved the sanctity of his journey's culmination.

We can view this in Lynch's theoretical terms. We might say the hiker was guarding against "profanation" of his sacred experience, drawing a boundary to keep the profane (touristic triviality) separate from what he saw as a significant reality. While the tourist group represents the ordinary and contingent, the Ribboner's solitary arrival represents the transcendent meaning he has built over weeks. This is an example of how sacralisation is socially grounded: The value and authenticity of the experience are maintained through social differentiation. By not being a tourist, by being a Ribboner, Ribboners asserts that their journey carries an importance that casual recreation does not. The boundary between "us" and "them" is where the moral weight of the endeavour is negotiated and upheld.

The following theme develops these observations by examining processes of sacralisation more explicitly. While the themes are presented as analytically distinct, they are not empirically separable. The social dynamics discussed in the preceding theme constitute an important precondition for sacralisation, as far as shared practices, recognition, and collective orientation enable experiences and commitments to acquire heightened moral significance. The analysis of community formation within Ribbon mobilities therefore provides a necessary foundation for the examination of sacralising processes that follows.

Sacralisation

Participants frequently portray the Ribbon journey in language and practices that marks sacralisation; something of certain significance. Several interviewees emphasised directly that completing the White or Green Ribbon is "More than an achievement, … a kind of identity creation" (Green Ribbon finisher, male). Ribbon finishers come to see themselves as "Now I'm someone who has done something that is quite special". This identity-forming aspect could be regarded as collective values that are forged through ritual, much in a Durkheimian sense (as referenced by Lynch for example). Participants engage in ritual-like acts and holds symbolic tokens in a way that sacralise their journey. A recurrent example is the informal finishing ritual at Treriksröset or Grövelsjön. Hikers recount that normatively "Everyone goes up and touches [the cairn]" (thus in Treriksröset, in one case, or "That blue door" at Grövelsjön STF station) as soon as they finish or start their journey (Green Ribbon finisher, male). Placing one's hand on the final goal has become an expectation: "I think it says somewhere that you should have your hand on it", one participant said about the normative rule to pat the marker upon completion or pose with one's hand on the blue door to Grövelsjön station. This act is often documented in photographs or even celebratory videos, underscoring its role as a secular ritual.

Many speak of completion as something climactic that needs to be performed and shared. One interviewee described how after the long journey that laying his hand on the cairn "was the first thing I did" (Green Ribbon finisher, male). In this analysis, this marks a ritual gesture that resembles classic rites of pilgrimage or sacralisation in general; they symbolically consecrate the completion of the quest and allow hikers to savour and communicate its significance (often snapping a photo with their hand on the cairn to show family and friends).

Tangible symbols also play a significant role in how hikers sacralise the experience and celebrate certain values. Many noted the pride of earning the emblems associated with completing a Ribbon. For instance, those who finish are awarded a diploma and often a small brass plaque inscribed with their name, which is then mounted at a mountain station or kept as a personal trophy. One interviewee admitted it was "a bit cool to be able to say one has done it" and to point at "one's brass nameplate" on the wall of Grövelsjön mountain station (Green Ribbon finisher, male). The badge or

“märke i mössan” that some wear on hiking caps or backpack is another such symbol of accomplishment and belonging.

Participants often downplay overt bragging, but they recognise that these symbols feed a sense of pride. “That pride of having done it, it's there,” one participant said, and likely every finisher feels it. In this way, the Ribbon plaques, badges, diplomas serve as tokens. They are not financially valuable, but symbolically they represent the pilgrim’s badge of honour, marking the individual’s integration into the Ribbon community. Analytically, this integration and the use of symbols affirm the values of perseverance and adventure that the community holds sacred.

Participants also create personal symbols and rituals that sacralise their journey on an individual level. A striking example comes from one Green Ribbon finisher, who shared a story about a mascot he carried. Just as he set off, close friends gave him a tiny, handcrafted owl made of yarn, nicknamed “Glaukus.” They chose this figure deliberately since in mythology, the owl Glaucus signifies wisdom. This playful blessing was carried throughout the hiker’s journey. The little owl was hung from his pack as a companion.

The mascot can be understood as becoming marked with meaning and its presence ritualised: “I hung Glaukus in the same carabiner where the satellite in-reach hangs” and even posed it in photographs at significant locations:

> When I photographed the delta of Rapadalen, I also included Glaukus in the picture […] Then I took pictures of Glaukus at Treriksröset, and many others I met [during the journey] became [emotionally] attached to that little mascot.

The mascot thus symbolically “experienced” the journey with him, and these images were sent back to the friends who gifted it, in a sense completing a circle of shared meaning. Other hikers and even children they met on the trail thus became enchanted by the owl asking about its story.

For the sake analysis, the mascot functions as a personal sacred object that concentrates the journey’s values (like friendship, wisdom, joy) into a portable symbol. The care and invested narrative exemplify how Ribbon participants sacralise their practice through invented rituals. I think these creative ritualisations underscore the (secular-) mythic framing that participants give to their experience; they generate symbols and rituals that elevate the journey’s meaning.

Participants' language also frequently adopts what was coded as sacralising tones when discussing the landscape and the act of hiking/skiing itself. Sometimes a sense of "ultimate" value was assigned to nature and the Ribbon journey itself in that reverential or absolute terms was used (see more on Absoluteness below). For example, some explicitly employ vocabulary or metaphors that could be marked as spiritual, like calling certain sections "magiska" (magical) or describing the mountain environment in terms of heaven and hell, as one female hiker put it (when speaking about life as a cabin host during the winter):

> I think the mountains… I usually say that they are like hell and heaven on earth, and also everything in between, and you're longing for those nice days. It's like when you go skiing. You want the nice, perfect snow and such. And it's a bit like that[…].

Metaphors invoking heaven, hell, and magic, reflect analytically Gordon Lynch's sociology of the sacred. Here the mountain areas are regarded as realm of extremes and profound experiences.

Another participant, a Green Ribbon hiker, explicitly framed her long-distance walking as connecting her to something fundamentally human:

> It is something spiritual-existential. I feel that moving in nature on foot is very primordial. I feel like I'm connected to something in the like of generations before the almost primordially human.

This remark resonates with the notion of nature as sacred. When participants articulate feelings of awe, unity, and/or deep purpose in the mountains, the natural world is being sacralised in effect through choice of words and framing.

A notable sacralising feature of participants' narratives is also the tendency to speak of the Ribbon journey and the values the journey entail in *absolute*, non-negotiable terms. It is analytically helpful to recall Lynch's definition of the sacred as "that which people take to be a non-contingent reality exerting an unquestionable moral claim." Indeed, interviewees speak as though their journey were of "ultimate concern," to draw from Paul Tillich's sense, or at least as a pursuit that places no or little doubt in their hierarchy of values. Another way this "absolutising" manifests is in how participants contrast the journey with ordinary pursuits like career or comfort where one Green Ribbon finisher reflects on her decision to attempt the thru hike:

> It's like: You won't regret [it]. When you die, you'll regret the hours when you sat at work than the hours you were out doing other things. So, by then I had

> started to think that I want to do this. Then I thought maybe I should just get to grips with it and do it. I won't regret trying no matter how it goes.

The implication of this sentiment is that dedicating time to a passion like the Ribbon is a desirable choice, whereas toiling at a desk is regarded as empty in comparison. Comparatively, the value of the journey is to something unconditional; it must be pursued.

In a similar fashion, participants sometimes characterised the Ribbon as one of the most important achievements of their lives: “It's one of the best things I've done in my entire life. If one is interested, then you should do it, if you have the opportunity..” Or what the following Green Ribbon hiker reflected when prompted about the role of the experience for him:

> I would say that [the role] is completely crucial. [It was] crucial in my own processing […]. You could call it an alternative to therapy or something like that… [I] put myself in a situation where I had to think about things by myself and move forward and get through […].

Such exhortations where thus coded as having absolutist tone where the Ribbon journey was regarded life-defining. The language of ultimacy here signals that for these individuals, doing the Ribbon implies values and rewards that is over/beyond more “profane”/contingent goals.

Some participants spoke in superlatives about certain moments on the trail, which were later coded as suggesting these were moments of fulfilment/absoluteness. A White Ribbon finisher said:

> [It’s] those moments when nature is so beautiful that the heart almost wants to burst. You feel how energy just rushes into you when nature offers itself. By then you don't want to be anywhere else on earth. There's nothing more amazing.

For others, exercising the freedom to abandon plans, both on the trail and “free hike,” but also the hectic planning of everyday life, was described in superlative terms: ”It was that feeling of maximum freedom. The feeling of not being stuck in a planning cycle; to let go of control. Letting go of control is somehow the ultimate freedom.” (female Green Ribbon hiker). In these sentiments, the value of the Ribbon experience is talked about in absolute terms. The Ribbon means something to people that get people in touch with what they regard as ultimate “goods,” and it is inherently set as something other from normal life.

Doing the Ribbon gave for some the resolve to make a life changes:

> In some way, it sounds cliché, but you become more clear about what is important to you. And a decision that I had explicitly formulated became that I should stop having this managerial position. (Male, Green Ribbon hiker)

Analytically speaking, we could say the Ribbon experience demands changes or commitments that participants cannot in good conscience ignore afterwards. A normative force is thus at play in sacralising the journeys "lessons." Doing the Ribbon once, green or white, can influence participants in that it continues to have an influence on them that can make ordinary pursuits pale in comparison: "The mountains are calling" as a White Ribbon organiser and finisher noted. The value gain during longer mobilities in the mountains has an enduring and, in some cases, "addictive" claim. Though we should not take the "addictive" aspect, the experience speaks of something essential that many seek out again.

Profane as a Contrast

While participants can be understood to sacralise many aspects of the Ribbon journey, profane realities and dynamics accompany the sacred. In participant narratives, the ordinary, trivial, or uncomfortable elements of the experience are frequent as a contrast to the extraordinary meaning. This interplay of sacred and profane serves to define the journey's significance by contrast, much alike a Durkheimian notion of the sacred understood in opposition to the mundane.

A recurring pattern in the accounts of the profane as a contrast was therefore the monotony and discomfort that accompany a 1300 km journey: For all the talk of freedom and awe, there are also dull stretches, aches, and banal concerns. Interviewees admitted that at times the thru hike became tiresome or painfully mundane. A female Green Ribbon hiker, for instance, confessed ""bored" isn't quite the word, but I'm doing the same thing I did yesterday." Others repeated this sentiment: "I think one really can get tired of hiking." The tedium was in other words acknowledged to occasionally set it. They described how certain parts of the route, especially where it runs on asphalt roads or through monotonous forests, felt excruciatingly dull: "walking on the road is so horribly brain-numbing. […] nothing happens; it just goes straight." To cope, some hikers spoke of developing what could be called profane strategies: they listened to podcasts, sang pop songs, or played silly word games to pass the time on boring stretches.

A female Green Ribbon finisher illustrated this mundane side when she answered friends' expectations of enlightenment: "When people ask me, 'so did you solve life's big questions out there?,' I'm just like, "Nope. I have no idea what I thought about all summer. I was singing schlager songs the whole time." Her response ("perhaps that is the answer," she deadpanned) says a lot of the mental space during the hike was filled with trivial tunes rather than constant reflection. When making both the sacred and profane salient, this admission serves as a counterpoint to any over-romanticisation in that it brings back the profane ordinariness into the narrative, reminding us that even a "quasi-pilgrimage" can involve boredom, silly songs, or longing for a proper toilet.

Participants also frame the end of the journey and the return to civilisation in terms of a profane contrast. Several described the physical marker of the finish line in un-sacred terms. Upon seeing the finish at Treriksröset, a female Green Ribbon hiker recalled thinking: "How the hell did I get here? Is this what I've been chasing all summer? A damned freaking yellow concrete block. [It's] the best yellow concrete block, but also the craziest one in my life." This description cuts the journey down to size: in some ways the finale of the journey is an ugly yellow cement post. By calling it "a crazy concrete lump," the endpoint is demystified even as she acknowledges it is the best such lump she'll ever chase. This exemplifies how Ribbon travellers often mix their own reverence with the profane. No one "gets disqualified for not having a photo with their hand on it," another participant noted about the normative ritual of touching the cairn, implying that even that cherished act is, in the end, a bit of fun rather than any literal magic.

Crucially, participants do not narrate these profane contrasts in a tone of true disillusionment or regret. Rather, the narratives underscore the value of what has been experienced. In one account, a female Green Ribbon finisher revealed that during a particularly difficult day with heavy rain, a boulder field, and walking apart from her partner she became so frustrated that she declared to a stranger at a creek, "I am never ever in my life going to hike in the mountains again." She really meant it in that moment. But by the time she reached the next cabin and rested, she said to her hiking partner that "well, I'll probably do it again sometime." Again, this anecdote can be interpreted as speaking to the ever-active dynamic of profane struggle and sacred commitment. At the worst, the Ribbon felt like hell (to recall her own words,

“helvetet på jorden” in harsh weather). But even that outright renunciation was fleeting. Ribbon finisher often re-enter “ordinary life” from these trials with an even deeper appreciation for the sacred or sublime aspects of their adventure. As a White Ribbon finisher and others noted, enduring the profane lows is precisely what makes the highs “real.”

The main argument for the theme of sacralisation is thus that various means work to elevate the meaning of the hikes/ski tours to something different than what it was before for participants. In cases where the profane is more evident, it acts like a contrast that acknowledges the possibility of sacralisation. In reverse, a sociology of the sacred as discussed by Lynch defines the sacred by its possibility of being violated.

The Implicit Religion of Ribbon Mobilities

In this theme, participants' accounts of Green and White Ribbon journeys are analysed through the analytical vocabulary of Implicit Religion. In sum, the concept of implicit religion invites us to discern in ostensibly secular practices those qualities of commitment and value-orientation that resemble religious meaning-making. In the context of Ribbon mobilities, the study has found that Ribbon finishers speak of- and demonstrate deep commitments to their journey, and at times organise their lives around integrating foci related to the journey. While the structure of their experience is comparable to traditionally religious patterns of devotion and transformation, the framing remains largely secular. Indeed, some participants actively reject spiritual or religious labels for what they do. Analytically, this underscores the "implicit" nature of the Ribbon as a phenomenon: meaning is constructed in ways comparable to religion, but without explicit religious identification.

Commitments

One of the implicitly religious dimensions of the Ribbon journeys is the strength of commitment in participants. It is safe to say the Ribbon stretch demands dedication; a hike or ski tour of roughly 1,300 km through mountain terrain, often takes several weeks or months to complete. When coding, the study has viewed such undertakings as something that requires participants to make *sacrifices* of comfort, time, and resources, and these are sacrifices they embrace as *necessary* and worthwhile. In interviews, many described the Green/White Ribbon as both the hardest thing they had ever done and the most rewarding. A White Ribbon finisher reflected that "this is the toughest thing I've done and the most wonderful. So, these two factors really matter." The language of ultimate challenge paired with language of ultimate joy suggests that the journey holds a given significance for them.

Commitment is salient in the preparations and perseverance that Ribbon mobilities entails. Several participants invested years of planning before finally setting off. One couple prepared for nearly two years for their first White Ribbon attempt. Others described how once they had "given themselves" to the idea of the journey, turning back was almost unthinkable. The journey became a goal to live for over an extended

period. The same White Ribbon finisher as before even noted the “mixed feelings” upon reaching the finish line. After so many months (or years) orienting life toward this goal, its completion was both joyous and strangely jarring. A goal was reached yet also the end of a long-standing commitment that created a sense of void and prompting thoughts of new beginnings:

> And when one does reach the finish line, it's a dream come true. And I think that there is always a conflict when a dream comes true. Happiness [is there], but still, it also means an end point of something. It may have a start of something new instead, of course. […] It's this contrast of emotions.

This pattern of repeating the journey also illustrates how enduring the commitment can become. The commitment can evolve into a recurring devotion or even a way of life for some.

Participants’ narratives also speak of how meaningful and necessary this commitment felt in their personal lives. The Ribbon was described by some as a response to life events or even crises; many felt the need to do the Ribbon for oneself and for deeply personal reasons. For example, one of the participants explained that he decided to do his Green Ribbon hike to process a sudden divorce, which was described as a personal crisis in his life. For him, the hike became something to hold on to in the aftermath of the crisis:

> I clearly remember thinking that I will need the time [out on in the mountains] to process [things]. I didn't know what life would be like six months from now, but I understood: now I have a lot to process. And I'm going to need it. […] I realised that after a while that it was very important that I had something ahead of time, when you have suddenly ended up in a black hole.

The statement is reminiscent of how the dedication to the Ribbon becomes a lifeline, or a life goal when life suddenly becomes too disorienting. The same participants reflected on the banding as an alternative to therapy in his very case, which became an important way to shift the focus to moving one foot in front of the other through the toughest parts of life. In meaning-creating terms, the Ribbon and the Mountains as an arena become central to restoring some kind of balance in life, but also to challenge oneself and develop oneself. Something that is also done in acceptance that some sacrifices will be made to achieve these "higher" purposes.

Physical and Psychological Challenges

To further understand the dedication and commitment of participants is to understand how they embrace and respond to the physiological and psychological challenges that are inherent to doing the Ribbon. Something that can be likened to ascetic practices or rituals in organised explicit religion is Ribbon mobilities demand for endurance. The similarity lies in how challenges of endurance are maintained as something central to the experience and practice. Many talked about how they were motivated by just testing how far they could push themselves in terms of comfort and ability. A Green Ribbon hiker justified her hike partly as a self-inflicted substitution rite, as she never did any military service: “I wanted to challenge myself… to see if physically and mentally I could manage to be out hiking for about two months. It’s fun to evaluate one’s own limits”. In short, the journey is a way to get to know oneself, and thus to voluntarily expose oneself to difficulties to evaluate one's capacity. The statements regarding this were marked by a mixture of respect, humility and excitement where the implicit religiousness lies in one's dedication and how one values the Ribbon journey itself.

The sometimes-extreme conditions that could occur on thru-hike/ski were often talked about with pride and as especially memorable. The interviewees thus talked about how they powered through storms, injuries and fatigue, and it was thus experiences that were painful in the moment but that were later regarded as proof of their perseverance. For example, one participant sustained a serious foot injury during his solo hike but still endured. He tells of how he continued for about eighty kilometres through difficult terrain in harsh weather while he could barely walk. He describes that segment of the hike as "among the toughest I've done", but it also stands out as one of the poignant and even most significant memories from the entire trip.

Participants also spoke of confronting real dangers and fears, especially those who undertook the winter traverse of the White Ribbon. In the mountains, severe weather can turn lethal; as one Green Ribbon finisher put it, “the White Ribbon is so damn much more life-threatening.” Yet even this knowledge was articulated with a tone of fascination and allure. The mixture of fear and exhilaration in a depiction like this speaks to how the challenge has a heroic or initiatory demarcation. Some approach

the "trial" ritually in that it is something that must be suffered on purpose to achieve self-knowledge, self-confidence and satisfaction. For example, the toughest and most difficult trials were often spoken of as the ones that produced the greatest "peaks" and the most positive and memorable experiences. In a statement that we have highlighted previously in terms of absoluteness, we can in this case instead see it in the light of challenges as a catalyst to something that almost likens mystical experiences: "[It's about] these moments when nature is so beautiful that almost your heart wants to burst [...], then you don't want to be anywhere else on earth... There's nothing more amazing". The same statement can thus be interpreted to mean that what is crucial is that one must experience the low points to fully appreciate these peaks. In terms of implicit religion, this speaks to an aspect of the trip's significance for the participants where the suffering and almost-ecstasy form a necessary couple-relationship. Of course, we can talk about the same thing in "secular" terms as them being about a (plainly) simpler existence, but it is interesting to regard the same trials as related- or as traveling in the same veins as trials and peak experiences that, in this argument, are often valued in religion and "religiousness".

Psychologically, the Ribbon journey likewise demands and creates commitment. Participants talked about challenges in confronting loneliness, monotony and inner dialogue during the weeks they were out in relative isolation. In other words, it was a challenge to stay motivated during days of rain or longer distances without meeting others. At the same time, however, some talk about the loneliness as enjoyable: "it was very nice not to see another person for a week" (White Ribbon finisher, female), although the same participants knew that the same challenge can be tougher for others if you are not used to being alone in such wilderness. As part of the commitment, an important part seems to lie in being able to accept loneliness and simplicity of life in the mountains.

In addition, Ribbon journeys were sometimes portrayed by the participants as an inner journey as much as an outer one, which one of the participants, organiser and White Ribbon finisher, even described as something inevitable. It is thus worth noting, in the context of this analysis, that even if religious duty may be inappropriate as a description of Ribbon commitments, it is at the same time clear how extensive

the commitment is, and how it both requires and justifies sustained commitment and sacrifice, which I argue is still valid in a “implicit” sense of religiousness.

Integrating Foci

In addition to the walk itself, there is evidence that the Ribbon serves as an ”integrative focus” in many participants' lives, i.e. a focal point that ties together their energies, relationships and daily routines into a coherent whole. In the theory of implicit religion, the term integrating foci denotes the activities or ideas that connect distinct parts of life. For the participants, the long-distance hike/skiing becomes such an integration point in this analysis. To use a separate set of words: the Ribbon is not best understood as a casual hobby, but rather as something that binds routines before, during, and after the trip, and weaves itself into the "roll" everyday life.

One way this is evident is in the preparation and planning that precedes the trip, which effectively expands the Ribbon’s presence in the participants' lives long before the first step or pole stroke. Several interviewees described how the year leading up to the hike was characterised by logistical and physical preparations: studying maps, reading blogs from former Ribboners, exercising the body, acquiring or even manufacturing and modifying equipment, and organising and sending out food supplies:

> We started planning about a year before, when we went on this first [shorter] trip. Then we already started thinking what to do if you are out on a longer hike. We prepared ourselves by testing [walking longer]. Then, before the Green Ribbon, we started looking at maps very early, read old blogs and so on (Green Ribbon finisher, female)

Another participant who walked the Green Ribbon with his partner tells how they spent time drying food: "Throughout the spring, we were making big dishes and spent time drying foods. We planned what to eat and put it in boxes. In the end we sent it all out." He further describes how this became part of the experience and an enjoyable part at that of what it takes to hike the Green Ribbon. The Ribbon integrates "focal points" before the journey itself and integrates the challenge into lifestyles, and in terms of implicit religion, this invites comparison with things we may already know about, for example, religious pilgrimage (think Camino de Compostela). The difference, of course, lies in the secular framework that envelops The Ribbon; You talk about calories, equipment, training schedules. At the same

time, there seems to be a devotion in the persistence of every detail for the adventure ahead.

Liminality

If serious commitments and integrations of focal points in life can be interpreted as structural parallels in (implicit) religious life, the very experience of the Ribbon journey (as described by participants) seems to resonate strongly with the concept of *liminality*. Here, the analysis takes a certain theoretical liberty by introducing the concept of liminality into a theoretical framework that is otherwise characterised by Bailey's three sub-concepts of implicit religion. In my coding of the participants' stories, however, descriptions of being "between worlds" were something that I felt better explained implicitly religious dimensions than, for example, Bailey's concept of extensive concerns with extensive effects. Liminality, in the anthropological sense (Turner 1969), briefly refers to a state of being "between" roles and realities; it is the phase of a rite of passage where you step outside ordinary/everyday social structures and enter an intermediate zone, which is usually also described as transformative. The Ribbon participants often described their long journeys as just such a zone where time separated from everyday life meant that ordinary rules and worries fell away and were replaced by an immersive experience.

One aspect of liminality in the Ribbon Mobilities is the separation from usual social environments. Many started the journey specifically to "get away" and hence to escape the routines, places and even the people that define their everyday lives. "We wanted to get away from everyday life a bit and be away for a long time," said one Green Ribbon finisher, who was hiking with their partner, about their motivations. Another Green Ribbon participant expressed in these terms: "I wanted to get away from people. I wanted to go where no one else went." This search for solitude and not-exploited places is interpreted in this analysis as a motivation to step outside the otherwise prevailing order and enter another “arena.” In practice, many Green Ribbon hikers often avoid popular trails (such as the King's Trail/Kungsleden) in favour of off-trail trails or lesser-known trails. One of the participants who completed the White Ribbon and who began her journey at the northern end point (in the Treriksröset) noted how palpable the loneliness/solitude was from day one: "it becomes so desolate immediately and you are so vulnerable". She contrasted this

with starting further south (in Dalarna), where "there are cottages, there are people" that in a way facilitate a "softer" entry to the experience. This observation speaks to how many participants deliberately walk through some of Sweden's wildest and least populated parts. The more barren environments themselves maintain a kind of liminality when hikers/touring skiers can go days without meeting other people. One participant, a hiker, commented that after setting off alone, she felt that it was fundamentally different from the other hikes she had done before (in more southerly parts of Sweden). After a week into the hike from Grövelsjön, she stated, "This is different, it is what I wanted to explore, I got confirmation of [that difference] very fast." The difference in this case can be described as the entry into a liminal state where the normal reference points of everyday life fade.

Participants often described this liminal state in terms of being in a "bubble" or a kind of altered mental rhythm. A White Ribbon finisher said, for example:

> You walk in your own bubble [...] The last time I went, the war started. I just remember when I heard on the radio that Russia invaded Ukraine. Then, I went into my own bubble and didn't have a single one of those worries. It will be very strange. In the bubble that you travel in, there is only kindness. Everyone is just friendly. It's simple. It's quite nice to run away to it, I think, to the little bubble of unreachability.

This depiction thus speaks to the liminal world of the band: In the "bubble of unreachability" where the worries and complexities of society remain far away, all this is in a sense replaced by a kind of idealised micro-society of simplicity. In this thesis and analysis, the "bubble of unreachability" has become something of a central image for how The Band's Mobilities generate meaning, hence the title of the project.

The environment also seems central to the liminal experience. The mountains are often described in terms such as "impressive" and "humbling". Many participants emphasised in it how the grace of nature was an important aspect of the trip. Especially in winter (the White Ribbon) you cannot fight against the elements: "you're out on nature's terms... it's nature that decides how far I get today, and I can't fight back," as one White Ribbon finisher put it. This attitude reflects a kind of submission to a higher power, in this case the power of nature. Such a surrender can practice patience and respect for, in a way, forces greater than oneself; something that can be interpreted as something implicitly religious, again. White Ribbon participants like the one above also seemed to find freedom in this "surrender". She

described how long winter days became "meditative", precisely because one must tune into a "nice rhythm in it all for it to last in the long run". If you overexert yourself (to the point of sweating, which is dangerous in the cold), it comes with some risks; You are forced to move in harmony with your body and your surroundings. "There is something very meditative in it," the same participants also noted.

Parts of the material also seems to suggest that many of the liminal features that have already been identified become even more prominent in the context of the White Ribbon. Among other things, the participants themselves often drew contrasts between the summer and winter versions of the trip, and these comparisons show how winter trips can reinforce the feeling of stepping outside of ordinary life. Aspects such as starker environment, increased loneliness/solitude and increased risks of winter travel pointed, in sum, for a quality in the White Ribbon as a "next-level" initiative-rite. In implicit-religious terms, one might say that winter turns the commitment into an even more demanding task; something that is attempted by fewer, but for those who try it, can reinforce both the liminal and the sacralising dimensions of the Ribbon.

A differentiating factor is thereby the extremity of the environment, where cold, snow-covered expanses and long distances without human contact create an arena where normal social roles and everyday worries take a lesser role. Participants emphasised, in addition, that winter travel requires not only different skills, but also an almost different existential attitude. A female Green Ribbon finisher described the White Ribbon as both "terrifying" and "titillating" (connotations close to a notion of the sublime where fear and awe coexist). The danger was part of the attraction in her eyes and the winter trip represented "one more step in this to assess one's own limits" beyond what the summer hike had already demanded.

The framing of the White Ribbon portrays it as an even more transformative threshold or liminality experience. As one of the participants who completed the winter route highlighted regarding the quality of the winter landscape: "it becomes vaster in some way... In addition, skiing is a more enjoyable activity than walking." She pointed to small conveniences, such as no mosquitoes, for example, but also hinted at a phenomenological difference in the experience. Frozen lakes and

snowfields created a sense of openness that magnified the world, while it also was emptied of people.

Discussion

This study shows how the White and Green Ribbon long-distance challenges can function as a form of secular-sacred mobility; as an arena for personal meaning-making, transformation, and experiences of "the sacred" outside conventional religion. Across the interviews, the Ribbon is repeatedly narrated as a life-shaping project that affects priorities, values, and self-understanding. Although some participants frame their motivation in practical terms (enjoyment of mountain environments, recreation, or a physical test), many accounts also include moments of reverence, devotion-like commitment, and moral insight that exceed the purely recreational. On this basis, the study argues that Ribbon mobilities can be interpreted as a coherent existential project for many participants in ways resonant with Thurfjell's observations on the sacralisation of nature in Sweden while remaining distinct from "religion" as an emic category.

Rather than treating the three themes as parallel results, the analysis interprets them as parts of a meaning-making process through which Ribbon mobilities become intelligible as secular-sacred. The interview material suggests that meaning is not only located "inside" the individual; it is also produced through a social and practical infrastructure that temporarily reorganises everyday concerns, moral attention, and self-relation. In many accounts, the Ribbon functions as a culturally recognisable way of stepping out of ordinary time and returning with a revised sense of what matters. The Ribbon was frequently narrated as identity-shaping and as being resistant to trivialisation. This supports the broader theoretical move of treating "religious" as an analytic description of a mode of meaning-making (rather than an emic identity label) and clarifies why "secular-sacred mobility" is not merely metaphorical but traceable in patterned ways across the material.

A central starting point for the study was a curiosity about expectations of transformation and implicitly religious dimensions within Ribbon mobilities. The findings support this line of inquiry as far as many participants describe the journey as a "journey of self." Extended time in mountain environments is narrated as cultivating resilience and endurance, but also humility: particularly when fear, self-

doubt, and bodily limits are confronted. Importantly, these shifts are often presented as extending beyond the journey rather than remaining confined to the "bubble."

Across several interviews, "sacred values" appear implicitly in how participants justify what the Ribbon means and why it matters. Some describe reverence for the mountains and their ambivalence ("a heaven and a hell"); others emphasise reprioritisation upon return, including changes in relationships, work choices, and how time ought to be spent. Understood as a sacralisation process, Ribbon mobilities are therefore frequently narrated as morally consequential: not simply something one does, but something one does to clarify what is right, important, or worth living for. Values such as independence, closeness to nature, perseverance, and kindness may, in this sense, be *sanctified* through long-term mobility and retrospective narration. At the same time, it is necessary to underscore variation: not all participants frame the Ribbon in strongly sacralising terms, and some accounts remain more prosaic, recreational, or sport-oriented. The "sacred" is therefore best treated as unevenly distributed across the sample, rather than assumed as a uniform feature of Ribbon participation.

The analysis indicates that Ribbon communities play a significant role in identity formation and in sustaining the meaning of the endeavour. The framing of the challenge enables immediate camaraderie among Ribbon travellers, and community is also recreated and strengthened through active online presence. The Ribbon are therefore better understood not as sealed retreats but as a socially recognisable form that is collectively made and maintained. Individual aloneness does occur, yet the experience is produced within a shared cultural frame, sustained through mutual recognition, and often overlaps through encounters, digital interaction, and shared norms. In this sense, aloneness does not negate community; it becomes a *mode* through which community, identity, and an ethos of care are enacted and reproduced.

Rituals reinforce this sense of belonging and moral gravity. Practices such as touching the cairn at Treriksröset (and analogous finishing practices) appear as expected, meaningful markers of completion. Community-making is also reinforced through boundary work between in-group and out-group, and through practices that protect the significance of the journey from dilution. These dynamics are directly

relevant to the study's research question: they illuminate how meaning is narratively legitimated *in the context of having done a Ribbon*, through socially stabilised symbols, moral expectations, and recognisable practices.

Read together, the themes suggest that community, sacralisation, and implicit religion are mutually enabling rather than separate layers: Participants repeatedly describe the journey as structured by meaningful encounters and a distinctive moral atmosphere. Meetings are narrated as "precious," and virtues such as kindness and hospitality are foregrounded, sometimes even institutionally recognised within the Ribbon context. These social dynamics are condensed into symbolic acts and boundary practices that mark the Ribbon as set apart. Touching the cairn/door functions as an expected finishing ritual, and some participants actively protect the significance of completion by avoiding tourists or approaching the endpoint alone, explicitly guarding against a felt dilution of meaning. These socially reinforced sacralisation practices help explain how the Ribbon extends beyond the journey into everyday life as a durable orientation. The experience becomes narratable as a serious commitment and an integrating focus, sometimes described as life-defining and morally clarifying. On this reading, "implicit religion" is not a claim that participants *are* religious, but an analytic description of how commitment, moral gravity, and narrative legitimation are stabilised through a collectively recognisable form of mobility.

This process becomes especially visible in small but analytically revealing details. Several participants treat the finishing ritual as something "everyone" is expected to do, and the act is documented and circulated, suggesting a mundane but socially powerful ritualisation that publicly confirms completion. Others create portable symbols that condense values into objects, such as the mascot "Glaukus," photographed at significant places and becoming meaningful not only to the carrier but also to others encountered along the route. Boundary work can also be explicit: tourists are sometimes framed as profaning presences, while solitude at the endpoint is treated as necessary to preserve the moment's gravity. These examples support the claim that sacralisation here is not merely private feeling; it is a socially maintained distinction between what is ordinary and what must be protected from trivialisation.

Theoretical Contributions and Tensions

The study's contribution is both conceptual and empirical. Conceptually, it operationalises a distinction between "religion" as an emic category and "religious" as an analytic mode of meaning-making, showing how the latter can be traced in secular contexts without implying hidden belief or participant misrecognition. Empirically, it provides a detailed case of how a Swedish outdoor subculture can generate sacred-like moral gravity through a combination of liminal separation, communitas, ritualisation, and boundary work: maintained through both trail encounters and digitally mediated community.

By showing that sacralisation here can be simultaneously individual and collective (and sometimes explicitly anti-religious in self-description) the thesis also contributes to understanding how "religion" remains contested in a secular Swedish context. Reluctance to adopt religious labels is not treated as a refutation of sacred-like meaning; rather, it becomes part of the phenomenon requiring explanation.

Anchoring the analysis in implicit religion and the secular sacred has been productive as primary explanatory lenses. The Ribbon case supports the idea that secular practices can function in religion-like ways: participants describe engagement that shapes everyday life beyond the journey (integrating foci), and many invest extraordinary time and effort in the endeavour in ways that mark seriousness of commitment. The material also aligns with Lynch's argument that binding moral claims and non-trivial values are not confined to institutional religion; participants narrate certain ideals as weighty and, at times, non-negotiable (for example, the obligation to endure adversity, or the sense that one "ought" to undertake a Ribbon).

At the same time, the use of these frameworks raises predictable objections and conceptual tensions that must be managed transparently. One tension concerns the risk of functionalist drift: if "implicit religion" becomes a label for any intense leisure practice, the concept may lose sharpness analytically. This thesis therefore avoids an "everything is religion" conclusion. The analytic claim rests not on intensity alone, but on recurrent dynamics through which meaning is stabilised: boundaries are drawn around profanation and authenticity, practices and symbols are ritualised to publicly confirm seriousness and completion, and experiences are retrospectively

narrated as enduring moral reorientation beyond the journey. Additionally, the analysis repeatedly emphasises scope conditions: not all accounts are sacralising, and sacred "weight" varies between individuals. The concept is therefore applied conditionally and interpretively, not as a totalising reclassification of the Ribbon as "religion."

A related tension concerns participants' aversion to religious terminology. Some explicitly distance themselves from what they perceive as "religious," which raises an epistemic question: does applying implicit religion impose a category participants would reject? This "pigeonholing" risk is well known in implicit-religion research. The thesis addresses this by adopting an interpretive stance consistent with a constructivist epistemology: the analysis does not claim that participants' experiences *are* religious in an emic sense, nor that participants are unconsciously religious. Instead, implicit religion and the secular sacred are treated as analytic perspectives for describing how serious commitments and moral gravity are narrated and socially stabilised. Importantly, resistance to religious labels is itself empirically meaningful in Sweden: reluctance to call something sacred or religious can be interpreted as a cultural boundary that shapes how existential meaning is articulated. The tension between sacralising descriptions and reluctance toward religious categorisation thus becomes analytically generative rather than a simple validity problem.

The concept of the secular sacred also invites a question of threshold: how absolute or intense must something be to qualify as "sacred"? Not all participants describe their journey in superlative terms, and none suggest they would risk their lives for hiking/skiing; the Ribbon does not necessarily rival commitments such as one's children or nation (examples often used to illustrate the secular sacred). It is therefore most accurate to treat sacredness here as a spectrum, with many participants occupying a moderate position. Nonetheless, some accounts describe durable life changes: reprioritising relationships, choosing different work, spending more time outdoors, or expressing fear about what might have happened had they not undertaken the journey. In these cases, the Ribbon carries sacred "weight" as far as it is narrated as morally decisive and identity-anchoring.

Implicit religion was especially helpful for describing commitments and integrating foci. However, interpreting the material also required concepts beyond implicit

religion's original triad. Liminality was introduced to capture experiences of being "between worlds" and undergoing transformation. This theoretical combination (with sacred mobilities perspectives) proved productive for specifying how commitment is not only present but is generated, intensified, and retrospectively stabilised through processual, embodied, and spatial processes. As a modest theoretical implication, the Ribbon case suggests that an exclusive emphasis on commitments may understate the extent to which liminal processes in secular life can function as implicitly religious social realities.

The analysis also speaks to wider claims about Sweden and contemporary sacralisations of nature. Sweden is often described as highly secular in terms of formal religious affiliation, while nature has been characterised as a "new church" for existential reflection (Thurfjell). The present study does not measure Swedish society at large; however, the interview material can be read as consistent with (indeed illustrative of) this broader diagnosis. Ribbon participants repeatedly describe comfort, purpose, and moral orientation in mountain environments. Feeling "small yet part of something big" or gaining "clarity" after extended time outdoors resonates with accounts of post-secular meaning-making that operates outside traditional dogmas yet still engages questions of purpose, belonging, and the sublime.

The study further suggests that sacralisation of nature in this context is not merely an abstract discourse but is produced through practice and then stabilised through narrative. At the same time, it appears largely implicit and individualised, even when sustained through collective recognition. Unlike contexts where nature spirituality may be organised into explicit movements, the Swedish case visible here is comparatively low-key and embedded in personal practice. Participants rarely describe the journey as "spiritual," yet it can function as an orienting project with sacred-like moral gravity. Avoiding spiritual or religious labels may therefore be understood as part of the cultural pattern: existential and sacred-like meanings may be articulated through secular idioms (well-being, resilience, adventure) while still exerting binding force in some accounts.

Future Research Directions

A limitation of this study is the lack of participant observation. Given the embodied nature of long-distance hiking and skiing, future research could use ethnography to generate richer data on practices, routines, ritualisation, affect, and sensory dimensions that may be difficult to reconstruct retrospectively in interviews. Observation could capture spontaneous rituals (quiet morning coffee moments, talking to oneself or to nature, leaving marks such as cairns), interactional dynamics, crisis responses, and moments of wonder. Multi-modal designs (diaries, photographs, voice memos) could also allow closer study of liminal transitions, such as the first steps of the journey and the return to ordinary life.

Socio-economic background was only addressed indirectly in this study. Future work could examine access and stratification: who undertakes these journeys, what kinds of resources (time, money, knowledge, equipment) participation presupposes, and how social location shapes meaning-making. This could include survey-based mapping of demographics and qualitative comparison of framings (adventure/sport versus existential project), as well as analysis of nature appreciation as a form of cultural capital. Relatedly, future studies could critically examine privilege and barriers to participation, and investigate gender and intersectional differences in motivations, narratives, and sacralisation practices.

Finally, many participants express joy in the minimalist lifestyle of mountain travel. Carrying only what is necessary, being free from digital distractions, and living through basic routines (walking, eating, sleeping) are sometimes described with reverence: as a reconnection to a more “authentic” way of being. The coding suggested that this could form a theme of its own: the Ribbon as a utopian “simple life,” or an implicit religion of simplicity and anti-consumerism. Future research could broaden this perspective by examining voluntary simplicity and back-to-nature practices in Sweden (for example, tiny-house communities or off-grid living) as meaning-making projects. From a religious-studies perspective, such work could explore how practices sacralise values such as authenticity, self-sufficiency, and closeness to nature, and how routines, abstentions, and seasonal rhythms function as rites. This could also connect implicit religion to lifestyle and environmental ethics in

ways relevant to sustainability research, potentially illuminating contemporary Nordic undercurrents where institutional religiosity may be low-key while values such as balance and harmony carry pronounced moral weight.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Information Sheet and Informed Contest Form

Informationsbrev

Jag heter Olle Vikström och håller nu på med ett magisterarbete som handlar om hur de svenska fjällen, särskilt i samband med Gröna- och Vita Bandet, fungerar som platser för meningsskapande. Den preliminära titeln är "Mening och praktik hos Gröna- och Vita Bandare". Det vore ytterst värdefullt ifall du kunde bidra genom att delta i en intervju.

Undersökningen är en kvalitativ undersökning och dess huvudsyfte är att undersöka svenska fjällen som meningsbärande och hur tidigare deltagare av Gröna- & Vita Bandet tycker/tänker/känner kring detta. Efter intervjuerna kommer de transkriberas och analyseras för att undersöka hur olika deltagare beskriver sin relation till fjällmiljön.

Dina svar och eventuella exempel som kommer från dig, i detta fall inspelning och transkription av intervjun, kommer att anonymiseras innan det behandlas vidare. Allt material och dina personuppgifter (till exempel namn, religiös affilitation och/eller hälsotillstånd) som samlas in i den här undersökningen kommer att behandlas enligt gällande personuppgiftslag och bevaras i säkerhet tills de gallras enligt gällande regler för gallring av uppgifter samlade in i studentarbeten.

När du har läst den här informationen kommer du att få välja om du vill delta i undersökningen eller inte. Om du är beredd att delta i undersökningen behöver du fylla i samtyckesblanketten.

För ytterligare eller mer detaljerad information om undersökningen eller för att besvara andra frågor under den pågående undersökningen är du i första hand välkommen att kontakta mig som genomför studien:

Olle Vikström

E-post: olvi0009@student.umu.se

Om du har frågor om undersökningen som inte kan besvaras av studenten är du välkommen att kontakta handledaren:

Handledare: Alana Vincent, e-postadress: alana.vincent@umu.se

Tack!

Samtycke till att delta i studien

"Mening och praktik hos Gröna- och Vita Bandare"

Med min underskrift förklarar jag

- att jag skriftligen informerats om studien och samtycker till att delta
- att jag är medveten om att mitt deltagande är helt frivilligt och att jag kan avbryta mitt deltagande i studien utan att ange något skäl

och intygar

- att jag väljer att delta i studien och godkänner att universitetet behandlar mina personuppgifter i enlighet med gällande dataskyddslagstiftning och lämnad information.

Ort och datum:

_____

_____

Underskrift

_____

Namnförtydligande

☐ Jag väljer att delta i studien och godkänner att Umeå universitet behandlar mina personuppgifter i enlighet med gällande dataskyddslagstiftning och lämnad information.

Kontaktinformation till handledare och student:

Handledare: Alana Vincent, alana.vincent@umu.se

Student: Olle Vikström, E-post: olvi0009@student.umu.se

Detta är baserat på följande källor:

https://www.miun.se/medarbetare/gemensamt/juridik/personuppgiftshantering/personuppgifter-i-studentarbeten/

https://www.umu.se/student/vi-hjalper-dig/dina-rattigheter-och-skyldigheter/behandla-personuppgifter-i-studentarbeten/

https://www.umu.se/globalassets/fristaende-webbar/regelverk/utbildning-pa-grund--och-avancerad-niva/regel-och-handlaggningsordning-for-behandling-av-personuppgifter-i-studentarbeten_fs-1.1-322-22.pdf

Mallen för samtycke är baserat på inst. för språkstudiers mall.

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

Intervjuguide

Motivation och förväntningar vägval/färdsätt

- Hur kom det sig att du till slut gav dig iväg på resan? Vad inspirerade eller motiverade dig att ge dig ut på resan Vita Bandet/Gröna Bandet?
- Vad hoppades du få ut av upplevelsen innan du började?
- Vad gjorde du för vägval under resan? Varför just dessa val?

Utmaningar

- Vilka var några av de största utmaningarna du stötte på under din resa?
- Hur klarade du eller övervann dessa utmaningar på vägen?
- Hur upplevde du tiden?

Relation till fjällen, naturen

- Hur skulle du beskriva din relation till naturen, till fjällen, under resan?
- På vilket sätt tror du att ditt färdsätt (på skidor vs. till fots) format hur du upplevde resan/fjällen?

Resans slut och omedelbara känslor vid målgång

- Hur kände du dig när du kom fram till målet (Treriksröset/grövelsjön)?
- Hur påverkade genomförandet av en sådan bedrift hur du ser på dig själv/dina egna förmågor?

Betydelse, identitet och livsperspektiv

- När du ser tillbaka nu, hur skulle du beskriva den övergripande innebörden eller betydelsen av denna resa?
- Hur skulle du beskriva den roll långdistansvandring eller skidåkning spelar i ditt liv och din identitet?

Återgång till vardagen och efterverkningar

- Hur var det för dig att återvända till det "normala" livet/vardagen efter att ha avslutat resan?

Var det någon upplevelse som var särskilt minnesvärd? Vad hände då?

Var det något du ville tillägga?

Appendix 3. Invitation Post

VILL DU BIDRA TILL STUDIE OM FJÄLLEN OCH MENINGSSKAPANDE?

Olle Vikström, magisterstudent i religionsvetenskap vid Umeå universitet, skriver just nu en magisteruppsats om hur fjällmiljöer – särskilt i samband med Vita och Gröna Bandet– fungerar som platser för meningsskapande.

Om du har genomfört något av Banden eller varit involverad på annat sätt och kan tänka dig att ställa upp på en intervju, är du varmt välkommen att kontakta Olle via uppgifterna nedan.

Intervjun är semi-strukturerad och ger dig möjlighet att själv berätta om dina upplevelser, tankar och erfarenheter.

Ett informationsbrev med mer information om studien, samtycke och hur insamlad data hanteras finns att få för den som är intresserad.

Om du tycker att det här låter spännande eller viktigt, eller om du känner någon annan som skulle passa bra att prata med Olle, får du gärna höra av dig direkt till honom:

olvi0009@student.umu.se

Tack på förhand!