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To the young people living in northern rural towns.

You are the future.

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Abstract

This ethnographic study focuses on young people's perspectives on wellbeing in northern Finland. It highlights the importance of anthropological contributions to studies on Arctic youth and urges a more nuanced understanding of young people's aspirations when they are in the process of deciding whether to stay in or leave their rural home town. Theoretically, the work draws on the debates on anthropological wellbeing and links these to concepts of relations, arguing for a shift from rigid definitions of wellbeing towards a more fluid understanding of the concept. In examining youth wellbeing in detail and from multiple perspectives, the thesis reveals the adaptive potential of the region's youth. The empirical examples demonstrate varying relations on the part of young people that go beyond their relation to place. Salient considerations figuring in youth wellbeing span close relations to nature, home communities, family, friends, work, education, safety, welfare state and well-working infrastructures. Significantly, the multi-sited research brought to light that considerations relating to where and how to live, work and study lie at the core of young people's decision-making about their futures. In this light, young people's agency and age become an important focus in exploring mobility, immobility and lifestyle migration. The five articles presented in this thesis provide distinct answers to the question of what young people consider to be the building blocks of a good life. Through this contribution, the work closes gaps in empirically grounded ethnographic studies of youth wellbeing and provides a novel perspective on the present anthropological understanding of wellbeing.

Keywords: Youth Wellbeing, Arctic, Northern Finland, Rural Youth, Mobility, Immobility, Arctic Lifestyle Migrants, Anthropology of Wellbeing

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Abstract (German)

Diese Dissertation untersucht Perspektiven auf „wellbeing“ von Jugendlichen in Nordfinnland. Die ethnografische Studie diskutiert die Bedeutung anthropologischer Beiträge in der Analyse von Entscheidungsprozessen von arktischen Jugendlichen bezüglich der Verlagerung ihres Lebensmittelpunktes von ländlichen in urbane Regionen. Auf theoretischer Ebene wird die Debatte zu „wellbeing“ mit Konzepten von „relations“ (Beziehungen) verbunden. Als Resultat plädiert die Studie für eine Abkehr von starren Definitionen von „wellbeing“ hin zu einem offeneren und flexibleren Verständnis des Konzeptes. Eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Erforschung von Mobilität, Immobilität und Lifestyle Migration, spielen Handlungsfähigkeit („agency“) und Alter. Auf empirischer Ebene verdeutlicht die detaillierte Analyse von unterschiedlichen Perspektiven zu Mobilität das Veränderungspotential von Jugendlichen. Die empirischen Fallbeispiele veranschaulichen verschiedenste Beziehungen, die von Forschungspartner:innen aufgebaut und erhalten werden und die über örtliche Bindungen hinausreichen. Diese Bindungen zeigen sich durch Beziehungen zu Natur, Gemeinschaft, Familie, Freunden, Arbeit, Ausbildung, Sicherheit, Wohlfahrtstaat und Infrastruktur haben. Die fünf in dieser Arbeit vorgestellten Artikel, geben unterschiedliche Antworten auf die Frage, was Jugendliche als Bausteine eines „guten Lebens“ betrachten. Diese multilokale Studie demonstriert, dass zentrale Entscheidungsfaktoren für die Mobilität von Jugendlichen der Zugang zu Bildungs- und Arbeitsmöglichkeiten sind. Die vorliegende Dissertation füllt so Forschungslücken in der ethnographischen Arbeit zum Thema Jugend - „wellbeing“ und bietet eine neue Sichtweise auf das anthropologische Verständnis von „wellbeing“.

Schlagwörter: Jugend, Wellbeing, Arktis, Nordfinnland, Mobilität, Immobilität, Lifestyle Migration, Anthropologie

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1. Introduction

In northern Finland, one sees young people constructing their lives in various ways, with each considering the building blocks of a good life differently. While some dream of urban surroundings – cities in more southern parts of the country – others imagine travelling the world beyond the borders of their homeland. Still others have arrived from distant, faraway countries, while some see their future in their rural home towns, places they have never aspired to leave. As diverse as young people's dreams and aspirations of a "good life" may be, equally varied are their perceptions of what determines their wellbeing. This present work, an ethnographic study, brings together these different views of young people in the region and investigates what wellbeing means from their own perspectives. One novel aim of the present work has been to draw on the debates on anthropological wellbeing and to link these to Tim Ingold's (2018, 2021) and Marilyn Strathern's (2020) work on relations. The insights gained have prompted me to argue for a shift from rigid definitions of wellbeing to a more fluid understanding of the concept.

The term "wellbeing" has become a buzzword in recent years. The content of the concept on the individual and collective levels varies, as does the use of the term itself, an analytical challenge that I will address in this work. Wellbeing as conceived in this work can be equated with the concept of a good life. The two concepts are intertwined, with both including aspects of collective and individual perceptions of what the building blocks of a good life might be. The well-known OECD "Better Life Index" (2023) defines the determinants of a good life in terms of access to housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, civil engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety, work-life balance and gender equality. While those who have constructed the index acknowledge that "there is more to life than the cold numbers of GDP and economic statistics", the index is essentially based on material living conditions and quality of life measures**.** To be sure, these categories are useful for understanding the basic elements of wellbeing, but the anthropological research to be reviewed in this thesis reveals that wellbeing is a multifaceted concept and can be perceived differently culturally, collectively and individually by different groups of people (see also Stammler and Toivanen 2021). Robbins (2013) urges that researchers look "beyond the suffering subject" in anthropological research and paves the way for theorising an anthropology of the good. In other words, he argues that anthropologists should redirect their gaze from the typically anthropological topics of pain, poverty, oppression towards topics of value, morality wellbeing, imagination, empathy, care, hope and time (ibid.: 448). Consistent with Robbin's theoretical considerations are Ortner's (2016) reflections on what she calls "dark anthropology", which focuses on harsh dimensions

of social life and negative subjective expressions of dimensions of power, domination, inequality and oppression (ibid.: 47). She concludes that "the good life", "happiness", morality and ethics represent a reaction to the historically rooted "dark turn" (ibid.).

In the Arctic context, one often finds the topic of wellbeing embedded in discourses about sustainability and viable northern futures, health, climate change impacts and adaptation (see also Petrov et al. 2017; Rautio et al. 2015; Timlin et al. 2021) However, many times contributions lack detailed descriptions and analyses of what individual and collective wellbeing entail. The concept is invoked frequently in contexts spanning research, politics, policies and regional planning efforts but without detailed conceptualising. What is more, illbeing and health concerns figure far more prominently in Arctic discussions on young people (see also Rautio et al. 2015; Timlin et al. 2021). This can perhaps be explained by the tendency in anthropological research on youth to highlight problems (Lee & Carney 2019), an inclination seen in anthropological work in general (see Ortner 2016; Robbins 2013). With this in mind, I set out to explore how young people in northern Finland make use of their agency and construct their everyday lives. Listening to what they say and think has allowed me to write this thesis and thus to make a meaningful contribution to the research debate.

Petrov et al. (2016) identify the most common research gaps in Arctic social science research, one being a gap in the transgenerational understanding of sustainability issues across the region. A second shortcoming that they point to is a paucity of research in the field of urban-rural connections in the Arctic and the resulting limited knowledge about non-Indigenous people in the region (ibid.). The empirical examples presented in the five publications comprising the body of the thesis attempt to close these gaps with respect to the study of young people in northern Finland. Notably, the research contributes to an understanding of wellbeing of three groups: young people who currently live in northern Finland but aspire to move elsewhere; young people who remain in rural areas of the North; and newcomers to the region, or lifestyle migrants.

This thesis comprises five peer-reviewed articles in addition to this synthesis. Two of the articles compare issues of wellbeing in different cultural context (Finland and Russia), and are unique in analysing similarities and differences between conceptions of a good life across national borders (Adams et al. 2021; Stammler et al. 2022). Moreover, the articles ask what viable communities in northern industrial towns look like from the perspectives of young people and address crucial determinants of wellbeing. The third article, the case of young rural stayers in Kemijärvi (northern Finland), highlights the agency of young people who consciously have

chosen to stay in their shrinking northern home town. This group demonstrates an alternative to the prevailing Western ideal, which emphasises mobility as well as ambitious educational goals and careers. Here, the contribution narrows a research gap, as there has been no work to date with an explicit focus on conscious rural stayers in Finnish Lapland (Adams & Komu 2022). The fourth article, "Not wanting to be 'Stuck': Exploring the role of mobility for young people's wellbeing in Northern Finland", for its part, seeks to engender discussion – lacking to date – between the fields of youth migration and anthropological wellbeing in the context of the global North. To this end, the research combines discussions on connections between mobility and wellbeing (Komu & Adams 2021). The final article, which deals with young lifestyle migrants in Finnish Lapland, challenges the perception that lifestyle migrants search for 'warm and sunny' destinations with lower living costs (see Benson & O'Reilly 2016). In moving to Finnish Lapland in their search for a good life, the young newcomers have opted for a cold destination with extreme weather and higher living costs. The research goes beyond the discourses highlighting the hardships of immigration and integration to delve into the motivations and experiences of the young migrants. As there has been no work to date focusing specifically on lifestyle migrants in the region, this work can be seen as providing a new perspective on what is a growing phenomenon in Arctic regions (Adams 2023).

Crucial to being able to resolve the research gaps identified above has been a careful selection of research questions: 1) What structural conditions contribute to the young people's decisions to choose northern Finland as their place of residence? 2) What motivates young people to stay, leave or move to northern Finland? 3) What factors contribute to the wellbeing of young people in northern Finland? The answers to this particular set of questions form the basis of the work presented in this thesis; they will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Outline

This thesis draws on outcomes of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the course of three different research projects[1]. Over a period of five years I conducted long-term fieldwork in the towns of Kolari, Kemijärvi, Pyhäjoki and Rovaniemi in northern Finland to learn about various groups of young people and their perceptions of wellbeing. The map displayed in Figure 1 shows the field sites in Finland as well as the Russian case sites discussed in the comparative articles. Place-specific descriptions included in the individual articles explain similarities and

[1] Finnish Academy funded project *WOLLIE "Live, Work or Leave? Youth – wellbeing and the viability of (post)extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia"* at the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi, personal grant "*uni:docs"* program by the University of Vienna and European Research Council project "*InfraNorth*" at the University of Vienna.

differences across regions. The following chapter, Chapter 2, examines the research questions and the constraints resulting from selecting specific questions. Chapter 3 then reviews and discusses structural conditions affecting youth wellbeing in northern Finland. Chapter 4 goes on to provide an overview of the anthropological conceptualisation of young people, as well as discussions of sustainability and viability in the Arctic, concerns which are critical to understanding where wellbeing is embedded in such discussions. The review includes literature on rural young people's (im-) mobility as well as on Arctic lifestyle migration. Chapter 5 illuminates the theoretical foundations and framework of this study, putting forward my contribution to current research debates by suggesting that researchers engage with anthropological theories of relations in connection with wellbeing theories. This is followed, in Chapter 6, by a thorough explanation of my research approach, which discusses, among other topics, conducting fieldwork in multiple field sites, my positionality in the field as well as ethical considerations. Chapter 7 takes up methodology, detailing how the individual methods were used and explaining the analysis of the data. The following chapter, Chapter 8, contemplates the central research findings and the findings of all five articles. In the final chapter, I then bring together the main findings and conclude with an account of the insights gained into young people's aspirations for a good life in northern Finland.

Figure 1: Sancho-Reinoso (2023): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_laea_location_map.svg

2. Research Questions: Explanation and Limitations

Taking as my point of departure that the research questions define the conceptualisation of the entire research, I set out to find suitable questions, which would remain open but yet concrete. Openness is important for generating surprising and new results, it is also essential to narrow down the research questions to keep within the methodological framework and limited resources (Flick 2014: 145). Curiosity to learn more about a specific phenomenon – young people's perceptions of wellbeing in northern Finland – was the guiding principle in conceptualising the research questions. In this context, Silverman (2013: 95) suggests that the researcher should think of the research questions like a puzzle to be solved, and should ask what that particular puzzle is. Flick (2014: 145) uses the analogy that the research questions are like a door to the field of study; depending on which doors one chooses to open, different fields emerge. With these thoughts in mind, I set out the following research questions:

- *What are the building blocks of a good life for young people living in northern Finland?*

This gave rise to the following sub-questions:

- *What structural conditions contribute to young people's decision to choose northern Finland as their place of residence?*
- *What motivates young people to stay in, leave or move to northern Finland?*
- *What contributes to the wellbeing of young people living in northern Finland?*

In the course of my research, it became necessary to modify and add questions. Once in the field, it became obvious that some were still too broadly formulated and required refining in order to study specific phenomena and subgroups among the young people. Depending on the topics emerging during the fieldwork, I added the necessary layers of detail: when working with young lifestyle migrants, the issue of social media representation came to the fore; in conversations with rural young people, mobility was in the spotlight; and when talking to rural stayers, aspects of agency and perceptions of rural young people in general became relevant. In addition, when analysing comparative data, questions of what aspects of wellbeing were determined by culture and age were added. One reason why age differences became an analytical category is that I opted to use the definition of "youth" in the Finnish Youth Act (2017) as a person between 16 and 29 years of age. I chose to adopt this clear point of reference, since there was no single, unifying definition in the literature. As Kehily (2007) points out, definitions of "youth" in the academic literature tend to vary between sociological and biological categories. In my work I use the concepts reflected in the terms "young people" or "youth", as these are more flexible than "adolescent" or "teenager" (Kehily 2007). I align with

Stammler and Toivanen (2021: 7), who submit that youth as an age group is more than adolescence, meaning that cultural practices differ also among young people. Moreover, narrowing the age range defining "young person" would have resulted in a more age-specific focus, whereas one facet of the research is to reflect on the differences between different age groups. Adhering to the broad definition in the Finnish Youth Act (2017) was both beneficial and challenging as regards finding suitable categories of wellbeing that would represent all young people's perspectives. In fact, it was precisely this openness that was needed to yield a new perspective for discussing young people's wellbeing in more fluid and flexible terms, rather than defining wellbeing in terms of fixed categories. Indeed, Stammler and Toivanen (2021: 7) note that it is no surprise that teenagers have different priorities when thinking about the determinants of their wellbeing than young adults, students or young professionals.

The main part of my work is dedicated to finding answers to the main question, that is, what the building blocks of a good life are for young people in northern Finland. While the structural conditions were easier to identify and analyse, the categories of individual and collective wellbeing were more varied. This led to the realisation that young people's agency – and how they make use of their agency – is strongly connected to how they describe and experience a good life. As important as it was to find categories to answer this question, it was also important to take a step back and analyse the results of all the individual articles to see how the answers squared with my research questions. During this process of reassessment, it occurred to me that even though I had listed a great number of variables comprising wellbeing, there could always be a category that I might have missed. But what concerned me even more was the fluidity of the categories, knowing that by the end of my work some categories might gained more importance, while others might have lost their relevance for the young people depending on their life situations. As a result, I propose that the categories that emerge from my responses to the research questions should be understood as flexible, changing and fluid rather than as fixed moulds that might result in a rigid, measurement-oriented model. In other words, in the case of wellbeing there is a need to shift from predominantly categorical thinking to a more relational view (following Ingold 2018; and Strathern 2020). Given this change of focus, I found it necessary to add the following question on the conceptual level of analysis:

- *What relations became evident in the research on young people's wellbeing in northern Finland?*

In the course of my work, I realised how diverse, vibrant and rich young people's perceptions of wellbeing are. The five articles yielded a wealth of insights that merit discussions in this

synthesis. My choice was to ask questions that would bring forward the perspectives of young people, individuals who in the past have often been overlooked, marginalised and rendered largely invisible in academic debates. Asking questions that mattered deeply in my interlocutors' lives on a daily basis resulted in the wide variety of constituents that make up wellbeing discussed in the results. Taken together, the research questions comprise a multi-dimensional framework yielding a better understanding of young people living in northern Finland and consciously turning the spotlight on groups of young people who are very important in addressing concerns about a sustainable and viable Arctic future. This choice of how to frame the research questions led to limitations. I will discuss these briefly below, before moving on to explore the answers to those questions, that is, the key research findings.

Limitations and Possible Extensions of Youth Wellbeing Research

This research includes all young people who wanted to participate. There were no limitations on participation regarding the interlocutors' national origin or ethnicity, except in the case of the article on young lifestyle migrants in particular. While Sámi young people are included in my work in Finnish Lapland, I did not specifically distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth when choosing participants. To do so would have required specific research questions and knowledge to address the very important topics of Indigeneity and would have had to be historically contextualised to illustrate Finland's colonial past as well as its wrongdoings towards Indigenous people. I acknowledge that part of my fieldwork has been conducted in the Sámi Homeland and I have taken specific care to be sensitive towards Indigenous livelihoods and include everyone's voice in my research. Others (see for example Gartler et al. 2021; Joona 2017; Toivanen 2021) make this important distinction and focus in particular on Indigenous youths' perspectives on wellbeing. Although my work includes all young people living in northern Finland, I urge that more research should be done to investigate the wellbeing of young Sámi in particular and to bring forward Indigenous perspectives on wellbeing. My theoretical contribution includes Indigenous studies on wellbeing as part of an analytical lens through which wellbeing can be conceptualised. The choice to focus primarily on non-Indigenous young people in the Arctic was prompted by the lack of research on the wellbeing of youth in the majority population (see Petrov et al. 2016).

My work does not have an explicit focus on gender differences, which would have added another interesting dimension of analysis. Other work in the region urges researchers to address gender specific dimensions (for example Klasen 2007; Kukarenko 2011; Vehkalahti & Ristaniemi 2022; Vladimirova & Habeck 2018; Wiens et al. 2021), whereas my work focuses

on youth wellbeing on a more conceptual level, not ignoring gender differences, but not highlighting them either. Timlin et al. (2021), who included gender as a variable in their study of wellbeing in Greenland, found that gender was not significantly associated with wellbeing, quality of life or life satisfaction. However, adding more gender-specific questions in Arctic studies on young people could yield more diverse outcomes.

Young people with health conditions or impairments are largely absent in my work; this lopsidedness was not my intention and has prompted me to critically assess my work to reflect on why it apparently was not conducted in contexts that were as inclusive as they could have been. I did not specifically target institutions serving young people with special needs, which in hindsight might have added another important dimension to my work. However, this would have required additional research questions and a level of expertise that I lack.

Given that this research was partly conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, one option would have been to add questions about the impact of the pandemic on young people's wellbeing. As most of my fieldwork was done before the pandemic, I decided not to include the effects of the pandemic as a separate topic. Compared to other countries, Finland had relatively few restrictions and it was possible for me to meet with the young people in person whenever I was in the field. The pandemic's limitations on my work were minor, since, being a Finnish citizen, I could travel to Finland after the most crucial first lockdown phase. Ultimately, there was no more than a half-year gap in my being able to travel to my field site during the entire pandemic, and in any event I was able to stay well connected with my interlocutors throughout this research.

3. Structural Conditions: Young People in Northern Finland

According to World Bank (2023) statistics for OECD members, the proportion of Finns living in rural areas declined from 45 per cent in the 1960s to a mere 14 per cent in 2021, with Finnish Lapland showing the sharpest decrease. Of the Nordic countries, Finland has the highest number of rural areas with heavy outmigration, seen in particular in young people leaving for more urban areas; the only exceptions to this are regions with tourism and industry (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020; Statistic Finland 2023). In the Nordic region, some 77 per cent of the territory is rural but is home to only roughly 25 per cent of the population (Jungsberg 2021). These structural conditions clearly matter when young people consider staying in or leaving their often rapidly shrinking home towns, where more and more services close down due to centralisation of public services (Jungsberg 2021: 10). Moreover, in the rural areas in northern Europe the proportion of pensioners (over the age of 65 years) is significantly higher than that of working-

age people (aged between 16 and 64 years) (ibid.). In an additional imbalance, the share of persons with a tertiary education is unevenly distributed between rural areas (31%) and urban areas (53%) (Jungsberg 2021: 10).

Finland remained a predominantly agricultural country for far longer than other Western European countries, partly due to a fear of political unrest and the spread of communist ideologies in the peripheries, and partly due to a lack of capital investment to accelerate industrialisation (Mattila et al. 2023: 815). A rural transformation that began in the 1960s has resulted in agriculture and forest industries eliminating around 600 000 jobs (Kuhmonen et al. 2016: 90). In the 1990s, the country was hit by an economic recession, which precipitated a structural change that saw manufacturing industries decrease in favour of an information- and technology-based economy and society (Mattila et al. 2023: 816). Despite ongoing efforts to introduce new technologies and create more diversified employment opportunities, employment outside the urban centres (mainly Rovaniemi and Oulu in the Finnish North) can be characterised as largely insecure, seasonal and linked to raw materials such as wood and minerals (Coates 2020). Northern Finland, along with most Arctic regions, is "more government-dependent than resource-dependent, despite the prevailing image of the northern regions as centres of mining, forestry, and oil and gas extraction" (Coates 2020: 176). The basic availability of services in Finland's remote areas is guaranteed by the Nordic welfare system, which provides several social services and programmes geared to families and women and to providing equal opportunities in education and career planning; the standard of such services is higher than in other countries (Bellinger 2018: 42). Moreover, northern Finland differs from many Arctic regions in having highly specialised high-tech activities as well as universities and research centres, elements that contribute to the region having a more diversified economy (Heleniak et al. 2020).

In addition, those living in northern Finland, as in the northern parts of its neighbouring countries, have better access to the southern urban areas of their countries and better transport connections compared with other Arctic regions (Heleniak et al. 2020: 53). Yet, despite comparatively good services and geographical connectivity, Finland's population has a declining birth rate and is aging faster than any other European country (Heleniak et al. 2020; Makkonen & Inkinen 2023). This downward demographic trend has led to self-reinforcing vicious cycles of decreasing regional competitiveness as well as a general loss of attractiveness for Finnish rural regions overall (Makkonen & Inkinen 2023: 334). Given these stark structural and demographic realities, discussions about the young people in Arctic and Subarctic regions

are often framed in negative terms, portraying them as persons who lack agency and whose lives are seemingly driven by these structural constraints (Tuuva-Hongisto 2018).

Anthropological research on young people has often been associated with problems and pictured in negative terms, ranging from school dropouts, youth unemployment, crime, early pregnancies, mental health issues, suicides to substance abuse (Lee & Craney 2019: 6-7). Northern young people, especially young women, have been leaving remote rural areas to seek education and jobs in the cities (Kuhmonen et al. 2016). This trend is discussed in detail in Vehkalahti and Ristaniemi (2022: 195), in which the researchers indicate that young women between the ages of 18 and 29 seem to be at the forefront of those migrating from their rural home towns and that their leaving is closely connected to educational opportunities, as well as more "female-friendly" labour markets elsewhere. The outmigration of young women is often portrayed as a threat to the viability and sustainability of the rural communities affected (ibid.). Moreover, Vehkalahti and Ristaniemi suggest that young people's relation to local culture and history plays a role in their level of commitment to their communities, and argue that the feeling of belonging to a place does not automatically translate into a willingness to build a future in one's home region. Notwithstanding, Vehkalahti and Ristaniemi (2022) point out that many of the young females who left wished to stay connected to their culture, history and home. Wiens et al. (2021) provide an additional, gendered perspective on the wellbeing of adolescent girls in Finnish Lapland, asserting that the natural environment positively influences young women's wellbeing. In addition to gender, age is an important factor for young people moving from and back to rural areas. Kuhmonen et al. (2016) indicate that between the ages of 25 and 35 years or later – upon retirement – some people move back to the rural areas where they grew up. In the light of these demographic trends and the concerns voiced by researchers about the sustainability and viability of Arctic regions, it seemed particularly important and timely to explore the determinants of wellbeing for young people living in the Finnish Arctic. Moreover, anthropological research can be invaluable in understanding young people's lived experiences, as it engages with contemporary practices of youth (see also Lee & Carney 2019).

Research on rural young people in Finland has mostly focused on eastern Finland (Armila et al. 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018; Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016) and deindustrialised areas (Makkonen & Inkinen 2023). For example, the ethnographic work of Abrahams (1991) highlighting connections between farm and family is set in rural eastern Finland. His work examines marriage patterns, kinship and succession of farms, in which young people play a significant role as successors. Although Abrahams' work analyses families, culture and society,

it does not explicitly address issues of young people (ibid.), nor does it specifically discuss wellbeing. In Chapter 4, I discuss in more detail the stance of anthropological research on youth-specific topics and the reasons why the topic continues to be a side issue of the discipline. Research in education, geography and sociology focusing on young people in Finnish Lapland has addressed mobility and belonging, as well as aspirations of staying in, leaving or returning to the region (Juvonen & Romakkaniemi 2018), but not aspects of wellbeing and a good life per se. Juvonen and Romakkaniemi (2018: 322) note that young people in Finnish Lapland experience more welfare deficits, loneliness and unemployment compared to youth in other parts of the country. In addition, they have fewer specialised services available and they need to become independent at an earlier age because education after primary school often requires them to move away from home (ibid.). In fact, mobility has been discussed as a "lifestyle" of young people living in rural areas, a mindset in which staying is being perceived as something negative, with the "stayers" somehow left behind or unable to move (Tuuva-Hongisto 2018: 28). The term "stayers" is a useful term in the discussion of rural people who have decided to stay, and is frequently used by scholars studying rural areas (Husa 2023; Morse & Mudgett 2018; Stockdale & Haartsen 2018; van der Star & Hochstenbach 2022) This term can include both voluntary and involuntary stayers. Indeed, in their study of future dreams of Finnish rural youth, Kuhmonen et al. (2016) acknowledge that the demographic trends noted and outmigration do not give Finnish rural regions much hope. However, their study also indicates that rural places have a number of advantages compared to urban centres, even from the perspective of young people. Communality, safety, societal involvement, a "self-made life", opportunities for entrepreneurship and nature-related activities are listed among the main drivers encouraging young people to stay in or move to Finnish rural areas (Kuhmonen et al. 2016: 89). My own findings are consistent with these, and are discussed in depth in the articles and taken up later in this synthesis. Significantly, my research has produced long-term ethnographic knowledge about youth wellbeing in the region, a contribution to remedying a recognised gap in the literature.

4. State of the Art: Literature Review and Identification of Research Gaps

Early in the discipline of anthropology, foundational ethnographies by Margaret Mead (1928) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) established adolescence as an important topic (Bucholtz 2002). In particular, Mead's "Coming of Age in Samoa" (1928), a study on adolescent girls in the South Pacific, sparked discussions about understanding humans within the context of

culture and in comparison to other cultures (see also Fuchs 1976). As a result, issues associated with different life stages – initiation ceremonies, sexual practices, courtship, marriage, and intergenerational relations – became the centre of anthropological research (Bucholtz 2002: 525). Despite the promising beginnings, in which they became an essential focus of anthropological inquiries, young people were later, and quite surprisingly, sidelined as a topic of research in the discipline until quite recently. Contrastingly, research on youth has been a core topic for sociologists since the 1920s (Fuchs 1976: 4). By the 1960s, sociologists were talking about "youth culture", with adulthood postponed to increasingly later ages, giving youth studies considerable attention within the discipline (ibid.). During these decades, the anthropologist's gaze was mainly directed towards the role of cultural changes disrupting traditional social roles and socialisation processes (Bucholtz 2002). However, a distinguishing characteristic of anthropological studies of youth, one setting them apart from research in other disciplines, was their interest in social changes affecting adolescents in historically specific processes of social, political, economic transformations and cultural practices (ibid.: 531). My work follows this anthropological practice and discusses social change and processes affecting young people in northern Finland as regards their notions of wellbeing.

The very definitions of "adolescent", "youth", "young people", "youngsters" and "teenagers" have been discussed since the beginning of anthropological youth research, as the terms are culturally contested and pose problems not only because assigning a specific age range to them but also because they refer to physical characteristics (Fuchs 1976; Lee & Craney 2019). Such classifications, according to Bucholz (2002), are often used strategically and should be contested as they are socially meaningful and used according to sociopolitical circumstances (ibid.: 527). Adolescence has frequently been defined through various *rites of passages*, in which individuals move from one social status to another (Fuchs 1976: 2). Moreover, "adolescence" derives its origins from a Western category that entails a specific phase of physical development and social maturation (Lee & Craney 2019: 2). The term "youth" has been used to describe young people as old as in their late twenties. This concept goes beyond adolescence and includes notions of young people's life course (ibid.). "Young people" is also used in varying ways, the broadest definitions including children and "young" adults (ibid.). Bucholz (2002) describes youth as a flexible and contestable social category and observes that "the anthropological study of adolescence is a search for cross-cultural generalizations and variations in the biological, psychological, and social characteristics" (ibid.: 528). I align with Bucholz (2002) in seeing "youth" as a flexible category, although at the same time I have applied the Finnish national definition of "youth" as the period between the age of 16 and 29

(Finnish Youth Act 2017). I make use of the terms “young people” and “youth” in this work but refrain from using “adolescent”, as it describes more a biological than a social change. I also eschew “teenagers” and “youngsters” as these are culturally contested terms.

Cultural understandings determine definitions of "youth" and these are therefore constantly changing. While in the 1960s the Panel on Youth of the President’s Science Advisory Committee in the US defined “youth” as the period between 14 and 24 years of age (Fuchs 1976: 3), Rollason (2017) brings in the example of the Rwandan government defining youth as persons between the ages of 14 and 35 (ibid.: 1278). According to Peatrik (2020: 14), age categories are shaped by individual and linguistic interactions. Moreover, she notes that from an anthropological perspective it is problematic to calculate age from the date of birth, as some cultures may define age differently (ibid.: 15) Indeed, Peatrik (2020) notes that “youth” primarily constitutes a demographic category rooted in statistical values and that researchers have failed to address the categories applied to youth critically. Bucholz (2002) points out that in some cultures pre-adolescent individuals and people as old as in their thirties and forties may be included to the category of youth (ibid.: 526). Predictably, given the varying and discrepant definitions, age turned out to be a defining analytical challenge in my own work, as I will show in Chapter 8 in the discussions of the central research findings. Youth between the ages of 16 and 19 years had a different orientation and valued different aspects of wellbeing than youths between 20 and 29 years of age. Stammler and Toivanen (2021) also make this argument in their edited volume on youth wellbeing in the circumpolar North.

In the late 1970s, Fuchs (1976) called for a cross-cultural view on adolescence and brought together ethnographies from Puerto Rico to New Zealand, and from Japan to West Africa. In the introduction to her study, she acknowledges that anthropological research interests in youth are directed towards problems, and calls on ethnographic work to free itself from the “myopic distortions of the ethnocentric view” (ibid.: 1). Forty years later, in her anthropological work on African youth, Peatrik (2020) noted that young people are still often either described as “inspiring hope” and as the “nation’s shining lights” or are pictured as “icons of desperation” (ibid.: 2). Moreover, she shows how anthropologists have been quick to identify problems but have also often neglected to pave the way towards a more nuanced understanding of young people (ibid.: 3). I would argue that such an understanding should include wellbeing. One ethnographic study of youth is Streissler’s (1999) work on young people in Bogotá, Colombia. The study exemplifies precisely that anthropological youth research commonly perceives its focus in terms of change and problems. Indeed, the title of her work suggests a “fear of the

future" (*Zukunftsangst*) where young people's lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is concerned. More recent anthropological research on youth has taken up notions of (im)mobility, agency and material and social relations as key topics (Rollason 2017). Young people are found to oppose other segments of society, social structures or cultural systems that can be seen as constraining or controlling them; yet it is here where their agency becomes apparent (ibid.: 1289). A recent ethnographic volume, *Pacific Youth*, edited by Lee (2019), also includes more positive topics, ranging from youth leadership, entrepreneurship, and mental wellbeing to future perceptions. However, the volume also has a notable number of chapters dealing with the common anthropological topics of youth aggression, problems with alcohol abuse and (difficult) post-migration experiences (ibid.). Lee and Craney (2019) rightfully point out that while it is understandable that issues of deficits are being addressed, "such a focus ignores the positive contributions that young people make to their communities" (ibid.: 6). Consequently, one ambition I have embraced in my work is to put forward a more nuanced description of young people; while it in no way neglects issues of illbeing, it differs from the problem-oriented tradition in highlighting aspects of wellbeing and agency. This is especially important in the context of the Arctic, where youth illbeing in destabilising physical conditions has been a central concern. Despite recent efforts to increase ethnographic work on the wellbeing of Arctic youth (see for example Ulturgasheva et al. 2014), the lack of interest in the topic has left a considerable gap in the literature. The present research is a contribution to remedying this gap.

Wellbeing in Sustainable and Viable Arctic Futures

In the case of the Arctic, wellbeing is often referred to in connection with sustainable and viable futures, frequently with specific reference to sustaining traditional livelihoods for future generations (Petrov et al. 2016). Petrov et al. (2017: 3–4) point out how the beginnings of the sustainability discourse included mainly ecological, economic and environmental considerations but assert that in today's discourses the social dimensions of sustainability are essential. Sustainability was famously defined in the 1987 Brundtland Report as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Hirsch 2020: 1). The anthropologist Anna Tsing (2017: 51) defines it as follows: "'Sustainability' is the dream of passing a liveable earth to future generations, human and nonhuman." This statement is followed by the insightful, critical addition "The term is also used to cover up destructive practices, and this use has become so prevalent that the world most often makes me laugh and cry." (ibid.), which demonstrates how differently the definition of sustainability can be interpreted (see also Brightman & Lewis 2017a). In their introduction to

The Politics of Sustainability in the Arctic: Reconfiguring Identity, Space, and Time, Gad et al. (2019) argue that sustainability appears to be at the centre of politics today. While they take up economic understandings of sustainability in the context of Greenland, they also acknowledge that the most common assumptions about sustainability concern protecting nature from human activity (Gad et al. 2019: 1). Moreover, they note how a concern for sustainability has become a precondition for life in Arctic communities (ibid.). Another recent contribution to the topic of sustainability is the volume *Resources and Sustainable Development in the Arctic* by Southcott et al. (2019b). In their introduction, the editors highlight the frequent mention of the Arctic's plentiful resources and their availability in the debates about sustainability (Southcott et al. 2019a). In the same volume, Schweitzer et al. (2019), for their part, urge a new understanding of societal impacts, arguing that in most cases cultural impacts are not properly understood in discussions of sustainability. A third work addressing Arctic sustainability is the recent edited volume by Tennberg et al. (2020) *Resources, Social and Cultural Sustainabilities in the Arctic*, in which the editors point out that sustainable development is understood as mutually supportive dimensions of the economic, environmental, and social aspects of development (ibid.: 3). In her contribution to the volume, Tennberg discusses connections between Arctic expertise and social sustainability, with special reference to Finnish Lapland. Interestingly, she mentions that the core concern of governmentality is populations and their wellbeing, while contending in the same connection that "wellbeing", as she uses the term, refers to "social sustainability" (Tennberg 2020: 119). An earlier article by Tennberg et al. (2014) on neoliberal governance, sustainable development and local communities in the Barents region also took up wellbeing but again embedded in the context of sustainable development. These are just a few examples that illustrate the need to examine the sustainability literature closely when exploring issues of wellbeing in the Arctic.

Discussions of sustainability have also provoked criticism. In a critical view of sustainability, Stepanova et al. (2020) point out that sustainability indicators developed for the Arctic have given little consideration to sparsely populated areas. While the study introduces an understanding of sustainability applicable in global terms, its discussion of the Arctic seems to revolve around resource exploitation (ibid.). Stepanova et al. (2020: 2) describe sustainable development in the Arctic as "a controlled eco-social evolution towards conservative nature use, comprehensive adaptation to climate change, and a minimization of negative anthropogenic impacts on the Arctic's natural ecosystems". Similarly, Hastrup and Lien (2020) take resource practices as their starting point when they talk about sustainability and liveability in the Arctic and urge that special attention be paid to colonial practices. Others also contend

that Arctic sustainability research would do well to focus on decolonialisation debates (see Degai et al. 2022; and Schweitzer 2022). Significantly, the shift from environmental to broader sustainability concerns has been closely connected to the increasing involvement of Indigenous peoples in Arctic politics (Petrov et al. 2017: 11). Indigenous perspectives have revealed the complexity and sensitivity of questions of place attachment and people's feeling of belonging to the environment. Vehkalahti and Ristaniemi (2022) point out that from a Sámi perspective the land is considered a place which incorporates essential elements of both the culture and the community. Kinship and family are especially important in Sámi communities and thus important aspects of inclusion when talking about sustainability in the Arctic. However, difficulties often emerge when trying to reconcile ideas of sustainability for the community, Indigenous ways of life, global climate impacts and the state's interests in Arctic regions (Gad et al. 2019). Each of these considerations may be based on different understandings of what a sustainable community should look like.

Anthropological work on sustainability has urged more nuanced definitions of sustainability and criticised the capitalistic approach evident in sustainability discussions. According to Hirsch (2020: 1), anthropologists typically investigate sustainable development on three scales: "the intimate and local realm of economic lives, the political ecology of resource extraction and the emerging ethnography of climate change". Hirsch asks what kind of development is sustainable, and urges that we ask what the term "sustainable" in fact means (ibid.: 2). Brightman and Lewis (2017a: 2) answer this question by asserting that anthropological study of sustainability should involve examining cultural processes from multiple perspectives. They argue that this should be done based on the interests and needs of the focal societies rather than universalist interests (ibid.). With this argument, they challenge the ideology of progress and development that currently prevails across political and economic institutions. In the volume *The Anthropology of Sustainability: Beyond Development and Progress* (2017b), Brightman and Lewis bring together contributions tracing sustainability by outlining institutionalised definitions of the term, highlighting what happens on a local level when such ideas of sustainability are applied (see also Hastrup 2017; Howell 2017). The discrepancy between these understandings becomes evident when an anthropological understanding of sustainability is applied through analysis of ethnographic evidence that explores and documents human adaptation to environmental changes (Brightman & Lewis 2017a: 10). In the same volume, Hastrup (2017) points out how, among the Inughuit, maintaining social relations is essential to the sustainability and viability of the community. Tsing (2017), adds to the debate by arguing that studying sustainability meaningfully requires a multispecies resurgence and consideration

of the actions of many organisms rather than focusing exclusively on human plans and actions. In a similar argument, Crate (2011) maintains that anthropological research should be included in the study of sustainability and research efforts should pursue the development of a critical, collaborative, multi-sited ethnography given the urgency of climate change.

These debates have sparked discussions geared to better understanding the needs of the Arctic through research on both global as well as regional contexts (Kristoffersen & Langhelle 2017; Ulturgasheva & Bodenhorn 2022) and to highlighting local understandings of sustainable development (Petrov et al. 2017). Specifically, Petrov et al. (2017) argue that examining relationships of equity in sustainable development becomes a key focus in Arctic research and that using local collaborations and co-production of knowledge becomes more than just empty phrases (Petrov et al. 2016). The concept of liveability often appears in research on the sustainability of northern towns, especially in the case of shrinking communities. Yet declining regions are not necessary deteriorating or bad places to live for those who stay (Makkonen & Inkinen 2023: 335). In the case of declining rural towns, ones which young people tend to leave, issues of liveability are of paramount importance and often included in discussions of sustainability and viability. In a study salient in this regard, I have argued that liveability in rural northern Finnish communities is ultimately shaped by individual and collective agencies (see Adams et al. 2022). In addition to discussions on liveability, recent years have seen the emergence of studies of Indigenous youth resilience showing how engaged youth can have a positive impact on their communities (Ulturgasheva et al. 2014; 2015). Moreover, Arctic youth resilience and vulnerabilities across circumpolar communities have been discussed in the context of rapid environmental change (Ulturgasheva 2014; Ulturgasheva et al. 2014). For example, Rasmus (2022) discusses youth wellbeing and resilience among Alaskan Yup'ik as these pertain to sustainable Arctic futures, and states that life in Arctic and subarctic regions has always required resilience and adaptive capacity building to gain knowledge (ibid.: 104). Ulturgasheva, for her part, has shown how Eveny adolescents in northeastern Siberia cope with hardships and show resilience in reindeer herding camps (Ulturgasheva 2014).

Vehkalahti and Ristaniemi (2022: 197) suggest using place as an analytical lens to approach topics of social relations, feelings, attachments or alienations, all of which are shaped over time and subject to change. I have followed this approach throughout my research, paying attention to the various relations young people have with their built environment, nature and other people, and I consistently argue for seeing these relations as fluid, that is, subject to change over time and depending on the place. Moreover, as this brief summary of important work on the topic

shows, young people's lives and what they think about how they live, have been largely overlooked in discussions on viable and sustainable Arctic futures.

Discussions on the topic of wellbeing are often embedded in discourses of public health and the availability of health services as well as in discussions of illbeing. Rather than determining what the essential building blocks of good life might be, research seems preoccupied with the illbeing of Arctic young people (also see Stevenson 2014). The Arctic Human Development Report (Larsen & Fondahl 2015) dedicates a full chapter to the topic "Human Health and Well-Being" (Rautio et al. 2015), in which it addresses emerging threats to wellbeing in Arctic regions with the warming of the climate. These threats include worsening food and water security, infectious diseases, impacts on health and care infrastructures, mental health problems, accidents and domestic violence (ibid.: 299). In discussing illbeing, others use the term "living challenges" (Timlin et al. 2021: 5) and note how young people in Arctic regions are suffering from loneliness, limited career and work opportunities, isolation and gaming addiction. To a large extent, these problems have their roots in the region's dark colonial history, which caused deep collective and individual trauma to its Indigenous peoples and whose effects are still visible across Arctic communities to this day. Nuttall (2018: 67) describes these transformative and significant changes over the past 70 to 100 years as being disruptive on social, economic and political levels, with particularly serious impacts on nomadic practices and traditional resource use.

In contrast, Stammler and Toivanen (2021: 4) highlight the need to start discussing wellbeing in terms of its positive conditions and parameters rather than dwelling on deficits, underprivilege, marginalisation and disempowerment. I will take up this incongruity of discussing wellbeing through illbeing in more detail in Chapter 5, which sets out the theoretical framework of the research. The work presented here acknowledges that illbeing, especially in the context of the Arctic, is an important point of reference when discussing wellbeing. While calling for more research on young people's illbeing in order to understand their struggles, I have deliberately chosen to discuss factors of wellbeing as well (following Stammler and Toivanen 2021) in my work in order to gain an understanding of what young people (would) need in order to have a good life in northern Finland.

Northern, Rural Youth: Discussions of (Im)Mobility

Research on young people in rural areas has long focused on issues of (im)mobility and decisions to leave (Armila et al. 2016; Forsberg 2019; Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016). Recent research by Hjort (2023: 601) reveals that young people are aware of the preconceptions and

negative images associated with their localities and that these representations may be perceived by one and the same person as true, upsetting and irrelevant. Juvonen and Romakkaniemi examine the agency of young rural stayers through contextuality and relationality, emphasising that young people typically make a large number of choices in the transformative stage of adolescence (Juvonen & Romakkaniemi 2018). Significantly, anthropological work on youth acknowledges that a key defining factor for young people is the "frequent need for decision-making" (Fuchs 1976: 11). For stayers, these choices become framed in the discourse maintaining that young people need to leave for education and work (Farrugia 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). The argument here is that structural inequality forces young people from rural regions to move, even though they have a positive relation with their surroundings and home towns (see also Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). Another salient contribution here is a study on rural Denmark by Pedersen and Gram (2018: 620). The work demonstrates that young people's relations to their rural locality can be characterised in terms of "conflicting feelings of attachment, detachment, pride and entrapment", with these feelings then playing a role in contemplating migration. Bjarnason & Thorlindsson (2006) present a case study documenting the process of young people migrating to bigger cities from Icelandic fishing and farming communities, resulting in a downward spiral of population loss and socio-economic deterioration in those communities. Prompted by these findings, they urge researchers to understand the importance of identification with a particular community and argue that young people who identify strongly with a community are less likely to migrate (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006: 290). In a contrasting outcome, Rönnlund (2020) found for young people in Swedish rural areas that there was no straightforward connection between identification with place and desire to stay in one's home town. Rather, a particular rural location was perceived in relation to other places, with material conditions, social relationships and practices being highlighted in the young people's views of regional futures (ibid.: 123). This strong sense of place, proximity to family, and emotional connection to the landscape are recurring themes in research on rural youth (see also Cook & Romei 2020). Discussions about rural young people and their attachment to place often seem to revolve around their connection and relation to nature (Kuhmonen et al. 2016; Matthews et al. 2000; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). This is a recurring finding in my own work. In addition to closeness to nature, having salaried work, living close to a city, safety, owning a house and maintaining social connections to friends and family figure as important factors when young people talk about their dreams in rural regions (Kuhmonen et al. 2016; Stammler et al. 2022). I will reflect upon these elements in depth later, in Chapter 8, which presents the central findings of the thesis.

Young people in northern rural communities inevitably need to make a decision about staying or leaving, a milestone in their lives (Tuuva-Hongisto 2018: 27). Already at the turn of the millennium, Matthews et al. (2000: 141) raised the topic of the sharp distinction between the symbolism and expectation of a "good life" among young people in rural areas, noting that the reality of growing up in remote places and how this is experienced may differ. Ollilla's (2008) work among young people in Lapland indicated that young people's decision to stay or leave was connected to their perceptions of a good life. Although they perceived Finnish Lapland as offering them a good life, they still had to leave in order to be "successful in life" (Ollila 2008: 204). Individual agency is deeply ingrained into and characteristic of Finnish culture, with young people are encouraged to make choices based on their own needs and preferences. This stands in stark contrast to other cultural settings, where collective and family pressure far more noticeably influences young people's choices. The edited volume by Stammler and Toivanen (2021) brings together these anthropological discussions of Arctic young people's decisions about staying or leaving, exploring topics related to (im)mobility across cultures in the Arctic region. For example, the volume includes work by Bolotova (2021) on Russian youth that highlights the agency of migrants and of those young people who decide to stay in the Arctic, as well as research by Toivanen (2021) that focuses on Indigenous youth who move from the Arctic to more urban areas in the south of Finland.

Generally speaking, rural and urban areas are described dichotomously, with the two emphatically and deliberately portrayed as different worlds with little in common (also see Tuuva-Hongisto 2018: 34). Somerville (2013) argues that "the country" and "the city" are relational categories in that they can only be understood in relation to each other. Accordingly, she urges researchers in rural studies to think in terms of localities and to avoid habitual binary thinking (Somerville 2013: 179–180). Similarly, Cook and Romei (2020: 84) argue for a shift to not seeing rural places exclusively as spaces of deficit where mobility itself is viewed as progress. In this respect, looking at rural areas location by location can reveal that some places are well worth staying in, despite their decline. In my work I distinguish between "mobility" and "migration". The latter describes a more permanent move as an act of mobility either within the borders of one country or outside. Population mobility is often measured in terms of migration, at times causing researchers to overlook the effects of (micro) mobility, that is, young people having to commute and being able to get around commuting within their home regions.

Over the past decade, there has been a shift in social science research towards studying why young people stay in their rural home towns in or return to them after moving. (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006; Haartsen & Thissen 2014; Husa 2023; Stockdale et al. 2018; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). However, young people are still underrepresented in discussions about viable and sustainable Arctic communities, and images of decline continue to dominate the discussions. Studies on rural young people (Maersk et al. 2021; Stockdale et al., 2018; Trell et al. 2012) are helpful in understanding how young people develop a sense of belonging to their home towns. For example, Kuhmonen et al. (2016: 91) report that young people who are committed to staying have a "realistic optimistic vision of their chances", while those who leave perceive the "greener grass outside of their own region." Interestingly, despite the prevailing mindset in Finland, urban life is not the ideal that everyone is striving for (Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). In their study of the Finnish rural north, Rautio and Lanas (2013: 219) point out that people live "good enough" everyday lives despite material shortcomings. They argue that successful lives are often framed through vocabularies of economic growth, increasing mobility, social capital and material possessions (ibid.) and criticise the related popular conceptions that derive from such descriptions of "progress" and "success" (Lanas et al. 2013: 385). Rautio and Lanas (2013) urge researchers to shift their focus away from consumption and measurable elements of a good life, limited in in the rural context, towards understanding the variety of possible lives in diverse environments (ibid.: 220). On the conceptual level, it may seem that they are advocating a shift away from defining wellbeing in categorical terms towards embracing a more fluid notion of what the elements of a good life might be.

Leyshon (2008) argues that the lives of young people in rural areas are multi-dimensional and complex, thus asserting in effect the importance of conceptualising young people as active agents who make their own decisions. Like Leyshon, Stockdale and Haartsen (2018: 1) highlight rural stayers, arguing that staying is a deviant response to the functional demands of neo-liberal capitalism. I agree with them when they argue that the discourse on rural young adults should move from perceptions of their being "being stuck or staying behind" towards viewing their decision to stay or move as involving "a complex interplay between competing personal considerations" associated with their "past, present, and anticipated future biography" (Stockdale et al. 2018: 1). Moreover, the reasons for staying in a small subarctic or Arctic town may be even harder to articulate than justifications for moving (also see Hjälm 2014). In this regard, Haartsen and Thissen (2014: 87) recommend that researchers pay attention to nonlinear perspectives on the transition to adulthood of rural young people; these encompass non-economic motives, such as family and friends, which are crucial in young adults' decisions

whether to migrate or not. Forsberg (2019: 323) takes the discussion further, problematising contemporary mobility in youth transitions in northern Sweden, and urges that the topic be discussed in relation to a "right of immobility". She argues that spatial capital is a facet of a young person's habitus, whereby geographical location influences perceptions (ibid). Interestingly, despite making their own decision to stay and despite being happy in their rural homes, many young people feel that staying in their rural community is a failure (Looker & Naylor 2009). Moreover, they may view themselves as having problems in "getting very far" in terms of either education or occupation and thus socioeconomically as well (ibid: 39). Husa (2023: 31) adds to the discussion, noting that there are different types of rural people, ranging from active to passive, determined to indifferent, committed to coerced. Hence, in addition to paying attention to immobility per se, there should be an understanding of the various nuances of stayers in remote regions. A study from Denmark by Maersk et al. (2021) reinforces this idea, indicating that there are also advantages for geographically remote, "immobile" students; immobility should not carry exclusively negative connotations. Fischer & Malmberg (2001), for their part, argue that people who are deeply connected to their rural geographical location are more likely to remain immobile but still construct good lives there. Morse and Mudgett (2018) use the term "contented stayers" to refer to those who value the landscape and the community as well as living near their families. They highlight the emotional dimensions of rural stayers as well as the diverse forms of mobility stayers exercise to remain "happy at home" (Morse & Mudgett 2018: 261). I will draw on and amplify this particular insight when discussing factors of wellbeing for young rural stayers in northern Finland.

Lifestyle Migration in the Arctic Context

The discussion thus far, which has focused on structural conditions and reviewed anthropological literature on young people, sustainable and viable Arctic futures, and the (im)mobility of young people, suggests that migrants to the region could be seen as a valuable asset in making Arctic regions more sustainable and viable. Immigration to Finnish Lapland has risen slowly but steadily since 2005, with the proportion of immigrants growing from 1 per cent in that year to almost 2.5 per cent in 2022 (Lapin Luotsi 2023). Collier (2013) notes that from a migrant's perspective high living standards make the Nordic countries attractive, featuring as they do social equity, high salaries, a highly ranked education system and well-functioning social services. On the other hand, understanding complex migration patterns in Arctic locations can be challenging, as these typically experience in-migration, out-migration and temporary migration as well (Howe & Huskey 2022).

O'Reilly and Benson (2009) use "lifestyle migration" to describe a conceptual framework for exploring the increasing trend of people migrating in search of a "good life". The framework has been adopted by anthropologists (see for example Korpela 2016), who through their ethnographic work describe lived realities of people seeking alternative ways of life. Anthropological studies on lifestyles have been discussed in the context of Russia in a recent volume edited by Habeck (2019b). While the contributions do not take up lifestyle migrants in particular, the conceptual framework is useful in understanding dynamics behind people's choices and everyday realities. Aspects of self-presentation, (im)mobility, belonging and creativity are discussed, as is the importance of understanding a more general social phenomenon through the study of lifestyles (Habeck 2019a: 2-7). While my work also builds on the framework, I augment it with insights gained in viewing the trend through relational theories (Ingold 2017; Strathern 2020).

As there is a research gap in examining young lifestyle migrants in Arctic regions, some contributions merit review although they address the topic on a broader age-scale in other regions of the North. Many of these studies highlight entrepreneurial and touristic perspectives, focusing on place attachment and mobility (Carson et al. 2018; Eimermann 2015; Eimermann & Singleton 2022; Tuulentie & Heimtun 2014). While Carson et al. (2018) engage with activities of international winter tourism entrepreneurs in northern Swedish "low-amenity areas", Tuulentie and Heimtun (2014) study mobile tourism workers in Finnish Lapland and northern Norway, who come to the region during peak seasons but do not settle in the community on a long-term basis. Howe and Huskey's (2022) study does not directly address lifestyle migration, but makes a contribution to understanding the phenomenon in suggesting that local amenities – better educational opportunities, housing and water and housing – are important determinants attracting migrants in general to remote Alaskan communities. These pull factors for remote regions also apply to lifestyle migrants in deciding where they will move. In his work on Dutch migrant families in rural Sweden, Eimermann (2015) points out that newcomers were not daunted by a place with a stagnating economy, decreasing population or cold climate. Moreover, he notes that the perceptions and images of the rural North figured among the main reasons for these families to start a new life in northern Sweden. In a later contribution on lifestyle migration, Eimermann and Singleton (2022) make a case for using the term "nature-based integration" when examining (in their study mainly Western) migrants in the Arctic region. The researchers see the snowy winters, which enable a range of outdoor activities, as one of the main reasons for migration, yet at the same time note that the extreme weather conditions present a challenge to lifestyle migrants. They deal with the climate in

different ways: some focus on working in nature-based tourism companies during the winter, while others escape the long, dark and cold winters and opt to spend only the summers in the North (Eimermann & Singleton 2022: 170). Munkejord (2017) contributes a case study from the Finnmark region in northernmost Norway, in which she points out how rural immigrant entrepreneurship can contribute to the sustainability and building of communities in the periphery. She also discusses how engagements between immigrant entrepreneurs, place and community are formed and how attachment to a community (spatial embeddedness) can be explained as one outcome of the entrepreneurial process (ibid.: 113).

Other relevant literature includes the two edited volumes "Human Migration in the Arctic: The Past, Present, and Future" (Uusiautti & Yeasmin 2019) and "Immigration in the Circumpolar North: Integration and Resilience" (Yeasmin et al. 2020). These research covers topics spanning economic integration, education, history, gender-related integration into the labour market and the health risks of Arctic immigrants, but none of the contributions addresses lifestyle migration in Finnish Lapland. While the articles do discuss the challenges facing and opportunities open to young migrants when moving to Finnish Lapland (see also Adams 2020), the focus is on structural and economic conditions, considerations which largely exclude young lifestyle migrants. However, the chapters on Arctic immigration can be useful in understanding issues of immigrants in the region more generally.

The literature on Arctic adventure tourism has proven to be helpful in understanding lifestyle migrants' interests in cold climates and their affinity for sports and nature. Varnajot and Saarinen (2021, 2022) raise the issue of "last-chance tourism" in Arctic regions, in which both tourism operators and local communities have seized the opportunity to develop and benefit economically from tourism in times of the Anthropocene. They illustrate their arguments on Arctic tourism through case studies in Finnish Lapland and list the most attractive activities in Rovaniemi, with these ranging from snowmobiling, reindeer-based activities, husky dog sledding, ice fishing and skiing to viewing the northern lights (Varnajot & Saarinen 2022: 362). Opportunities to work in and run small businesses providing these activities are also among the key motives prompting young lifestyle migrants to move to the Arctic. Studies of Arctic tourism also deal with concepts of wellbeing, and have shown that pleasure and satisfaction are central to creating memories of certain localities and destinations (ibid.: 365). This is also evident in the work of Kotašková (2020), who writes about wilderness perceptions and tourism practices in Svalbard, Norway. In her work, wilderness is described as untamed and pristine land that relies on the absence of people and the presence of wildlife to draw tourists (ibid.: 7). Although

the land is inhabited and used by humans and their built and unbuilt infrastructure, the image of "emptiness" and "vastness" attracts tourists and lifestyle migrants alike. In the lifestyle migration literature, Benson and O'Reilly (2016) ascribe the motives for lifestyle migrants to the outdoor idyll, which offers nature-based activities. They categorise lifestyle migrants' motives for moving under the headings "the rural idyll", "the coastal retreat" and "the cultural/spiritual attraction" (ibid.: 6), notions which echo those readily found in studies of adventure tourism. For example, Carson et al. (2018: 194) point out that locational drivers – the region's sparse population and "undeveloped character" – were key drivers for migrants to move to the North. In the course of seeking the "rural idyll" the self becomes a project that needs to be shaped, developed and expressed (see Korpela 2016). Indeed, the case of international winter tourism entrepreneurs in northern Sweden reveals that lifestyle migrants rarely have previous experience in the tourism sector before moving up north (Carson et al. 2018: 191). In the context of the Arctic, Tuulentie and Heimtun (2014) talk about the analytical category of "hobbyists". They describe this group of people as "non-institutionalised working tourists in that they prolong their stays to pursue a hobby" (ibid.: 376). The category includes people who are able to make money from their hobby, for example, those who earning their living in the ski resorts in Finnish Lapland (Tuulentie & Heimtun 2014).

This review of the literature dealing with Arctic lifestyles reveals a research gap, particularly in regard to ethnographic contributions. Even where anthropological work on lifestyle mobilities and migration has been done, it has traditionally focused on people moving from cold, northern destinations to warm, southern ones (Benson 2014; Benson & O'Reilly 2016; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; Duncan et al. 2013; Korpela 2016). It is in response to these shortcomings in the scholarship, that the present work has set out to challenge this perception and illustrate how the "good life" can take many shapes and forms when (young) people search for self-fulfilment in the Arctic.

5. Theoretical Foundations and Framework: Towards an Anthropology of Wellbeing

The common thread of my work has been to demonstrate how young people in northern Finnish communities define, describe and experience "a good life" and wellbeing. The theoretical framework presented here brings together different perspectives on wellbeing and the current anthropological discussions on the topic. In addition, I propose how ethnographic work on wellbeing could be embedded in the theoretical framework of relations. In doing so, I build on work on relations by Tim Ingold (Ingold 2018, 2021) and Marilyn Strathern (2020). My novel

aim is to show how ethnographic, empirical data on wellbeing could profit from being analysed through the lens of relations. While it is not new to include anthropological insights into wellbeing in asserting the importance of maintaining good and meaningful relations (also see Calestani 2009; Jimenez 2008b; Langer & Højlund 2011), the novel perspective I put forward here is that we would do well to shift from categorical thinking on wellbeing towards a more fluid understanding of the concept, one defined by relations. In other words, rather than explaining wellbeing solely in terms of categories, categories would always be viewed in relation to people, places and spaces. In short, I propose that wellbeing should be understood as fluid relations constantly changing in time, nature and focus.

Anthropological research on wellbeing is often embedded in ethnographies about different communities in various cultural settings. Interestingly however, many times wellbeing becomes apparent in discussing the "illbeing" on which anthropological work has seemingly focused in particular. Indeed, anthropological studies have been productive in pointing out problems and injustices. Ortner (2016) calls this "dark anthropology", meaning "an anthropology that emphasises the harsh and brutal dimensions of human experience, and the structural and historical conditions that produce them" (ibid.: 49). Robbins (2013) has challenged anthropologists to engage with concepts of the good life and to include in their research topics such as "value, morality, well-being, imagination, empathy, care, the gift, hope, and time" (ibid.: 448). Blunt (2020) explores an anthropology of the "good enough", examining beliefs and practices in the grey areas of social life and sees himself between the poles of "dark anthropology" (Ortner 2016) and the "anthropology of the good" (Robbins 2013). In the edited volume of Corsín Jiménez (2008a) "Culture and Well-being. Anthropological Approaches to Freedom and Political Ethics", wellbeing is addressed through topics such as diabetes, hospitals, law, mining, language and pathologisation rather than the actual building blocks of a good life. The authors' approach in the work can be described as traditionally anthropological, which raises questions of relativism (also see Langer & Højlund 2011). Thin's (2008) chapter in the volume probes this astonishing silence of anthropology in matters of happiness, despite the discipline's own understanding that it is being known for having a holistic perspective. I align with Calestani (2009) and Mathews and Izquierdo (2009c), who argue for the use of ethnography in providing new insights and a better understanding of wellbeing, as well as with Thin (2008), who urges cross-cultural comparisons in the search of common determinators of wellbeing. In following these scholars, I wish to contribute meaningfully to anthropological perspectives on young people's wellbeing that shed light on the constituents of wellbeing rather than the symptoms of illbeing.

The question of what constitutes a good life has been an important one for humanity for at least two thousand years. Greek philosophers pondered questions of what the building blocks of a good life were, and centuries later the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 emphasised that citizens have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (Bellinger 2018: 1). Ever since, various governments, NGOs and organisations have articulated their own definitions of what this "pursuit of happiness" or "human wellbeing" should entail. The World Health Organization (WHO), one of the most prominent actors in this domain, defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which a person is able to realise his or her own potential, is able to cope in life with normal stress, and is able to work and contribute to his or her community. It is not just an absence of disease or infirmity" (Timlin et al. 2021: 4). The OECD (2023), in its "Better Life Index", measures a good life in terms of categories such as housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, civil engagement, health, life satisfaction, safety and work-life balance, as well as a barometer indicating gender equality. While the OECD, like other organisations, acknowledges that "there is more to life than the cold numbers of GDP and economic statistics", it mostly bases the defining characteristics on material living conditions and quality-of-life measures. McGillivray (2007) notes that if countries perform poorly, it is usually connected to an absence of relevant policies or the implementation of inappropriate ones. In making a clear distinction between wellbeing and welfare, James (2008: 72) argues that individuals must be seen in a larger socio-cultural context, because "the way that individuals pursue their sense of well-being can even end up in direct conflict with the ideas of the state, or some organisation, about the welfare of the population as a whole." Lambek (2008) adds to the discussion, pointing out that wellbeing is no more stable than society as such and that any models of a good life must incorporate structural conditions, given that "well-being does not occur in the abstract" (Lambek 2008: 125). Mathews and Izquierdo (2009b) criticise quantitative surveys on life quality and wellbeing for largely ignoring cultural differences, while Sointu (2005) questions the normative obligation of wellbeing sought after by individual agents in a "consumer society".

Whereas definitions and concepts of wellbeing seemed to be appearing within and outside of academia at large, anthropology made a rather late state in conceptualising and theorising wellbeing. According to McGillivray (2007: 3), early conceptualisations of wellbeing were utilitarian, reducing it to a subjective feeling. The absence of the specific term "wellbeing" in anthropology does not mean that the topic was neglected in early ethnographic work, however. For example, the work of Evans-Pritchard (1940) describes in extraordinary detail the relations and the social and political forms of wellbeing among the Nuer in southern Sudan, including

well-nourished children, families possessing cattle, a surplus in cheese making and entertaining guests (also see Corsín Jiménez 2008; Evans-Pritchard 1940). Corsín Jiménez (2008) argues that the topic of wellbeing is not directly addressed in Evans-Pritchard's work, but that the vignettes in its thick description indicate a path into theories of wellbeing that anthropologists have since built their work on. On a similar note, Thin (2008: 136) observes that wellbeing figures prominently in Durkheim's work, with key topics of happiness, life satisfaction and health appearing repeatedly in his texts.

First notions of wellbeing from an anthropological perspective appeared in the concept of "Buen Vivir" ("living well") in Latin American studies, which emerged as a critique of development emphasised including people's subjective perceptions in political agendas rather than following ideas of economic growth and restructuring measures (Stammler et al. 2022: 4). In similar work, Calestani (2009: 141) deals with an understanding of "the good life" in the Bolivian plateau, where "well-being is largely attributed to harmonious social relations". Her work highlights the complexity of issues emerging from social relations with regard to co-operation, collaboration and unity as well as conflicts and moral obligations (Calestani 2009: 142). Mathews and Izquierdo (2009a) also encourage a discussion of diversity in wellbeing approaches, an enhancement that anthropological studies in various cultural contexts can bring to the table.

The topic of wellbeing has figured prominently for some time in psychological, educational, philosophical, health, political, economic and development studies, which have put forward diverse conceptualisations of the term (Bellinger 2018; Johnson et al. 2018; McGillivray 2007; Sointu 2005). While a different approach can be distinguished in philosophical treatments of wellbeing, which highlight ideological paradigms of morality and ethics, contributions drawing on economics have mostly based their research on quantitative measurements looking for a more utilitarian view of wellbeing (Calestani 2009: 142). Studies on youth wellbeing often build on psychological work on adolescence (Sweeting et al. 2012) or, as Calestani (2009: 144) claims, wellbeing definitions in those contexts often rely on situational and relational definitions that depend on particular collective constructions. Social science scholars, philosophers and psychologists usually define "the good life" as one in which people themselves define and experience their own lives as meaningful (Fischer 2014; Mathews 2018). Moreover, scholars in the social sciences (including myself in the articles presented in this work) tend to describe wellbeing in terms of categories spanning living standards, income, housing, relationships to family and friends, access to education and work, availability of

infrastructures, leisure activities and practicing one's religion (McGillivray 2007; Stammler et al. 2022). Bellinger (2018) adds that individual determinants of subjective wellbeing may also include such categories as religion, marital status, gender and age. The desire to measure and categorise wellbeing has also been addressed by Gasper (2007: 23), who urges us as researchers to think about what we are able to measure and to discuss what purposes underlie the fundamental conceptualisations of wellbeing. Klasen (2007) discusses the challenges of measurement in the context of gender-related indicators of wellbeing. While there is nothing wrong with developing categories of wellbeing, anthropological research should look beyond any categories and find ways to conceptualise wellbeing in a more inclusive and diverse way.

Many of the prevalent theories on (anthropological) wellbeing draw on the work of economist and philosopher Amartya Sen (2009), who in his study of justice elaborated a capability approach that included discussions on wellbeing. Edwards et al. (2016), for example, build their arguments theorising wellbeing on Sen's capabilities and the notion of freedom. Following this line of thought, they contend that "justice is considered to be achieved when people are able to live lives that they consider to have a value" (Edwards et al. 2016: 756), an argument focusing on capabilities and morally relevant subjects in the search of wellbeing. Oades et al. (2021: 1), for their part, propose taking the capability model as a "new model for wellbeing science and practice". They argue that wellbeing literacy is underpinned by a capability model, and that it is based on constructivist and contextualist epistemologies (ibid). Corsín Jiménez (2008: 9) draws on Sen's social theory of a "nuanced philosophical anthropology" in arguing that people's agency and location in a structure of reflexive choices is described as being conditioned and oriented. Later scholars, for example Calestani (2009), refute Sen's approach based on capabilities by highlighting that the picture of coexistence is more complex than substantive freedom. Moreover, Calestani argues that social interactions must be taken seriously as they may greatly affect people's capabilities to make choices. In making this argument, Calestani emphasises the value of ethnographic work and puts forward a case for using qualitative methods in the study of wellbeing (ibid.: 141).

In the search for a common definition of wellbeing in anthropology, Mathews (2018) addresses the issue of wellbeing often being inconsistent in the anthropological literature, with definitions varying between individual researchers. Indeed, finding common definitions in the attempt to theorise the anthropology of wellbeing seems to have dominated the discussion to date. Mathews (2018: 1), for example, indicates two foci of wellbeing in contemporary anthropology: medical anthropologists tend to think of wellbeing in physical and mental health terms, whereas

social and cultural anthropologists examine wellbeing as it correlates with happiness. Fischer (2014), for his part, advocates an anthropology that goes beyond flagging problems, and proposes a move towards a "positive anthropology". Wellbeing, according to Fisher (2014), includes dignity and fairness, and in his perspective wellbeing becomes evident through one's relations to others. Mathews suggests that a very broad common definition of wellbeing could be described as "an optimal state for an individual, community, or society, as conceived of, expressed, and experienced in different ways by different individuals in different cultural contexts" (Mathews 2018: 3). He continues, pointing out that this definition incorporates different dimensions of the physical, interpersonal, existential and structural, which vary within different cultural contexts (2018: 3–4). I agree with Calestani (2009: 143), who argues that happiness is "an elusive, subjective phenomenon which is hard to measure", and simultaneously acknowledging that a "good quality of life" is equally hard to define. Mathews and Izquierdo (2009b: 2) add to this debate by criticising happiness as being an "ultimately subjective" term. While they acknowledge that happiness is a distinctive part of wellbeing, they contend that wellbeing entails more than just happiness (Mathews & Izquierdo 2009b). For example, values also play a crucial role in defining wellbeing (Calestani 2009). While wellbeing is often connected to ethics and morality, happiness is not always part of it. In other words, having strong values and living according to them can indicate a "good life" for people without guaranteeing them happiness (Calestani 2009: 145).

In trying to find ways of conceptualising wellbeing, Fischer (2014) makes an important distinction between individual and collective wellbeing and relates this to the hedonic vs. eudaemonic understandings of wellbeing. In the present research, hedonic wellbeing – the individual pursuit of happiness – emerged as particularly relevant for the young people. While happiness may have more hedonic, individual components, a good life can also be seen in eudaemonic perspective, a point also highlighted by Stammler and Toivanen (2021) and the present research. Johnson et al. (2018) also distinguish hedonic and eudaemonic wellbeing, with the former referring to subjective feelings of happiness and the latter psychological wellbeing. The psychologist Carol Ryff (in Johnson et al. 2018: 7) breaks eudaemonic wellbeing down into six key components – self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth, purpose in life and autonomy – while hedonic wellbeing has only three – happiness, subjective wellbeing and positive emotions. Bellinger (2018) contributes to the debate by pointing out that subjective approaches to wellbeing focus primarily on indicators such as levels of happiness, life satisfaction and personal achievement. Veenhoven (2007) addresses issues of subjectivity within the debate as well, and proposes to distinguish

between substance and assessment in subjectivity. A contrasting perspective is offered by Calestani (2009), who urges researchers to analyse how individual dimensions of wellbeing might contrast or even compete with collective efforts. Similarly, Corsín Jiménez (2008b) argues that social wellbeing is often assumed to be the sum of personal wellbeing.

Another key anthropological insight and contribution has been to emphasise that wellbeing goes beyond having a high income. Calestani (2009: 143) points out that no cultures define wellbeing solely in terms of wealth. Bellinger (2018: 7) identifies a lack of consensus in the literature about whether or not a greater income increases or decreases wellbeing. The limitations of looking at wellbeing through per capita income have been frequently addressed because the measure captures only one dimension of wellbeing, and scholars argue that the concept must be approached as a multidimensional one. Fischer (2014: 202) argues that people vary in their conception of what it means to have "enough". This stems from the work of Sen (2009), in which he notes that most people naturally want and strive for more income but that even as Western societies have become richer, the people in them have not become happier. Sen elaborates the point with the claim "the central issue is not the significance of happiness, but the alleged insignificance of everything else, on which many advocates of the happiness perspective seem to insist." (Sen 2009: 273). Calestani (2009: 142) notes critically in this regard that Sen's work "focuses on individuals and their relations to a general social context, without entering into any detailed or empirical account of the interaction between individuals and specific collectives". Taking an anthropological stance, Bird (2019) examines neoliberal precarities and sheds light on the capabilities people show and discusses collective and individual wellbeing, shedding light on the capabilities people show to deal with uncertainties. Moreover, in the anthropological discourse, safety, securities and insecurities have figured prominently as topics in the context of capabilities (see Bird 2019; Eriksen et al. 2010; Grant & Collier 2018).

Entering the discussion from an empirical perspective, Thin (2016) points to the fact that policymaking and research often assume that wellbeing is rooted in a particular place. He urges scholars to understand wellbeing from the perspective of dynamic interactions with places rather than assuming that displacements pose a threat to wellbeing. He is not alone in this stance. Tomaney (2017: 99) detects a growing interest in understanding how the local and regional contribute to human wellbeing and advocates adopting alternative measures of wellbeing that go beyond measuring GDP, a suggestion that Stammler & Toivanen (2021) also put forward in their work. Work by Smith and Reid (2018) criticises a "science of happiness" for its focus on

decontextualised and individualised subjects, and emphasises the need to develop geographical research agendas in the social sciences. Later, I will examine Ingold's (2021) understanding of relations in more detail but a finding of his that merits mention here is that people are connected with specific places through care, value and correspondence. Embracing this place-specific concept in the case of the Arctic points to the importance of including Indigenous perspectives in discussions of wellbeing.

Other important views on anthropological wellbeing have been contributed by work Indigenous studies. Timlin et al. (2021: 2) observe that from an Indigenous perspective wellbeing is a holistic concept, one including factors such as "family life, talking, and having intimate communication and adhering to traditional culture, ways of life and connections to the land". Accordingly, they suggest understanding health and wellbeing as a combination of mental, physical, spiritual and social wellbeing. Crawford et al. (2022) make a strong case for suicide prevention and life promotion in circumpolar regions and urge young people to participate in decision-making processes. This approach is much needed, as studies on Indigenous wellbeing tend to address illbeing and its impact on health rather than focusing on a more holistic perspectives of wellbeing (Lehti et al. 2009). Møller (2018) discusses a range of threats to Indigenous people's wellbeing as a result of colonialism: substance abuse, diseases, housing problems, lack of employment, suicides, threats to cultural and linguistic continuities, food insecurity and climate change. Trout et al. (2018) engage with the radical discontinuities between the lives of Alaskan young people and their Elders. Taken together, these contributions highlight the tendency to discuss wellbeing through illbeing, as discussed before. Countering this, Wu (2021) investigates subjective wellbeing issues among Indigenous peoples and finds that subsistence activities lead to positive perceptions of one's own life. Furthermore, she challenges the preconception that modernisation and wage employment will profoundly and favourably impact Indigenous people's wellbeing (Wu 2021: 2621). The topic of wellbeing among Arctic Indigenous youth has been taken up in work by Toivanen (2021), Joona (2017) and Gartler et al. (2021), who all argue that attention should be paid to sustainable future livelihoods for young people in their respective communities.

Towards an Understanding of Wellbeing through Relations

On the first page of his book *Anthropology: Why It Matters*, Ingold (2018) poses the question: "How should we live?" and states, "living is a matter of deciding how to live, and harbours at every moment the potential to branch in different directions, no one of which is any more normal or natural than any other" (ibid.: 1). He continues, arguing that whatever humans do is

never isolated but takes place in relation to and in the company of others (Ingold 2018, 2021). His work indicates that the way people have lived and continue to live through relations lies at the very heart of anthropological research and is essential for understanding the discipline. Another way to look at relations is to view them as correspondences, because, as Ingold contends, “in a more than human world nothing exists in isolation” (Ingold 2021: 6). Ingold (2015) defines interaction as occurring between relations, while correspondence can happen in-between. On the topic of human correspondence, he submits that correspondences rest on three principles: “habit”, “agencing” and “attentionality” (Ingold 2017: 9). He suggests understanding anthropology as a “discipline of correspondences”, where everything is in flux – a view clearly influenced by post-modernist thinking. Through the notion of life through correspondences, where “things are continually coming into being through processes of growth and movement”, Ingold arrives at the fundamental principle of coherence (ibid.: 10). Although he does not directly address wellbeing as a theoretical concept, the indication that relations in any form are essential elements of wellbeing can be seen as an integral part of his work. Langer and Højlund (2011: 2) propose that researchers should view “welfare” not as a measurable, objective state, but as a daily practice and ethical orientation. While they focus on terminology and collective aspects of “wayfaring” and “well-faring” (ibid.: 4), I propose that the focus could be trained on the relational aspects of correspondences. Salient conceptual support for this suggestion can be found in Strathern’s (2020) theory on social relations. In her view, relations are central in anthropological inquiry and a prime focus in gathering anthropological knowledge (Strathern 2020: 2): “Working with relations can turn out to be as trivial – because of their pervasiveness – as it is powerful – given their capacity to at once join and separate” (ibid.: 3). Strathern argues that the fundamental truth of human existence is the capacity of persons to relate with things, beings and entities in their environment. She notes explicitly that there is a distinction between the terms “relation”, “relationship” and “connection” (ibid.: 7). While relationships can be described as unbounded and processual in nature, connections can also exist among unconnected actors in global processes (ibid.: 8). In other words, connections can be described as indirect social relations which include “abstract mechanisms”, whereas relations have an effect far beyond connections (ibid.: 8.). On balance, relations can be described as the “smallest unit of analysis” with a “significant otherness at every scale” (ibid.: 12-13).

Such relations form the basis of what the young people in my research considered to be the building blocks of a good life. Moreover, wellbeing discussed in empirical perspective can only be understood when looking at the various relations young people form. In this sense, the building blocks are variable, relational and fluid. Categories of wellbeing that can be related to

individual and collective wellbeing are justifiable. However, there is a need to acknowledge that such categories are subject to change during any person's life course. Wellbeing, therefore, cannot fit into fixed categories; it must be understood as changeable and fluid. This in turn implies that there can be as many categories of wellbeing as there are relations. What is more, it means that relations entail agency, which varies individually. In this regard, I align with Mathews and Izquierdo (2009b), who argue that wellbeing and happiness are not one and the same thing but have different meanings in different places, societies and cultural contexts. They call upon researchers to view wellbeing as multiple "pursuits of happiness", rather than looking for a single pursuit (ibid.: 1).

6. Research Approach: Description, Critical Discussions & Ethics

Anthropological knowledge is based in empirical realities, where relations, as discussed in the previous chapter are, according to Hastrup (2004), neither self-evident nor neutral. From Hastrup's perspective, knowledge cannot be completely "objective" in the strict sense of the word and social facts must be understood in the context of the focal work (Hastrup 2004: 458–459). Ingold (2021: 198) takes the discussion further, explaining how objectivity hinders us in following promising pathways, barring the research from allowing things or persons in our presence to just correspond with us. In order to really study *with* communities, Ingold (2021) urges us to step into a corresponding relation with our interlocutors. In the case of my research, this meant being open to serendipitous approaches in finding interlocutors. Rivoal and Salazar (2013: 178,183) recommend observing an "unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum", which involves creativity and being in "the right place at the right and wrong times". This approach does not rely solely on luck but requires hard work and ingenuity in gauging where and when relevant things might take place. Moreover, making use of serendipity still requires that one work systematically, while at the same time allowing serendipity to be part of the work (Rivoal & Salazar 2013). McCay-Peet and Toms (2015: 1463) point out how serendipity can result in an "interactive outcome of unique and contingent 'mixes' of insight coupled with chance" and how it is conceptualised simultaneously as a process, trigger and method. Finding young people also required using the method known as "snowballing", or "chain referral", in which interlocutors direct you to their own networks within the community (Bernard & Ryan 2010). This approach worked well to reach also the more "hidden" groups among the young people (Dusek et al. 2015), as some guided me to others through their social networks. The value of being introduced to such networks is plain in the Dusek articles focusing on young

rural stayers in the post-industrial town of Kemijärvi (Adams & Komu 2022) and in the case of young lifestyle migrants in Finnish Lapland (Adams 2023).

Hastrup argues that an anthropologist engages with the world as a “double agent”: as a trained researcher and a character set in the midst of the local everyday life (Hastrup 2004: 465). Therefore, it is vital to acknowledge that participation as a researcher in the world under study is a distinct process in which the relations are inferred by and through the researcher implicated in them (ibid.: 466). I align with Hastrup’s idea of approaching ethnographic work as a distinct process that is embedded in our own capability to form relations and encourage our interlocutors to share their lives and stories with us as researchers. Ingold (2018: 14) urges us to take our collaborators in the field seriously, going beyond attending to their deeds and words to understand the challenges they present to our assumptions. Moreover, the questions asked should lead to comparisons, rather than mere juxtaposing, of different ways of living (Ingold 2018). Hastrup (2004) argues that an anthropological research approach should look at not only the object of interest but also the mode of interest, while organising the information as knowledge. Furthermore, it is important to organise the knowledge in both reductive (reducing empirical complexity) and selective ways (where some information needs to be disregarded) (Hastrup 2004: 456).

I am convinced that using ethnographic methods to study everyday lives can lead to ground-breaking insights, ones which can be hard to achieve in the same depth through so called “objective”, measurable methods. In particular, when studying people, the term “objective” seems obsolete, since any study depends on the context and research questions, which may vary from case to case. Ingold (2018: 2) argues that in order to understand human social life, it must be seen as a never-ending, collective process where every way of life represents a “communal experiment of living”. Here, he urges researchers not to interpret or explain the ways in which other people construct their lives but to learn from being there with them and to describe these experiences to demonstrate the rich spectrum of what human life may entail (Ingold 2018: 8). In trying to do so, I had to limit myself and make conscious choices as to what to focus on during my research. It would have been impossible to capture “all aspects of human life” and reflect upon all topics at the same time.

Moreover, my research approach has been to learn from those young people whose voices might have been dismissed but without putting a spotlight on this group, who would otherwise have remained unheard. As Ingold (2018) suggests, there is much to learn if we allow ourselves to get involved and step into a relation with others who have a different experience to share. In

this light, it has been of utmost importance to me to conduct research together *with* young people, rather than making inquiries *of* them (ibid.).

So far, I have indicated the underlying research approach guiding my work, including the description of how serendipity can be a useful in approaching young people in particular. In the following, I will further explain and critically discuss my approach of working in multiple field sites simultaneously, as this was fundamental to the outcome of my research. This is then followed by a discussion of my positionality and ethical approach.

Multiple Sites: Finding a Balance between “Being here and there”

Adopting the use of multiple sites in the fieldwork with young people living in the Finnish north seemed inevitable, as the lived realties of most of my interlocutors were not confined to a single location or town but spanned multiple physical locations and included the virtual world. As young people in northern Finland often have to commute long distances for education, work, health services, meeting friends, leisure activities, youth centres, shopping and the like, expanding the research to lives in the setting of an urban Arctic town (Rovaniemi) as well as rural towns contributed to a more diverse outcome.

The work at the multiple sites was carried out on three levels: first, the field consisted of four different towns (Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi, Kolari and Pyhäjoki), each with distinct characteristics and varying in size, population, services as well as employment and educational opportunities. All four (physical) field sites are located within a 400-kilometre radius. Second, the multiple sites comprised different physical locations: schools, leisure time places, youth centres, and the like. Third, the virtual world of social media (Instagram in particular) provided another site to generate knowledge about young people’s lives. Especially during the times of my physical absence from the field and during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, using social media was an expedient way to stay connected.

Conducting fieldwork in multiple sites in the present case should not be mistaken as an application of the theoretical concept of multi-sited fieldwork in anthropology; the latter has its origin in the work of George E. Marcus (1995), who urged conventional ethnography to move from single-site locations to multiple sites of participation and observation. He argued for a new contextualisation of cross-cutting “dichotomies such as the ‘local’ and the ‘global’, the ‘lifeworld’ and the ‘system’” (ibid.: 95) and suggested that multi-sited ethnography is defined through the study of a social phenomenon that cannot be understood by focusing only on a single site (Falzon 2009). Interestingly, Marcus (1995: 95) proposed including “new spheres of

interdisciplinary work, including media studies, science and technology studies and cultural studies broadly" into our studies, long before social media existed in the same form as we know it today.

Today, multi-sited ethnography is discussed in a broader sense than that put forward by Marcus, being seen as an undertaking using ethnographic approaches in conducting research in multiple realities at the same time. Çaglar & Glick Schiller (2018: 11) investigate the context of migrants acting in "multiscalar" connections and point out how the multiscalar connectivities of everyday life should not be ignored but carefully examined. Marino (2020: 76) describes multi-sited ethnography as an "open and flexible tool that researchers need to adapt to the changing needs and practices of the population under study". The example of van Duijn (2020) addresses the challenges of the method in healthcare institutions. Hannerz (2003) studies the work of foreign correspondents for news media, while Wittel (2000) stresses the need to move from localities to the internet. Pierides (2010) argues for the importance of multi-sited fieldwork in a world that is characterised by partial connections, an observation which I have found to be particularly relevant in the study of young people. Hannerz (2003: 206) criticises Marcus' approach, contending that the term "multilocal" in itself is misleading because it entails phenomena which are significantly translocal and which are not to be confined to single places. He submits that we should look at the connections and relationships between sites, as "the fields are not some arbitrary collection of local units". In addition, Hannerz (2010) calls for a reconceptualisation of what field sites are, or where they should be, to the extent that we rethink the limits of fields altogether.

Furthermore, I concur with Falzon (2009: 1–2), who argues that "the essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships across space". I see space as very much including the world of social media, which is extremely popular among young people and plays a big part in forming their identities. In the present research, the opportunities to follow online behaviours of young people on the internet on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, as well as various gaming platforms, would have been essentially limitless. While I occasionally searched for content on some of these platforms, I needed to limit myself and chose to focus on Instagram, a popular social networking service for sharing photos along with descriptions and short videos. Judging from this wealth of sources, I would argue that the strength of multi-sited ethnography lies in its bottom-up approach and, as Xiang (2013: 283) describes it, "in mapping out the ever-unfolding mobility and connections as they are".

In carrying out research in all these places and spaces and understanding the issues of young people more broadly, the limitations of conducting research in multiple sites also became obvious. Building meaningful connections, finding key persons to help connect with young people, and building relationships and networks with municipal employees, mayors, school headmasters, youth workers and local activists require a great deal of additional, preparatory work. One can run the risk of failing to live up to the ethnographic ideal of staying in a single location for a relatively long period of time. Indeed, the feeling of having too little time in each site was occasionally frustrating. Yet, it was pivotal to use this approach if I was to gain a sufficiently broad picture of young people's wellbeing in the region. I draw support from Horst (2009), who argues for the importance of working amongst the members of the same community in different contexts and who shows in his work how depth and multi-sitedness are not contradictory. Mazzucato (2009: 215), too, contends that a good balance between depth and breadth is possible and highlights that the challenge is to combine multiple localities and contextualise the often fragmented information from the different sites. What is more, Horst (2009) shows how multi-sited fieldwork allows the researcher to study networks particularly well (ibid.: 120), which was an integral part of my work. Some of the young people I met during the years in multiple locations, either because they had moved or because they were commuting between places themselves. When some of the young people came to Rovaniemi, for example, we would meet in the buzz of the Arctic capital for a coffee; yet it was also significant for them and for me as a researcher that I went for longer visits to their hometowns. It was beneficial for and valued by the young people that I had connections with other rural communities as it showed my interest in the topic beyond the borders of one single location.

Positionality

From the very beginning of my PhD research, I have been affiliated with the Arctic Centre in Rovaniemi. Being a research affiliate at a local research institute (Arctic Centre, University of Lapland) and being part of a local research team (Arctic Anthropology) helped me tremendously in finding relevant research partners, but also in establishing long-term connections within the Arctic research community. This in turn was instrumental in enabling me to place my work in a larger context and remaining constantly informed about relevant topics emerging in the field.

Starting my PhD research in the project "Live, Work or Leave? Youth wellbeing and the viability of (post)extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia", yielded the framework in which the towns/sites in my present research were embedded. When I received a

three-year uni:docs grant, I decided to continue working in the towns that I had become familiar with. Employment in the ERC Advanced Grant project "InfraNorth" helped me to finish my research, as my work for the project took place in Finnish Lapland, where I could continue to build on existing networks.

On a personal level, my position as a Finnish citizen who has spent most of her life abroad was useful on several levels. On the one hand, I was able to communicate in my native language (Finnish) while, on the other, the region of northern Finland was largely a new and unfamiliar area to me. Not being familiar with the northernmost region of my home country and people living there provided me with a distance to observe new things. I had only two acquaintances in Finnish Lapland, where I conducted the main part of my fieldwork, and essentially had to established my contacts from scratch. In this sense, I was an outsider entering the field with language skills but no ready, established connections.

During the period of six months in the field, I was accompanied by my teenage boys, who did an exchange semester at a local school during my fieldwork. This enabled me to experience the place differently in that I had daily routines and took part in local activities. These included participation in local events such as a reindeer race, ice-fishing competitions, sports events or regular meetings of the Arctic Anthropology Team at the Arctic Centre. Because I had my children with me, opportunities opened up to meet and get to know other families, to participate in school events, have contacts with other teenagers through my boys, volunteer for children's and youth events, and get a first-hand look at the medical, social and educational care. Experiencing the long winter, with all the perks and drawbacks – a frozen car or having to put on layers of clothing before even stepping out the door – enabled me to engage with the place in a different way than I had during my shorter visits to the field. In this regard, the purpose of the research was well served by the dual role of researcher and "temporary local resident with children at school". Although I was in the field with my children, I always conducted formal interviews and focus groups alone and made sure my young interlocutors were comfortable with the setting.

Ethical Considerations

The moral obligation to work ethically and to protect my informants has been of utmost importance in my work. I have followed the recommendations of The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences (TENK Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2019), the Code of Ethics issued by the American Anthropological Association (2012) and the "Ethical Guidelines 2021 for Good Research

Practice" of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK (ASA 2021), all of which require being open about my research interests and topic whenever having encounters in the field. The ethics of ethnographic writing, using the stories that people share combined with insights into their daily lives, need to be processed with care and respect (McGranahan 2020). Clearly, ethical dilemmas cannot be completely avoided by merely informing people about the research purposes. Emerson et al (2011: 37) point out that while participants might have consented to the research, they might not know exactly how the researcher will carry it out or how the information will be used. Especially in anthropology, the interlocutors might forget that in everyday life situations the research is still ongoing, which is why I kept reminding the young people about my role throughout the research. On this topic, Swain and King (2022: 8) remark that there is indeed a blurred line when people become "participants in a study", and suggest treating interlocutors as participants as soon as their data is recorded in the fieldnotes.

Conducting fieldwork with young people required me to be sensitive to the power relations this entails, as young research participants are in a potentially vulnerable position vis-à-vis the researchers due to the age difference and access to resources (Cieslik 2003). Finding a middle ground where I could engage with young people and invite them to share their insights on various aspects of their lives was guided by the idea of working together *with* them, rather than conducting research *about* them (Ingold 2018).

I have continuously and systematically anonymised names, ages, ethnicities, and exact meeting places to avoid revealing the identities of not only the young informants but also the educators, town officials, industry representatives, youth workers and other informants, all of whom have voluntarily participated in this study without receiving any material or monetary benefits in return. Participants in this research were informed and aware that they were sharing their knowledge for the purpose of scientific research, and that the findings would be shared in the form of articles and my thesis.

The data collected has been stored in safe online data stores or in safe physical locations in accordance with the data storage regulations and requirements of the different projects [2]. All arrangements have met the requirements of the Research Ethics of Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology (2023) at the University of Vienna.

[2] University of Vienna, "uni:docs" Fellowship programme; Finnish Academy funded "WOLLIE", project ID 314471, and the ERC advanced grant project "InfraNorth", project ID 885646.

7. Methodological Approach

Throughout my research I have adhered to a mixed methods approach in which I have collected qualitative data from multiple sites in northern Finland. To understand the social processes in this region and the everyday lives of young people living there, I used informal conversations, interviews, focus groups, participant observation and analyses of social media content. Such a mixed methods approach is useful in gathering data on a broader societal context, although at the same time it cannot claim to reveal 'the whole picture' (Bernard & Ryan 2010; Silverman 2013). The methods used in analysing the data are described in detail in later in this chapter.

First and foremost, I would like to highlight the ethnographic dimension of this work, which goes beyond conducting formal, recorded interviews. This research owes its depth to the relationships and the countless informal conversations with young people, youth workers, teachers, social workers, municipal officials, and local residents willing to share their time and knowledge. I align with Lareau (2021: 1), who describes how ethnographies have the capacity to show the way in which people live in different, overlapping social worlds and can reveal worlds colliding in unexpected ways. Similarly, Hastrup (2004: 464) points to the importance of making connections and "allow[ing] oneself to be 'caught up in the series of events that constitute social life, where there is no objective truth, but simply potentially exclusive versions of the truth that together constitute the event'". Roberts (2003) highlights the importance of being adaptive when engaging with young people, and Clark (2011) strongly encourages the use of ethnographic, qualitative research methods when working with young people.

Following Lareau (2021) and Hastrup (2004), I would like to demonstrate with my contribution how ethnographic research can challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and offer new perspectives. Indeed, embracing this conviction proved particularly fruitful in studying young people's lives in northern Finland. Long-term fieldwork and multiple returns to the field (see Vitebsky 2012) have been essential in the process of making sense of how young people think and act in their everyday lives in changing contexts. In all, this entailed spending a total of one year in the field in twelve visits to northern Finland between May 2018 and March 2022. These fieldwork periods lasted from six months to ten days each. I consider it important to live and visit different locations during all seasons to experience the changes in the region (e.g. high and low tourism seasons, academic semesters, seasons including extreme weather conditions, living in different rental apartments in multiple areas, private guestrooms of friends, hotels, hostels and Airbnb accommodations). For most of my time in the field I stayed in Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland, which served as a base with good connections to the more remote

towns of Kemijärvi, Kolari and Pyhäjoki, where my stays ranged from three weeks to a single day.

Since completing the research on the topic of young people's wellbeing, I have continued fieldwork in the area, and am still in contact with some of my former interlocutors. Establishing long-term and in-depth relations with local people has been crucial to understanding their perceptions of the place and factors affecting individual and collective well-being. In a relevant observation, Bernard and Ryan (2010: 370) note that during long-term ethnography, close relationships with key informants are developed that can also last for a lifetime. These key informants are important because they know the local culture and are willing to share their knowledge. The combination of repeated returns and close relationships with some key informants allowed me to witness some participants' coming of age, as some of them were only 16 years old when I started my fieldwork and 21 years by the time I had formally finished this research.

Informal Conversations

Informal conversations are at the heart of any anthropological research, as they yield insights that often may not be articulated during the course of formal interviews. Informal conversations proved to be the most suitable method – the primary source of gathering knowledge for conducting research among young people. Given the hierarchical setting between me and my interlocutors, who often were only half my age, the method of "casually conversing" allowed for meetings in familiar and safe settings (schools, youth centres and popular cafes) and created an atmosphere of trust. Using informal conversations was particularly helpful in listening to a variety of voices, allowing me to include marginalised young people, who would not have felt comfortable participating in formal interviews or focus groups. Swain and King (2022: 2) argue that informal conversation generally creates greater ease of communication and has the potential to produce "realistic and naturalistic" data. Their work among students shows how the less performative aspect of the method enables the researcher to get closer to the "reality of individuals' experiences, values and perceptions" (Swain & King 2022: 8). Kvale (1996: 5) emphasises the importance of including conversations as a research method because the interlocutors' experiences, feelings, hopes and the world they live in are well reflected.

The advantages of informal conversations lie in the opportunity to interact with a variety of people, for example, ones who happen to be in the right place at the right time by serendipity (McCay-Peet & Toms 2015; Rivoal & Salazar 2013). While informal conversations might seem like casual conversations, the method requires a trained memory in order to recall detail from

the conversations (Bernard & Ryan 2010: 28). Whenever possible, I jotted down notes during the conversations and later added these to the fieldnotes proper. I understand "jottings" in the diary as observations written quickly during actions and dialogues, which at a later stage help to preserve accuracy and detail (Emerson et al. 2011). The apparent informality is embedded in a conversation that is defined and controlled by the researcher. The topics were often introduced by me as the researcher, and I followed up on the interlocutor's answers when the conversation revolved around the research questions (also see Kvale 1996).

One of the main disadvantages and concerns of using informal conversations is getting formal, written consent from the informant before starting the conversation. Swain and King (2022) point to the ethical considerations arising from using informal conversations but also present a solution in advocating being open throughout the research about the motives. Faubion (2009: 146) challenges the common practice of asking informants "to sign on the dotted line" and argues that the formalities can become a hindrance in conducting ethnographic fieldwork.

My approach to conducting informal conversations was always to first introduce myself as a researcher, briefly explaining my research topic and making sure my prospective interlocutors knew *why* I wanted to have conversations with them and *what* my motivation was to learn about their everyday lives. These informal conversations took place in a variety of locations ranging from formal school rooms, sports centres, supermarkets, cafes, youth centres, young people's homes to public outdoor campfire sites. Collecting the rich data presented in the individual articles only became possible because my interlocutors were willing to share their knowledge also outside of formally organised interviews. In the process, I followed Stevenson's (2014) advice that one should listen to the other in a way which did not fix the interlocutor in a place, but rather created the possibility of questioning, changing topics and reformulating thoughts casually throughout the conversation. Maintaining the young participants' confidentiality and anonymity vis-à-vis other members of the community was a basic prerequisite for my being able to use this method.

Interviews

Much as in the case of informal conversations, the purpose of interviewing is to gather information from a respondent and to forge a relationship with the intention to learn as much as possible about the young person's life (Lareau 2021). Whenever conducting these more formalised interviews, I came to a pre-arranged setting with a prepared interview guideline and a recorder. The participants were asked to reserve around an hour of their time and the meeting places were selected beforehand. The older my interlocutors were, the longer I could plan for

an interview to last (up to two hours); while the attention span of some of the younger participants was no longer than fifteen minutes. I made sure to always adjust my requirements to the expressed needs of my interview partners and adapted the length and depth of the sessions to what they felt comfortable with. This aligns with Clark (2011), who points out that particular attention in interviewing young people should be given to being intuitive and reflexive throughout the interviews.

I used open-ended questions, always bearing in mind that the interviewee is the expert on the subject matter. The interview guidelines included questions concerning the young people's former and current living environments, factors that lead to their staying in, leaving or returning to the focal towns, aspects of personal wellbeing, opportunities and challenges associated with living in northern Finland and future aspirations and dreams. Bernard and Ryan (2010) regard interviewing as a social process in which the interplay between the interviewer and the interlocutor provides answers to the questions asked. For her part, Lareau (2021: 63) concurs with this line of thought, adding that special attention should be paid to the intimate ways in which confidences can be shared that people would guardedly withhold from a more closely related person. Clark (2011) notes that in the case of young participants individual in-depth interviews require a clear explanation of the interview process, and emphasises that interviews must be designed in an age-appropriate manner. Silverman (2013) in turn suggests designing the research questions to be as open-ended as possible to allow for different interpretations.

I refrained from asking the young people sensitive questions about their personal lives – in particular their political views, their relationship status, living standard, physical and substance abuse, mental health issues and addictions. Even though I did not have any specific questions in my interview guideline about these sensitive topics, the open-ended questions allowed the young people to talk about these topics if they wanted to. In many cases, we ended up talking about various very personal aspects of their lives, as these relations were essential in defining aspects of wellbeing. It was of paramount importance, however, that young people felt that they could share as much or as little information about their lives as they felt comfortable sharing.

Focus Groups

Using focus groups is highly suitable for youth research, as this form of qualitative data collection provides a forum where participants can immerse themselves in a certain topic together with their peers (also see Clark 2011; Flick 2014). In the present research, focus groups required a different type of preparation, such as creating sufficiently open questions (based on the same interview guidelines I used for individual interviews), and also involved my having to

moderate the groups so that everyone`s opinion was taken into consideration. The core idea of the focus groups was to moderate the group in a dynamic way that allowed the young people to feed one another comments, ideas and perceptions of what wellbeing and "a good life" meant from their viewpoint. Running focus groups in a tightly knit communities such as the small northern towns in which I conducted most of the groups required special attention and sensitivity to ensure that the discussions were inclusive. In other words, I made it clear to the participants from the outset that the group was a safe space to talk, that there were no right or wrong answers and that it was important to talk to one another respectfully.

The limitations of focus group interviews are that not everyone is likely to voice their opinion, especially if their opinions differ from what seems to be the common view. Moreover, there were always some people who dominated the discussion, while others were hesitant to participate (also see Bernard & Ryan 2010). I started the groups with a round of introductions in which all the participants told where they grew up, where they currently lived and what occupation or studies they were engaged in. We then continued discussing the pros and cons of living in their respective towns and took up what factors were important for their individual wellbeing. We talked about job opportunities, educational prospects, leisure time activities, future plans and other topics that came up during the discussions. Towards the end, the task was to reflect on hopes, wishes and dreams in regard to what their hometowns would need for them to live a good life.

I made sure to emphasise the voluntary nature of participation in such groups and that if someone wanted to leave the conversation at any point, this was perfectly acceptable. Altogether, I conducted 13 focus group interviews, with each having three to eight participants. Focus groups were best held at schools and youth centres, where young people would naturally hang out in larger groups and where teachers and youth workers helped me to gather participants. Some of the focus group discussions emerged serendipitously during longer breaks in school halls and at youth centres. However, most were pre-arranged and took place in locations that the young people or their supervisors had chosen.

Observations and Participant Observation

My research approach acknowledged Ingold's (2018: 11) concern that the researcher should study *with* people, rather than making studies *of* them. To this end conducting observations among the young people required multiple returns to the field and a substantial amount of time. Ingold (2018: 12) points out that part of participant observation is to accept "what is being offered when it is offered". Moreover, he argues that for an anthropologist participant

observation is not just one method of data collection but rather a commitment to learn by participating in emerging activities (Ingold 2018: 14). In this light, the observations I used during my time in the field fall into three categories: direct observations, indirect observations and participant observations. Bernard and Ryan (2010: 22) stress the importance of observing and watching people in addition to listening to what they are saying. Stevenson (2014: 2) points out the importance of ethnographers already knowing what they want to find out and paying attention to moments when things become unhinged. In this spirit, I set out to go to places popular with young people, capturing observations in extensive fieldnotes. The combination of using these three forms of observations widened my understanding of how young people construct a good life in their respective communities and what factors of wellbeing matter to them.

In concrete terms, I conducted observations in three high schools, where I was granted generous access to attend classes with students, and in two youth centres, where I was welcomed whenever the centres were open. In addition, I was invited to spend time at a motorbike repair workshop – specially designed to serve under 18-year-olds – where people had a chance to fix their vehicles. An old indoor skating rink operated by a youth organisation also granted me access. In addition, I participated in activities together with young people ranging from hunting the northern lights, taking trips to popular nature destinations and hanging out in local coffee houses, pubs, libraries, summer festivals and stores. I visited places that the young people described as important and relevant – with them and on my own – examples being shopping malls and movie theatres; hiking, skiing and biking trails; gyms; beaches; national parks; outdoor campfire sites (*laavu*); flea markets; and grocery stores. Whenever possible, I tried to accept invitations and adapt my schedule to the schedules of my young interlocutors. I agree with Falzon (2009), who describes ethnographers viewing data as a form of gift from their informants, one which calls for reciprocity.

The data from the observations was formalised in written fieldnotes. Sometimes it was possible to write notes during observations, but most of the time when I was conducting participant observation the notes were written afterwards.

Analysis of Social Media Content

Social media has an enormous impact on young people's everyday lives today, whether they actively use the platforms or deliberately refrain from participating in the virtual world. Recalling Falzon's (2009) idea of conducting multi-sited research across space, I found that the analysis of social media content revealed new perspectives and insights into how young people

showcase their lives. Caliandro and Graham (2020) explain how social, cultural, economic and political concerns can be revealed through anthropological analysis of social media. As the use of social media has become normalised, many aspects of young people's lives have become more visible; for example, they share snapshots of their daily lives on various social media channels (Wyn 2020). However, it is important to remember that what individuals choose to post and transfer to a visual medium is transient (Sinanan 2020). Accordingly, as Sinanan (2020) suggests, an essential part of the ethnographic inquiry of everyday practices on social media has been to look beyond the pictures posted.

I have analysed social media content mostly in the case of young lifestyle migrants, who chose Instagram to promote their chosen way of life (Adams 2023). Instagram is very popular among 18-to-29-year-olds and is designed to adapt quickly to the latest changes in the market and culture (Caliandro & Graham 2020). Instagram's idea is to upload stunning images and to gather followers and likes; it is a platform where young people often do not showcase their everyday lives but rather highlight special occasions. Sinanan (2020) points out that Instagram is used by individuals to craft and shape images and aesthetics in a socially acceptable way. In the case of my young interlocutors, the life showcased on social media usually featured stunning images of nature while leaving aside their everyday routines. Instagram also served as a platform by which I could stay in contact with the young people while I was not in the field physically and had to contact individuals for interviews. My basic principle here was to follow the young people's public profiles without prior approval but to get consent before following their private profiles. As a basic principle, I would wait for them to "follow" me first, before adding them to my "followers" because of the sensitive power relation between a researcher and vulnerable young interlocutors.

In addition to Instagram, young people in northern Finland use TikTok and YouTube to produce social media content. TikTok was especially common among the younger participants, and I occasionally viewed the platform. Because I had to limit the range of social media I could follow, I chose to focus analytically on Instagram, as it best served to answer the research question of how young people were showcasing situations relating to their wellbeing and what they viewed as the building blocks of a good life.

Analysing the Data

Converting ethnographic material into data requires that all written and recorded notes must be organised in a way that makes it possible to create analytical categories. Recorded interviews were transcribed and once all the materials were systematically ordered, I followed the method

used by Emerson et al. (2011) to further analyse the data. Their approach is for the researcher to systematically sift through the fieldnotes and interviews looking for threads. with the ultimate goal being to produce coherent analyses of aspects of the participants' social life (Emerson et al. 2011: 171). After the first round of reading through the fieldnotes and interviews in chronological order, analytical coding of the fieldnotes is begun. This proceeds in two phases: the first is open coding in which the fieldnotes are read line-by-line to identify and formulate all themes. The second is focused coding, in which frequently emerging topics and particular interests are identified (Emerson et al. 2011: 172). I also followed Caliandro and Graham (2020: 6), who suggest analysing social media content in triangulation with the interviews and fieldnotes. In other words, I treated the pictures and the texts accompanying the social media images like any other field data and coded them in the same manner. The codes developed were tested against the observations in the field again and again during the frequent visits (Bernard & Ryan 2010). It was necessary to move back and forth between topics and themes, between codes and patterns, to identify topics leading to the outcomes. Through constant feedback loops with interlocutors in the field, my supervisors and the data itself, salient topics and patterns came to light.

The main codes emerging from my fieldnotes included education, work/career opportunities, housing, living environment, personal health (mental and physical), access to health services income/economic perspectives, identity, spatiality, labour market friends, relatives, family, associations, multi-ethnic relations, civil society, clothing, leisure time activities, nature, relationships, religious views, shopping, transport infrastructures, mobility, safety, security and sports. To achieve such a variety of codes, it was necessary to take extensive fieldnotes, even of seemingly unimportant details. The notes and jottings focused on being consistent in keeping questions of *how* in mind, rather than focusing on *why*, in an approach Emerson et al. (2011) suggest. Lareau (2021: 163) points out that the written observations and notes from conversations are a trade-off between breadth and depth and that high-quality fieldnotes are characterised by precise descriptions of the events that occur.

8. Central Research Findings: Discussion

In the following, I will first discuss the determinants of youth wellbeing through two articles featuring case studies comparing Finnish and Russian[3] towns. In the course of the project, I took part in one trip to the Murmansk region in Russia (visiting mainly Kirovsk and Revda)

[3] All Russian data was collected before the Covid-19 pandemic and before the start of the war against Ukraine.

with my colleagues and co-authors and visited youth organisations, educational facilities and met with individuals. This fieldtrip, part of the WOLLIE[4] project, made it easier for me to understand the similarities and differences in youth wellbeing in both countries, on which we build our comparative articles. The soft comparison (Mathews & Izquierdo 2009c) enabled us to catch the fluidity of relations and agency, while seeking to demarcate categories of wellbeing. All data from the Finnish field sites was conducted and processed by me, while the Russian fieldwork was conducted and processed by my colleagues Florian Stammler, Lukas Allemann, Aytalina Ivanova and Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen. Together, we analysed our individual outcomes and brought them together in the two articles. Although the publication dates suggest otherwise, these articles were the first ones that I wrote during the project. I therefore consider them to be my starting points on which my other work built.

In the second part of discussing my research findings I shift from the comparative design to studying two distinct rural towns in Finnish Lapland – Kolari and Kemijärvi. The data used in the articles from both case towns was collected solely by me. My colleague Teresa Komu (2019, 2020) had conducted extensive fieldwork in the Kolari region prior to our collaboration and when she joined the WOLLIE project, the idea was born to co-author two publications, using my field data but to develop a theoretical, analytical and conceptual framework together. The main fieldwork used for both articles was caried out before the Covid-19 pandemic during repeated visits to both case towns. I had a chance to visit Kolari also once during the pandemic when travel restrictions had been relaxed somewhat. In this section I will discuss the main findings of our work, which takes up agency and mobility among rural young people in Finnish Lapland. This research indicates how a good life can be achieved in the Arctic region despite structural constraints, which are often described in terms of long distances, scanty educational opportunities, a lack of services and infrastructure and limited employment opportunities.

In the third and final part, I show how newcomers to Finnish Lapland experience and describe aspects of wellbeing. Some of these young people I met at the beginning of my research as my original intention was to focus solely on young immigrants' perspectives on wellbeing (Adams 2020). However, I quickly realised that in order to understand the processes at work in newcomers' integration, I first needed to understand how young people for whom northern Finland is home perceived wellbeing. During that process I came across a number of what one might call "young lifestyle migrants", and realised that what was a growing phenomenon had

[4] WOLLIE is short for the Finnish Academy funded project "*Live, Work or Leave? Youth – wellbeing and the viability of (post)extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia"*

received only little academic attention and that thus far no anthropological research on Finnish Lapland had touched upon this topic.

Despite their different foci, there is a surprising amount of overlap between the case studies in northern regions. Agency is visible throughout the analyses, regardless of whether young people wanted to leave, stay in or come to the northern regions, as well as attitudes indicating that wellbeing is more than a high income. The connection to nature was prominent in all cases, although how the young people made use of the nature and nature-based activities differed culturally. Furthermore, all articles bring forward the structural conditions, aspects of mobility and infrastructures, perceptions of services, education and employment. Taken together, the analyses in the contributions demonstrate the relationality in wellbeing. The categories of wellbeing were always expressed by talking about the young people's relation to people, places, work, education, infrastructure, mobility, security, housing and the like. In this respect, the ethnographic vignettes I present here reveal fluid categories of wellbeing: it is experienced and expressed differently depending on the lens and perspective through which they are viewed. In Chapter 5, I discussed specifically how wellbeing has different meaning in different places, societies and cultural contexts, which is exemplified through the comparative articles. Furthermore, I show in my theoretical chapter (5) that any wellbeing categories are subject to change during any person's life course. This is visible in all articles as young people's agency is highlighted. Following Strathern's (2020: 2) line of thought, where relations are at the centre of any anthropological inquiry and where scale matters, I continue to discuss my main research findings from the individual articles.

Determinants of Youth Wellbeing: A Comparative Approach

Together, the articles "Rewiring remote urban futures? Youth well-being in northern industry towns" (Stammler et al. 2022) and "Youth wellbeing in 'Atomic Towns': The cases of Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki" (Adams et al. 2021) form a basis for studying young people's wellbeing in Arctic and subarctic communities. The comparative approach relies on "soft comparison", as suggested by Mathews and Izquierdo (2009c: 6), which consists of comparing "all the nuances of sociocultural context ethnographically portrayed", rather than looking at "bold statistics". We compare two very distinct places – pre- and post-industrial northern towns and two culturally different places Russia and Finland – in order to discover similarities and differences in youth wellbeing. Emphasising contextuality, we analyse the role of town-forming companies and their impacts on local youth wellbeing. The comparison of the Finnish and Russian cases highlights how the relevant variables are determined by structural factors such

as geography, the life-cycles of the industries, individual and collective preferences and company and municipal policies (Stammler et al. 2022).

We sought to understand determinants of youth wellbeing and designed a catalogue of main variables suggested by our analysis from all the case towns. The variables of wellbeing identified included employment opportunities, access to education, a functioning network of family and friends, access to nature, sufficient infrastructure, safety, social security, access to health services, access to transportation, religious views and the quality and diversity of leisure time activities (Stammler et al. 2022: 6–7). Furthermore, our research discusses how factors such as networks of family and friends and educational and employment opportunities lead to decisions to stay, leave or return (Adams et al. 2021: 236).

Surveying the topic of wellbeing, it is hard to ignore the limitations young people face living in rural, northern places. While reflecting on the building blocks of a good life, young people also explain the downsides of living in their home towns. The hardships often materialise in a lack of infrastructure, having to commute long distances, the absence of friends, limited post-secondary education offerings or a lack of choice when it comes to leisure-time activities. These may amount to decisive reasons to leave one's rural home town (Adams et al. 2021). Tellingly, it became apparent that the long distances, for example, were not exclusively a problem. Indeed, our work shows how mobility and access to a vehicle played an essential role in the young people's satisfaction, especially in rural areas (also see Adams & Komu 2022).

In both articles (Adams et al. 2021; Stammler et al. 2022), we discuss how age figures significantly in the perception of their respective home towns and the effect of age when making a decision to leave or stay. We consider younger participants aged between 16 and 19 years and refer to participants between the ages of 19 and 29 as "older youth". While leisure time activities and personal mobility (hedonistic determinants of wellbeing) were more important for the younger participants, affordable housing, family ties and employment opportunities (eudaemonic determinants of wellbeing) were more significant for the older participants. In the light of this finding, we suggest that greater attention should be paid to the role of hedonic happiness when studying youth issues. Fischer (2014) tends to consider hedonic aspects of wellbeing "less gratifying" because they are not long lasting. However, from the perspective of teenagers, hedonic activities and places where they can "hang out" freely with peers matter significantly. Hence, we argue that wellbeing should not only be framed through permanent and stable elements (eudaimonic factors) but attention should also be paid to less-structured activities (Adams et al. 2021). While young people above the age of 20 tend to value peace,

safety, nature, family-friendliness, and work opportunities, mobility, freedom to explore different opportunities in education, work and leisure-time activities are more dominant in the discussions with younger participants. In findings similar to ours, Timlin et al. (2021) distinguish between younger and older people in their study of wellbeing, with the result that being younger is associated with more satisfactory wellbeing.

Our articles highlight how income alone is not reason or motivation enough for young people to stay in their home towns. We agree with Fischer (2014), who argues that while income contributes to subjective wellbeing, there are many more factors that contribute fundamentally to people's overall wellbeing. The theme of wellbeing "beyond income" is visible throughout the research in all case towns. I will explore this issue in more detail in the next chapter, which deals specifically with young rural stayers.

Despite many similarities, we found that there are significant differences between the Russian and Finnish approaches to youth wellbeing. While the general approach to wellbeing issues in Finland mostly begins with consideration of individual needs, the Russian cases show a prioritisation of collective approaches. This became particularly obvious through the topic of access to nature and a clean environment. The Finnish young people refer to nature as a source of individual mental wellbeing, while Russian young people emphasise the environment as a space for group activities (Stammler et al. 2022: 12). When it comes to living conditions, the results also differ: while in the Russian towns studied there is hardly any private homes (most young people lived in apartment blocks), the Finnish young people highlighted not only the benefits of individual housing but perceived moving away from their childhood home as a rite of passage (also see Adams & Komu 2022). This observation implies that there are differences between collective and individual experiences of wellbeing that are culturally embedded.

In addition, we draw attention to the policy makers and the cooperation organisations and how they promote programmes and activities aimed at young people. Municipalities in particular are making considerable efforts to keep young people in their rural home towns by offering a variety of activities, trying to maintain educational institutions and creating new job opportunities (Adams et al. 2021, 2022; Stammler et al. 2022). However, young people themselves highlight that finding suitable work was at times difficult, as either education or aspirations failed to match the jobs or education on offer. In fact, comparing the two nuclear towns of Pyhäjoki (Finland) and Polyarnye Zori (Russia), it became clear that young people in both towns tend not to see their future as working for the towns' companies (nuclear power plants), but rather saw outsiders getting the jobs created by the plants.

In conclusion, we recommend that attention be paid to both eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing when doing research on young people (Adams et al. 2021). Moreover, we suggest that youth wellbeing should get more space in academic discussions about sustainable and viable communities, on the strength of the argument that wellbeing lies in the socio-cultural context and the relevance of the age group (Stammler et al. 2022).

Two Case Studies in Finnish Lapland: Rurality, Mobility and Agency

Moving on from the more general approach of comparing cultural similarities and differences, highlighting age-specific issues and looking at categories of wellbeing, I now shift my focus to young people's agency with regard to mobility and immobility. In both articles we understand migration as "an act of individual agency, one driven by future aspirations that are facilitated and constrained by material, social and cultural conditions" (Komu & Adams 2021: 33). The research processes and findings are set out in two articles, "Radically Ordinary Lives: Young Rural Stayers and the Ingredients of the Good Life in Finnish Lapland" (Adams & Komu 2022) and "Not Wanting to be 'Stuck': Exploring the Role of Mobility for Young People's Wellbeing in Northern Finland" (Komu & Adams 2021).

In both articles we elaborate how it is common for young people in rural Finland to leave their place of birth to study and work in urban environments. A "mobility imperative" has been central in discussions about rural youth (also see Armila et al. 2016; Farrugia 2016; Stockdale & Haartsen 2018; Tuuva-Hongisto 2018), who "are driven out by structural inequality whereby cultural and economic capital becomes concentrated in cities, leaving rural living symbolically portrayed as inferior to urban life" (Komu & Adams 2021: 32). Then again, outmigration represents a transitional phase for young people living in rural Finnish communities and is strongly suggests a process of "self-realisation", which is an indication of a "good life" in Western societies. When mobility is seen as the cultural norm, young people who stay in their home communities are perceived as peculiar; they often find themselves confronted with negative images and stereotypes of being "left behind" or "disadvantaged" (Adams & Komu 2022; Komu & Adams 2021; Stockdale & Haartsen 2018). Interestingly, attitudes towards youth migration are twofold because young people are simultaneously encouraged to leave and criticised for leaving their home towns. In the cases studied, this seemed to cause a clash between the individual pursuit of (hedonistic) wellbeing and the collective (eudaimonic) wellbeing of the community (Komu & Adams 2021). Finnish rural areas are associated with conservatism and stagnation, but also with a closeness to nature and safety (Tuhkunen 2007). Hence, if one's rural home town is depicted as a "dying periphery" with insufficient services,

infrastructure or employment opportunities, moving away is seen as essential to ensuring oneself a "good life". Nevertheless, the young people in our study had a clear vision of and the agency to decide whether they would stay or leave (Adams & Komu 2022; Komu & Adams 2021). In sum, while some young people might see the ingredients of a good life in migration, others make a conscious decision to stay and see opportunities to achieve a good life in their rural home community.

In today's world, young people are encouraged to be flexible, educated and willing to move in search of work, yet at the same time they are urged to stay in and make their home communities vibrant and sustainable. Young people are thus faced with a conundrum: to leave for their own good or stay for the good of their towns (Komu & Adams 2021: 34). We argue, as Stockdale and Haartsen (2018) do, that leaving or staying in a rural place is not a one-off decision but one that is renegotiated multiple times over a person's life course. Furthermore, we submit that staying should be regarded as a process whereby "the stayers are active participants in their own fate and are content with their choice of stay" (Adams & Komu 2022: 361). In other words, a conscious decision to stay represents a deviation from the norm, and thus can be described as a "radical" choice in a context that emphasises mobility for young people. Our work answers the call to discuss rural staying in terms of its advantages rather than solely its shortcomings (Adams & Komu 2022: 370; Maersk et al. 2021).

In discussions of the "good life", the anthropological literature emphasises the social dimensions of wellbeing; that is, social relations, rather than place, can be the determining factors in decisions to stay in or leave a place (Mathews & Izquierdo 2009c). Our findings show that, on the one hand, social interaction can be viewed as constrained, when everyone knows about each other's affairs (Komu & Adams 2021) yet, on the other, may engender feelings of familiarity and security (Adams & Komu 2022). The importance of social relations became especially evident when talking to young people about the absence of people close to them who had moved elsewhere. This was frequently mentioned as a negative aspect of staying in a rural town. Then again, social relations often played a crucial role in their deciding to stay in or return to their home town. Young people cited the ability to embrace who they are as individuals as one defining aspect of their wellbeing. Depending on the person, the rural home town was either perceived as overly restrictive in this respect, while others felt that it was only in their home town that they could be their "true selves" (Adams & Komu 2022: 369). Participating in various activities in the town – religious groups, sports clubs, hunting associations and music schools –

was an important part of feeling like a full-fledged member of the community. Such active engagement resulted in a stronger attachment to the place (Adams & Komu 2022).

Young people viewed places where they could informally “hang out” as vital to sustaining close friendships and relations. Mobility, the ability to access transportation or to own an own vehicle, affected social relations in a positive way. On the contrary, immobility, when young people felt not being able to freely move between places, had negative effects on their social lives. In other words, where public transportation is scarce, young people rely on their own vehicles or the willingness of their parents and other people to give them lifts to pursue their friendships and leisure time activities, typically in the centre of town. Long distances were not perceived as a problem so much as not having access to transportation. In general, young people in rural areas – regardless of their decision to stay or leave - value independence and wish to move between places on their own. Not being able to do so resulted in a feeling of “being stuck” (Adams & Komu 2022; Komu & Adams 2021). As a result, the mobility experience, on a local level, impacts young people's perceptions of their rural home towns, which can influence their decision to stay or leave.

The individual search for happiness, which is highly valued in Finnish society, was reflected in our interlocutors’ reasons for leaving the peripheral northern towns where they lived. The desire to find suitable employment or to study not just anything, but something of interest, were the most significant drivers for outmigration from rural areas. In the case of Kolari, it was not a lack of jobs as such but jobs young people felt were not worth pursuing (Komu & Adams 2021). Jobs in the tourism sector are often seasonal and the longer-term jobs available in health care (especially caring for older persons) were not always described as the “dream job”. Most of the young people indicated that they wanted a job corresponding to their education and their own perception of meaningful work. Contrasting with this majority are the rural stayers we discuss in the article, who showed a willingness to compromise on employment and education for the benefit of staying in a place they valued, thus prioritising place attachment over a desired career. An additional benefit cited by the young stayers, one adding to their overall wellbeing, was the significantly lower cost of housing costs compared to bigger cities elsewhere in Finland (Adams & Komu 2022). Here, we turn the gaze in our work from what young people can offer their communities to also assess what their communities can offer them (Adams & Komu 2022).

A connection to nature was frequently described as one of the key components for personal wellbeing and also cited as a reason for staying in or return to one’s rural home town. Even if young people were not always actively making use of nature in the form of nature-based

activities, they characterised themselves as deeply rooted in and connected to the extensive nature surrounding them. They described nature as a unique and calming place that is completely different from that in the more southern regions of the country. In their view, the vastness had a different feel in the north (Komu & Adams 2021). Moreover, the case of young rural stayers highlights how home towns are not necessarily defined by inadequacies. Indeed, the lack of things made Kemijärvi an attractive place to stay because the young people felt that everything they needed to live a good life was available or accessible (Adams & Komu 2022). Many of their young stayers' activities were outdoor-oriented, reflecting a lifestyle that emphasised a mixed economy where part of one's subsistence is hunted (animals), caught (fish) or collected (mushrooms, berries).

We conclude that in a culture of migration, individual mobility is essential for young people's wellbeing. In this light, mobility allows young people to move within their community but also to migrate outside of it in their search of a good life. One of the central findings resulted in our acknowledging that the same considerations can serve as push and pull factors and are not straightforward but rather fluid and changing over young people's life course (Komu & Adams 2021). We highlight, however, that mobility plays a key role in young rural stayers' lives, regardless of whether they stay or leave. Moreover, we argue that wellbeing should be understood within the framework of dynamic interactions with places and people, and in this light suggest that young people not be described in fixed categories as "stayers" or "leavers". Accordingly, we contend that staying should be discussed as a process and emphasise that moving to urban centres is not an ideal for everyone (Adams & Komu 2022).

The Newcomers' Perspectives: Nature-based Lifestyle and Showcasing a Good Life

The article "Hunting a 'Good Life': Young Lifestyle Migrants in Finnish Lapland" (Adams 2023) is the last of those written for the thesis. It turns the spotlight from Finnish youth to the newcomers to the region. While my work on Finnish young people in northern Finland has mostly focused on rural areas, the lifestyle migrants tend to feel attracted to the more urban Arctic town of Rovaniemi. Interestingly, they tend to present their life in an urban setting with images of the rural, a paradox understandable in that the main reason for their moving to Finnish Lapland is to pursue outdoor activities and to find work in the tourism sector (Adams 2023). The group of young people is conceivably different from the Finnish youth who have grown up in the region and who are deeply rooted in the region through family ties and friends. Yet, given the aim of investigating wellbeing of young people living in northern Finland, the perspective of the newcomers seemed to be a salient one.

The case of young lifestyle migrants reflects a rising phenomenon of newcomers “discovering” the Arctic as an attractive place to live, study and work. To date, the research is scanty on young lifestyle migrants in all Arctic regions, and little work has been done on what motivates them to move to the Arctic or what they see as the building blocks of a good life there. Moreover, the ethnographic literature on lifestyle migrants has given little attention to the Arctic, exceptions being Eimermann (2015), Carson et al. (2018) and Sokolíčková and Soukupová (2021). However, these studies do not focus on young people per se. In general, the literature on lifestyle migration discusses the phenomenon in terms of people moving to regions with a warmer climate and lower cost of living (see also Benson & O’Reilly 2016; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; Korpela 2016). The present work challenges this perception by demonstrating how young people pursue their chosen lifestyle in a place with higher living costs and a harsher climate.

In much the same way that I have argued in the previous chapter that young people in rural areas have their own agency, lifestyle migrants can also be described as active agents of their own fate. This becomes visible through the characterisation of lifestyle migrants used by O’Reilly and Benson (Benson & O’Reilly 2009: 609) as “affluent individuals” who move and seek “authenticity, implying simplicity, purity and originality” and make an effort to go “back to the basics”. Agency and creativity are vital capacities in adjusting to the new daily routines of the chosen home. The agency of young lifestyle migrants becomes evident in their process of searching for the building blocks of a good life in their self-realisation project (Adams 2023: 4). Agency is also visible when lifestyle migrants make conscious choices about where and how they want to live (Torkington 2010), a different set of decisions from those facing migrants who move for work, economic reasons or to seek refuge (the latter groups also exercise agency). Lifestyle migrants differ significantly from other migrants in that their primary goal is not integration to the mainstream society’s culture. Moreover, they seem to narrate away negative images of immigration in describing their life as “fuller and more meaningful” (Adams 2023; Benson & O’Reilly 2016).

Conceptually, I draw on the ethnographic literature on lifestyle migration (Benson & O’Reilly 2016; Benson & Osbaldiston 2014; Eimermann 2015; Korpela 2020; Torkington 2010), in which lifestyle migration is mostly discussed through people moving to places with a “pleasant climate”, lower living costs and a “slow pace of life”. In academic debates, the term “lifestyle migrants” is mostly used to refer to older persons in their “golden years” (Åkerlund & Sandberg 2015). In the present case, however, lifestyle migrants are in search of a new way of life that resonates with their aspirations of a fulfilling life where each can illustrate the “exceptional

individual" who stands out from the masses (Adams 2023; Grønseth 2013). My intent has been to challenge the perception of age in lifestyle migration. I argue that young people have mobility patterns and motivations similar to those of older persons, thus making a comparison of the two salient.

The Nordic welfare state offers a safe environment, reliable infrastructures, employment, educational opportunities and accessible health and social services (Adams 2023). A reason often cited for choosing Finnish Lapland lies in the perception that the area has a good infrastructure that provides easy access to travel by plane, train and car. Together these structural conditions enable young lifestyle migrants to pursue their "dream of a good life". In the beginning, many of the young lifestyle migrants work in the tourism sector, and the structure of the sector makes motivation to become an entrepreneur to work independently. Other factors drawing young lifestyle migrants to the region included the high standard of education, the unique nature and safety. Safety in this regard being two-fold: personal safety (e.g. not getting robbed) and safety of a stable society (no war, unrest, arbitrary arrests, etc.). In the case of education and employment, the trends cited run counter to those seen in outmigration, in which young people cite the limited education possibilities and work opportunities as reasons for leaving (Adams 2023). As not many immigrants overall are expected to settle in Finnish Lapland, the young lifestyle migrants can be seen as a possible exception to the negative trend of migrants leaving the North for more urban areas in the south of the country (ibid.: 7). I argue, however, in one somewhat paradoxical qualification of this observation, that young lifestyle migrants do not significantly contribute to the "viability and sustainability" of rural communities given that most of them live in the capital city of Rovaniemi and not in the rural areas of Finnish Lapland.

Although lifestyle migrants' privilege is obvious and is visible in the actual practice of lifestyle migration, this does not mean that young people would not struggle at times to find sufficient income to maintain their chosen lifestyle. In other words, choosing a certain lifestyle does not automatically imply that one will have the means to sustain it, and this group of young people often has to work hard to achieve their goal of staying in Finnish Lapland (Adams 2023: 5). This being the case, the topic of wellbeing as meaning more than just having a good income came up readily in discussions with the migrants. In their view, pursuing a good life was not motivated by lower living costs or a pleasant climate but a desire to live an "authentic" lifestyle, with opportunities to pursue nature-based activities. This is not to say that young lifestyle migrants do not value a good salary or are not motivated to achieve better jobs (Adams 2023).

A nature-based lifestyle can be pursued in the Fennoscandian region due to the right of a "freedom to roam" (*jokaisenoikeudet*), which "allows everyone in Finland to move freely on foot, skis or a bicycle everywhere except for private yards or farmland", and allows overnight stays in nature as long as the chosen site is in a "good distance" from settlements (Adams 2023: 10). Although young lifestyle migrants report experience difficulties at times due to Arctic weather conditions, the benefits of pursuing outdoor activities, such as hunting for the northern lights, skiing, biking, hiking, camping, boating and picking berries and mushrooms outweigh the weather-related hazards. This nature-oriented lifestyle is promoted through social media channels to the outside world. The images show the region's vast nature, northern lights, cabins, campfires, animals, various outdoor activities and the lifestyle migrants themselves. I align with Torkington (2010) and argue how the era of social media has contributed to the increase in the number of young people considering moving to Arctic regions.

I conclude this section by urging that the perspectives of young lifestyle migrants to the Arctic be included in the debate on lifestyle migration. This entails broadening the scope of the topic from middle-class people moving to warmer destinations with low living costs to include those seeking a good life in a more expensive and climatically cold region. The Arctic, like other regions, can be seen as a place where individuals are "hunting" their own, private version of a good life (Adams 2023: 14; O'Reilly 2016). However, this contrasts with the more superficial motives of people moving to cheaper countries with better climates. I emphasise the need to view migration of young lifestyle migrants not as one-off moves but as decisions that are fluid and changing over the course of the migrants' lives. In this respect, the discussion has contributed answers to the research questions about what constitutes a good life for young people in northern Finland.

9. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this thesis has been to gain an understanding of young people's perceptions of wellbeing in northern Finnish communities through ethnographic work. Together, the five articles written for the thesis provide distinct answers to the question what young people consider to be building blocks of a good life. The variety of cases demonstrates similarities as well as differences in young people's perception of their wellbeing. One facet of wellbeing young people share is their relationship with nature. Not only are outdoor activities often mentioned, but mere access to the surrounding natural environment is frequently emphasised as enhancing individual and collective wellbeing. This becomes particularly evident when young people consider leaving their northern home towns. Indeed, one of the most common

concerns related to voluntary and involuntary mobility is losing one's connection to nature; (re-) connecting with nature, as well as social and family ties, is one of the most important reasons young people who have lived elsewhere cited for returning to their home towns. Other common determinants of youth wellbeing were investigated in the course of the research, with these spanning from safety, access to mobility, the cost of living, a sense of community and sense of space as well as access to nature-based leisure activities (see also Stammler et al. 2022). Structural conditions accounted for most of the differences in young people's perceptions of wellbeing. While some were concerned about the lack of educational and job opportunities, the long distances, insufficient infrastructure, and declining services, others did not seem to be troubled by these circumstances and had created a good life despite such structural constraints (Adams 2023; Adams & Komu 2022). Young people's agency figures crucially in their decision to stay or move, highlighting the importance of agency as a research topic. In the articles, they consistently appear as conscious young actors who make their own choices (Adams & Komu 2022; Komu & Adams 2021). Interestingly, the same considerations apply in the case of young lifestyle migrants, who to move to the region because of the natural environment and what many see as favourable structural conditions (Adams 2023).

These structural conditions are widely discussed in Arctic debates, beyond the national borders of Finland. It is commonly known that the Arctic is undergoing rapid socio-economic, cultural, climatic and environmental changes. These changes are having a profound impact on the living conditions in northern communities (Hansen & Ren 2021; Petrov et al. 2016). Stammler and Toivanen (2021: 6) demonstrate how climate and the environment are the two overarching factors influencing human wellbeing in the region. In this light, Arctic topics are often addressed in terms of vulnerabilities because the region is bearing the brunt of the ongoing economic, ecological and social changes. Against this background, discussions of wellbeing in Arctic regions are often incorporated in debates about sustainability (see also Southcott et al. 2019b; Tennberg et al. 2014). In Chapter 4 of this synthesis, "State of the Art", where I engage with anthropological criticism of the term "sustainability" (Brightman & Lewis 2017a; Hastrup 2017; Hirsch 2020; Tsing 2017), I demonstrate how this debate has largely failed to include young people's perceptions. While the literature review showed the need for more nuanced definitions of sustainability, it also revealed that wellbeing was commonly discussed in the context of illbeing (Ortner 2016; Robbins 2013). Hovelsrud et al. (2010: 335) challenged this perception and urged researchers to shift their focus to adaptive capacities in order to gain insights into dealing with future changes in the region. In examining youth wellbeing in detail and multiple perspectives, the thesis has revealed the adaptive potential of the region's youth

while remaining mindful of the challenges they face**.** With this finding, among others, it marks a contribution to the body of anthropological youth literature, where lived experiences of young people have been neglected (Lee & Craney 2019).

The case studies presented in this work embrace Fischer's (2014: 202) perception of a good life where "a sense of control over one's own destiny" becomes an important factor determining wellbeing. Yet agency alone does not account for the presence or absence of youth wellbeing in northern communities; place attachment, as noted by Thin (2016: 6), is also a key consideration. Thin highlights the need to understand the relationships between a place and wellbeing, pointing out the need "to look beyond the simple idea that some kind of place, local characteristics and place attachments" make people's lives better (ibid.). Importantly, he argues that while places do matter, wellbeing is not environmentally determined but a "complex outcome of lifelong interactions between people and places"; some of these connections are conscious and deliberate, while others are not (Thin 2016: 6). Significantly, my empirical examples have revealed varying relations on the part of young people that go beyond their relation to place. Salient outcomes here include accounts of young people's relations to each other, to their home community, to the welfare state and their agency. On the theoretical level, this research bridges the discussion between anthropological conceptions of wellbeing and theories of relations. On the strength of this observation, I propose moving towards an understanding of wellbeing through relations in anthropological studies of wellbeing. I have drawn on Ingold's (2017, 2021) and Strathern's (2020) theories of relations to undergird my contention that aspects of wellbeing should be understood as variable, relational and fluid. While the young people cannot alter structural conditions, they can look at their situation and decide whether to interpret the conditions as constraints or opportunities, hence making use of their agency. This being the case, it would make more sense to describe wellbeing through relations rather than categories. In fact, I would submit that there are as many categories of wellbeing as there are relations between people. Agency plays a crucial role in creating these relations. Here I concur with Mathews and Izquierdo (2009) when they argue that wellbeing is not "one thing" but consists of many meanings and places depending on the society and culture in question.

My research approach has also drawn on Hastrup's (2004: 468) idea that the role of anthropology "is not to tell the world *as it is* but to interpret it and to suggest possible (theoretical) connections within it as perceived and inferred from being in touch with a world that cannot be taken for granted". Engaging in depth with the research methodology, I have

shown that ethnographic methods can reveal new insights into how young people construct their lives in northern Finland. The discussion of my research methods, as well as their limitations and difficulties, demonstrates, as Ingold (2021) suggests, the importance of studying together *with* my informants – the young people – rather than doing research *about* them. Unchallenged assumptions about youth wellbeing are best tested by spending long periods of time in the field. Engaging with young people in their everyday activities across the northern communities made visible their relation to their home communities, nature and society while also providing insights into their social networks. Ingold (2018: 111) points out how good ethnography is "sensitive, contextually nuanced, richly detailed and faithful to what it depicts". I have implemented this advice in practicing long-term fieldwork, an effort involving multiple visits to the research sites. Including social media in the study of young people seemed inevitable as social media have become an integral part of young people's daily lives. Here I drew on Falzon's (2009) idea of expanding the field to include the virtual world, which hosts sites meriting inclusion if one's approach is to be truly multi-sited.

As I was studying young people in detail, it was important to build connections and relationships where the informants felt comfortable talking about their lives. These efforts now serve to underpin the findings presented in this thesis. Attending important events, such as end-of-year performances, sports events or school functions, also showed the young interlocutors that the research was not just a matter of gathering information, but a sincere interest in learning about their ways of life and showing up for events that were milestones in their personal lives. Here, informal conversations became an important methodological part of the data collection. Conducting research with these ethnographic methods required a deep commitment to following ethical guidelines and ensuring that the young people knew how I would be using the data collected.

Outlook

Future research on young people in northern Finland should continue to look beyond the ordinary discourses of decay and loss that colour the region. Obviously, it is of extreme importance to continue bringing forward the problems and constraints that hold young people back. But it is equally important to listen to young people and engage with them in their daily lives to learn about their way of life and see that this consists of more than hardships and difficulties. Specifically, Arctic research on young people should address wellbeing not only as one finds it embedded in discussions of sustainability, viability and health, but as an independent topic of research. This shift in focus would entail analysing wellbeing through

relations as well as categories, with an increasing focus on the former. This does not mean that studies on illbeing should be reduced. Quite the contrary, illbeing studies, too, are important in understanding young people's struggles. Yet the strong tendency of anthropological work in particular to turn its gaze to problems evokes a need for more studies on wellbeing. Petrov et al. (2017: 60) address wellbeing as a "problem focused 'grand challenge'" on a par with climate change, economic development, the integration of multiple ways of knowing about systems, adaptive co-management and government. Their work has identified knowledge gaps in sustainability research on the Arctic that include a lack of knowledge needed to address urban-rural connections and dynamics, limited connectivity between conceptual and empirical work and a paucity of research addressing inter-generational and gender issues (Petrov et al. 2017: 63–65). This present work can be seen as a contribution to remedying these gaps.

Future research should emphasise the value of engaging with diverse groups of young people in northern Finland. I have discussed how the limitations of my work resulted in my having to choose which groups to study, with other equally important and interesting groups having to be left out. Thus, this thesis does not do justice to all groups living in northern Finnish communities, whereby there is an obvious need for further investigation and research if we are to obtain a more complete and nuanced picture of how wellbeing is perceived in the region. If done properly, young people's concerns can not only be brought to the attention of a wider academic audience, but also be translated into policy recommendations to be implemented by local authorities in planning viable futures for their cities.

Young people do not all fit the same mould, nor do they consider the same relations to be equally important. At this very moment, they are "out there" creating, sustaining and reconsidering relations and decisions that influence their wellbeing. In the pages and findings of this thesis, I have tried to capture parts of their lives they that have shared as they bring to bear that fluidity of choice and expression of agency.

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Images

Figure 1: Sancho-Reinoso, A. (2023). Map created through:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_laea_location_map.svg

Appendices

Publication I

Adams, R.-M., Allemann, L., & Tynkkynen, V.-P. (2021). Youth Well-being in "Atomic Cities": The Cases of Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki. In F. Stammler & R. Toivanen (Eds.), *Young People, Wellbeing and Placemaking in the Arctic* (pp. 222–240). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003110019-14

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Stammler, F., Adams, R.-M., & Ivanova, A. (2022). Rewiring Remote Urban Futures? Youth Well-being in Northern Industry Towns. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2081493

Publication III

Komu, T., & Adams, R.-M. (2021). Not Wanting to be "Stuck". Exploring the Role of Mobility for Young People's Wellbeing in Northern Finland. In F. Stammler & R. Toivanen (Eds.), *Young People, Wellbeing and Placemaking in the Arctic* (pp. 32–52). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003110019-4

Publication IV

Adams, R.-M., & Komu, T. (2022). Radically Ordinary Lives: Young Rural Stayers and the Ingredients of the Good Life in Finnish Lapland. *YOUNG*, *30*(4), 361–376. https://doi.org/10.1177/11033088211064685

Publication V

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Publication I

Adams, R.-M., Allemann, L., & Tynkkynen, V.-P. (2021). Youth Well-being in "Atomic Cities": The Cases of Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki. In F. Stammler & R. Toivanen (Eds.), *Young People, Wellbeing and Placemaking in the Arctic* (pp. 222–240). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003110019-14

10 Youth wellbeing in "Atomic Towns"

The cases of Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki

Ria-Maria Adams, Lukas Allemann and Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen

Introduction

In this chapter we present and analyse two case studies of how young people living in the "atomic towns" of Pyhäjoki (Finland) and Polyarnye Zori (Russia) perceive wellbeing. We look at the two cases through the lens of ethnographic methods and policy analysis to provide insights into how local youth are connected to the energy companies operating nuclear power plants in their hometowns. The two sites differ greatly in their socio-economic, cultural and political setting, as well as in the development stage of the respective power plants. Despite obvious differences, we have found striking similarities in young people's perceptions of what the "good life" means to them in these prospective/current nuclear towns.

Pyhäjoki and Polyarnye Zori may seem like an unusual pair for comparison, ostensibly sharing little beyond the fact that the former is, and the latter will likely become, dominated by the nuclear power industry. The common yet different connection of these towns to Rosatom offers insights into the relations between the local youth and a major industrial player in places that lack economic diversity. In Polyarnye Zori, Rosatom is a pervasive actor: it produces electricity—its core product—provides municipal housing maintenance and transportation and sees to the catering at large events. This kind of "town-forming company" (*gradoobrazuiushchee predpriiatie*) is a common phenomenon in Russian single-industry towns (see also other chapters in this volume: Bolotova; Ivanova et al.; Simakova et al.). At present, the power company in Pyhäjoki does not have a comparably dominant role, but the community is on track to become an "atomic town" as well. In reviewing and analysing our data from these contrasting field sites, we bring to light the similarities as well as the differences in the factors young people regard as important to their personal wellbeing.

We start by providing insights into our two field sites. Next, we outline our methods and embed our case studies in the relevant policy settings, these being energy politics and geopolitics. Then we compare and describe the studies, which are informed by and grounded in anthropological theories of wellbeing. In our analysis, we contribute to the understudied area of comparing towns reliant on the nuclear energy industry in disparate cultural and

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policy settings in the Arctic. Petrov et al. (2017, p. 56) urge that research efforts should increasingly focus on

> understudied issue areas with global-national-regional-local linkages, in order to better understand outlooks and pathways for Arctic sustainable development as well as the Arctic's role in global processes and sustainable development challenges.

Finally, we discuss how the policy analysis and the ethnographic findings can help to understand young people's decisions about their future in the two regions studied.

Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki: two contrasting field sites?

Pyhäjoki is a municipality located in North Ostrobothnia, some one hundred kilometres south of Oulu, the most populous city in northern Finland. Pyhäjoki, the central town in the municipality, is currently entering a new stage of development: the nuclear power plant will be built in an existing community and the population is expected to grow in the upcoming years as the power plant project progresses. The town has 3,146 inhabitants at the time of writing, with this population currently declining at a rate of 1.3 per cent annually (Statistics Finland 2019). The unemployment rate in 2019 was 10.1 per cent, which was slightly lower than Finland's general average of 11.3 per cent (Statistics Finland 2019). The municipal council of Pyhäjoki has developed an operational plan for creating new employment and business opportunities by promoting the area to newcomers and existing businesses alike (Pyhäjoki Municipality 2020). Despite ongoing construction work at the power plant site, the municipality has not succeeded in growing the number of inhabitants. In fact, in the year 2019, the number of inhabitants decreased by 2.2 per cent due to outmigration (Statistics Finland 2019). The planning of Fennovoima's "Hanhikivi 1" project started back in 2007 and Fennovoima continues to wait for the final permits to build the nuclear power plant by Rosatom. Various factors, either within or outside the company, have slowed the progress of the construction work, these mainly relating to building permits and meeting the safety requirements of the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (Fennovoima 2020).

Polyarnye Zori is a town in Murmansk Region, North-West Russia, about two hundred kilometres south of Murmansk, the largest city in the world above the Arctic Circle. According to the most recent census, Polyarnye Zori had a population of 14,389 (Rosstat 2019). With a population decline of 6.3 per cent over the past decade (Rosstat 2009; Rosstat 2019), the outmigration rate has been lower than in most other towns of Murmansk Region. The current rate of registered unemployment is also low at 3.2 per cent (PZ City 2020). The single most important employment sector in the town is the nuclear power plant (owned by Rosenergoatom (Rosatom's civilian subsidiary)) and

its subcontractors. The main subcontractor for maintenance is Kolatomenergoremont (owned by Rosenergoatom), but there are also private subcontractors. The town was built in the early 1970s, at the same time as the power plant, meaning that the creation of the town was tied to the creation of the power plant. This dependence is still pervasive but since the end of the Soviet Union private small- and medium-scale entrepreneurship have formed a secondary socio-economic pillar, as in any other Russian single-industry town. Rosatom's structures dominate not only large parts of the residents' professional lives but also much of their leisure time. To cite but a few instances of Rosatom's omnipresence, the town park, the stadium and the sports centre are sponsored by the company; apartment block maintenance is provided by one of its subsidiaries; and the town's favourite *pirozhki* (stuffed buns) come from the power plant's bakery.

For the people of Pyhäjoki, the coming of the power plant entails multiple ramifications, one being the hope that the resulting growth in population will add a variety of services. The municipality, as Strauss-Mazzullo (2020, p. 38) notes, has become a place on the map beyond the national borders of Finland. Polyarnye Zori has gone through the anticipated stages of development a long time ago and is now in the phase where the effects of a running power plant are visible in daily life. The area of North Ostrobothnia is known for having many adherents of the Lutheran religious movement known as Conservative Laestadianism (*vanhoillislestadiolaisuus*); members are particularly known for their active engagement in entrepreneurship, especially in the construction industry (Linjakumpu 2018). This might be part of the reason why the municipality voiced a strong interest in obtaining the nuclear megaproject and thus ensuring prospective employment and continuous revenue for the community members (Linjakumpu 2018; Strauss-Mazzullo 2020, p. 28). While this article does not deal with the effects of religious movements, it is important to mention this specific characteristic since it influences employment in the area and helps to understand why such a megaproject is being constructed in this particular place.

If one visits Pyhäjoki, Fennovoima (and thus indirectly Rosatom) is visible as a single, small, inconspicuous office in the centre of the municipality; Rosatom's visual presence in Polyarnye Zori is ubiquitous. This visibility in Polyarnye Zori has its historical roots in the practice of establishing single-industrial towns, one dating from the Soviet policies of economic specialization. With the nuclear power plant traditionally being essentially the only industrial employer in the atomic towns, city and regional governments have imposed extensive economic and social responsibilities on the operators (cf. Collier 2011).

By describing these two contrasting field sites, and by embedding policy analysis in our study, we demonstrate the structural differences between the communities in size, stage of company development, and political and cultural context. These distinctions are important in order to understand the outcome of our comparative ethnographic analysis of the local youth's perceptions, wishes and aspirations in both locations.

Methodological considerations and research ethics

Although doing research in two strongly differing towns, we have used the same qualitative methods to gain insights. Anthropological fieldwork lies at the core of our methodological approach, which featured open-ended individual interviews, focus group interviews and media analysis (Clark 2011; Silverman 2013, 2014; Olivier de Sardan 2015). The holistic approach of anthropology is valuable as it takes all different aspects of human living into account and considers both actions and verbal accounts equally (Eriksen 2010; Crate 2011). In the context of our research, we sought to listen to young people and to let their views be heard.

Participatory approaches to youth research are often described in "all or nothing" terms, meaning that young people participate either as active researchers or as passive research objects (Heath and Walker 2011, p. 8). In our research we aimed at finding a middle ground where we actively engaged in youth activities. Through several fieldwork visits by Adams (Pyhäjoki) and Allemann (Polyarnye Zori) between August 2018 and August 2020, we engaged with young people in a way which did not render them passive research objects but rather invited their insights on various topics of their hometowns. While doing research among young people, we tried to be sensible about the issue of the unequal power relations between us as researchers and the youth as the focus of our work. Young research participants may lack the resources, social networks and knowledge of those conducting the research and thus be in a potentially vulnerable position (Cieslik 2003, p. 2). We were aware that we were dealing with sensitive topics, and throughout the research process we were open with our informants about how we would process and store the data. The identities of the young people sharing their life stories, ideas and thoughts with us were anonymized in order to protect them from any possible exposure. At the same time, our analysis enables us to exemplify how young people are connected to their nuclear towns, how they perceive the industries in their hometowns, what wishes and aspirations they have and what opportunities they see in their future.

We were guided by the conviction that the task of finding out about what hedonic wellbeing means for young people could only be fulfilled successfully by working *with* them. In such co-productive research, we see the interviewee as on a par with the scholar (cf. Denzin 2009, pp. 277–305; Allemann and Dudeck 2019). Our interlocutors are not just sources of raw data that we tap into and then interpret. Rather, it is primarily the interlocutors who actively reflect on their own lives while talking to us (Bornat 2010). Our task as researchers is to connect these reflections with each other and with our field observations on political and corporate actors. Thus, we see the interviews not as factual data but as *first-stage* interpretations, on which we build our *second-stage* scholarly interpretations and recommendations.

The Finnish Youth Act (Ministry of Education of Finland, 2017) defines persons up to the age of 29 years as youths, while in Russia at the time of the research the age range was between 14 and 30 years (Government of the

Russian Federation 2014, see discussion of the age-range in Ivanova et al., this volume). The selection of research participants was guided by these respective definitions.

Young people's experiences can offer exceptional insights into the operation and the character of institutions. Roberts (2003) argues that changes in and links and mismatches between institutions become apparent through youth research by giving voice to young people's experiences, which then lays a basis for broader academic debates (Roberts 2003, p. 15). Our research results suggest that young people's views on how a "good life" is constructed in a nuclear town is marginally connected to the industry itself but relies on other considerations, such as educational opportunities, getting work in one's own specialization, having places to "hang out", having access to a functioning infrastructure, being connected to services (such as leisure activities and health services), being connected to nature, having a feeling of safety and being close to social networks of family and friends.

Geopolitics, the nuclear sector and corporate social responsibility

Both Russia and Finland are nuclear power-friendly states in that nuclear power plays a central role in national energy policies: in Russia 18 per cent, and in Finland 25 per cent of electricity is produced by nuclear power plants (International Energy Agency 2018). Moreover, people's attitude toward nuclear energy is relatively positive (Wang and Kim 2018). What is more, the nuclear sector is also a central element in Finnish-Russian trade relations and foreign policy. In Finland, nearly half of all energy consumed is of Russian origin, two-thirds of all energy imported comes from Russia, and nearly all of Finland's fossil (around 80 per cent) and nuclear (varies from year to year between 40 to 70 per cent) fuel comes from Russia (Statistics Finland 2017). Thus, when it comes to energy, the relationship between Finland and Russia is tight, yet at the same time very asymmetric: Finland accounts for a small percentage of Russia's energy exports while energy imported from Russia makes up a large share of total energy imports in Finland. The dependency of Finland's energy sector on Russian hydrocarbons, as well as on its nuclear power technology and nuclear fuel exports, gives Russia political leverage vis-à-vis Finland. The fear of losing the economic benefits gained from consuming, refining and further selling energy of Russian origin have an impact on Finland's policy considerations (Tynkkynen 2016; Jääskeläinen et al. 2018). Thus, the Pyhäjoki project between the Russian state-owned nuclear corporation Rosatom and the Finnish private enterprise Fennovoima includes a foreign policy dimension, not least as the project is symbolically and economically important for Russia. On balance, the social programmes promoted as part of nuclear projects should be understood as intertwined with other (energy and foreign) policy issues.

The main institutional actor in this context is Rosatom, Russia's state-owned corporation which controls the civilian and military use of nuclear energy in

both the internal and the export markets. Rosatom's position is unique, as the company does not have to produce a profit. Accordingly, it is better positioned to promote a wide range of policy objectives set by the state both domestically and internationally. In Russia, nuclear power is prioritized in relation to other energy sectors, and internationally Rosatom has the possibility to increase Russian influence through very attractive deals for constructing nuclear power plants and supplying uranium (Tynkkynen 2016). In the Finnish context, the role of Rosatom is exceptional, as the company will be the exclusive provider of uranium fuel to the Pyhäjoki plant for the first ten years. As long as the project progresses smoothly, the Pyhäjoki power plant, as cooperation in the area of nuclear power, officially stands to make a key contribution to enhancing good relations between Finland and Russia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland 2016; Putin and Niinistö 2017). If problems should occur during the project, they will reflect badly on relations between the countries.

How does this wider political context then affect social policies and the youth in atomic towns? The political context has very much to do with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices of Rosatom in Russia, and especially in Finland. CSR is a soft-power tool used by state actors, in addition to all other means, to further their objectives. Rosatom's CSR in Finland is important precisely for geopolitical and geo-economic reasons, and the community's youth are an important target of CSR efforts.

CSR is the instrument by which companies approach the issue of wellbeing. Following a global trend, but also replicating many practices from the Soviet era, CSR is an integral part of social policy among Russian energy giants like Rosatom (comp. Saxinger et al. 2016; Wilson and Istomin 2019). Rosatom promotes social policy under the heading of sustainability. CSR is implemented based on general objectives of the corporation addressing traditional social and work-related issues of the workers, but also promoting the wellbeing of workers' families and, in particular, their children. The youth are explicitly chosen as a focus group within Rosatom's CSR. Work on sustainability is operationalized through two special programmes "Rosatom School" and "Rosatom's Territory of Culture", which promote school children's skills in the natural sciences and nuclear physics, in particular, but also offer youth possibilities to engage in and enjoy music, arts and sports (Rosatom 2020a).

The role of Finland and Fennovoima's nuclear power plant as an important reference for Rosatom is also visible in the company's CSR activities. The webpage of Rosatom (2020b) bills the success of "Rosatom School" in the following terms:

> Since 2016, about 1,000 kids from 25 countries have taken part in nine International Smart Holidays with the "ROSATOM School" in Russia, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Finland, Thailand and Turkey. […] For example, in 2017–2018 schoolchildren from Russia and Finland implemented the international project "Educational Tourism". In this project

> 10 schoolchildren from Sarov visited Pyhäjoki and schoolchildren from Pyhäjoki visited Sarov.

Providing amenities under the heading of CSR by a powerful industrial actor may enhance the wellbeing (basic needs) of people in general and the youth in particular. However, at the same time CSR consolidates the company's political and economic power, potentially diminishing people's choices as to how to live a good life (extended and broader needs). Especially in a single-industry town there is a risk that decisions on which youth activities to develop or sponsor are guided by the dominating company's own interests. In a small town, this both broadens and limits people's choices: on the one hand, a powerful sponsor may make it possible to provide the youth opportunities that would otherwise be impossible, such as the sports school in Polyarnye Zori, which offers a wide variety of different sports. On the other hand, activities that do not coincide with the larger sphere of interests of the dominant sponsor may be dismissed despite a demand from the youth. In Polyarnye Zori, where the Rosatom company is already an established player, this is reflected in an ambivalent attitude towards the opportunities that the company offers (Allemann and Dudeck 2019).

Youth wellbeing: Eudaimonic and hedonic perceptions

What does "a good life" mean for young people living in very different countries and circumstances and what are their visions of wellbeing? Fischer (2014) and numerous other theorists on wellbeing (see discussion in Stammler and Toivanen, this volume) argue that wellbeing, across cultures, cannot be reduced to material conditions alone, which is in line with our findings in Pyhäjoki and Polyarnye Zori. Perceptions of wellbeing from the young people's point of view in the two atomic towns entail more than having access to work or a stable income. Young people long for functioning social networks, mobility and a choice of educational opportunities.

Lambek (2008) addresses the importance of wellbeing in human sciences, while simultaneously acknowledging that it is a 'problematic' topic in terms of "measuring or bringing about other people's wellbeing" (Lambek 2008, p. 115). He argues that "measuring from the outside someone else's quality of life" (p. 116) might seem inconceivable, whereas through their ethnographic research anthropologists can acquire more perspectives "from inside" and thus make valuable contributions to theorizing wellbeing, as the introduction to this volume shows (Stammler and Toivanen, this volume). Moreover, Lambek points out that ethnography must suffice as the basis for more general claims concerning an anthropological perspective on wellbeing by elaborating how wellbeing is constituted:

> Well-being does not occur in the abstract. As human life is culturally constituted, so well-being only makes sense with respect to the contours of a particular way of life; particular structures of persons, relations,

> feeling, place, cosmos, work and leisure. Another way of saying this is that quality of life cannot be simply open freedom of choice. Well-being must include guides and orientations in the making of choice or the exercise of judgement, ones that affirm people's intuitions.
>
> (Lambek 2008, p. 125)

Our analysis shows that wellbeing has different meanings for young people. While some proportion of the youth perceived their hometown as a place that lacks activities, others described exactly the opposite, as for them their hometowns provide everything that they need.

A range of scholars focusing on wellbeing distinguish between hedonic happiness and eudaimonic happiness (Ryan and Deci 2001; Mathews and Izquierdo 2009; Fischer 2014; Edwards et al. 2016; Johnson et al. 2018). Hedonic happiness refers to everyday, short-term contentment, such as buying a long-desired item or satisfying "a man's own desire to play instead of working" (Hobsbawm 1968, p. 85). Eudaimonic happiness denotes a broader, overall life satisfaction. While hedonic happiness is more ephemeral, eudaimonic happiness as well is far from being a static condition or a final goal. As Fischer notes, "good life is not a state to be obtained but an ongoing aspiration for something better that gives meaning to life's pursuits" (2014, p. 2). Eudaimonic happiness consists of many trade-offs, often at the cost of hedonic happiness. The pair "can well be at odds with each other, a tension familiar to most from daily life" (Fischer 2014, p. 2).

In this research we combine these two notions of happiness as key concepts for a holistic understanding of wellbeing. People pursue their individual visions of a good life, but the concept of wellbeing is morally laden with ideas about value, worth, virtue and what is good or bad, right or wrong (Fischer 2014, pp. 4–5). Adding to this observation, Fischer argues that "adequate material resources, physical health and safety, and family and social relations are all core and necessary elements of wellbeing" (p. 5). This means that aspirations are limited by the capacity to aspire. Such constraints on aspiration and agency may be social norms, legal regulations or the labour market. The individual's will is important, but there also has to be a way (Appadurai 2013, pp. 179–195; Fischer 2014, p. 6).

In our analysis, we sought to achieve a cross-cultural comparison that informs us about the ways in which "beliefs, practices and institutions impinge on happiness" (Thin 2008, p. 135). Thin argues that ethnographic methods and analytical approaches enable researchers "to observe and discuss the quality of human experiences, the ways people feel about their lives in general and about specific institutions and practices in particular" (p. 135). There is a rather limited corpus of anthropological literature developing a systematic interest in the subjective, experiential aspects of wellbeing (see Ortner 2016, and the introduction, this volume for an overview). The topic is mostly associated with and dominated by psychological or economic perspectives (see Johnson et al. 2018 for a recent overview). Brown (2013) attempts a comparison between the "atomic cities" of Ozersk (Russia) and

Richland (United States) and the impact of families. However, our aim is not merely to compare our case towns, but rather to demonstrate young people's views on a good life in their respective hometowns.

Based on these considerations, we ask: What are the important factors prompting young people to live in, stay in or return to Pyhäjoki and Polyarnye Zori? What does wellbeing mean to them? Our results suggest that wellbeing from the youth's perspective strongly emanates from aspects of focusing on the self, the present moment and consuming what a young person wants or needs. This, essentially, is a hedonic perception of wellbeing.

The meaning of good life for young people in nuclear towns

The majority of our informants addressed the need and desire to have places where young people can "hang out" together. In Pyhäjoki the municipality runs a youth centre which is open on weekend nights for youth to informally spend time together in a safe space supervised by a youth worker. A billiard table, game consoles, board games, TV, a stereo, sofas and a kitchenette for drinks and snacks are central elements of the centre, which is used primarily by youths under 18 years. In addition, the local church has a supervised youth space once a week, which attracts many young people (under 18). One collaborative project between the church and the municipality is a small workshop (*moottoripaja*), where young people can come and fix their motorbikes once a week under the supervision of volunteers (usually older local men). Another, easily accessible place in the centre of the municipality is an old youth association house (*nuorisoseuratalo*), which local young people and activists have turned into an indoor skating rink. According to our informants, the facility has a long history of attracting young people from outside Pyhäjoki for events and parties but is now rather run down; young people can hang out there or skate at their own risk. However, many parents do not allow their teenagers to go to the indoor rink, because it is not supervised. Nevertheless, younger youth value the rink, precisely because they are not supervised there, which gives them the feeling of freedom to do what they want. Other places offering possibilities to meet socially are private cottages or homes, where groups of friends are likely to spend their free time. In addition, the local upper secondary school offers its students space to hang out on the school premises. The newly re-opened and only local pub (*Dado*) has been well received, especially among youth aged over 18, who for some years had no place to gather evenings and weekends. In sum, sufficient availability of places where they can spend leisure time is an important factor of wellbeing for young people in Pyhäjoki, as this female teenager indicated:

> If I could wish something for our town it would be a burger restaurant. On the main road, just beside the shop would be a good place. We could go there, get some food or drinks and just hang out with our friends. It would be nice to have clothing stores as well, but I know that it is not a realistic wish because of the size of our town.

Having access to a variety of free-time activities is essential for keeping youth in their hometown. Pyhäjoki offers a range of activities and facilities: ice hockey, tennis, hunting, motocross tracks, swimming, floor hockey, soccer, frisbee golf, cross-country skiing tracks, a gym and running tracks, to name the most common ones. However, if young people want more specialized facilities like an indoor pool or horseback riding, they have to travel to the neighbouring towns. In Pyhäjoki different organizations and sport clubs can apply for financial support from Fennovoima; according to informants, however, the money granted is usually not decisive for keeping the organizations running. In Finland leisure activities (*harrastustoiminta*) are considered a core element of youth wellbeing, and therefore access to various activities is guaranteed by the Youth Act (Ministry of Education of Finland, 2017). Youth services, which in Finland include professional youth workers, are provided mainly by the state, not by private actors (European Commission 2017).

In Polyarnye Zori, the municipality offers young people a wide range of organized leisure activities, not least thanks to the presence of Rosatom as a powerful sponsor. There is a sports school, an arts and music school and a wealth of creative activities at the House of Creativity and the House of Cultures, examples being dance classes, theatre groups or scale-model building. All of these activities are free of charge, but they require regular attendance and thus a certain level of commitment. Another option is the Club of Interesting Things (*Klub interesnykh del, KID*), also funded by the municipality and free of charge, but less structured. There is only one adult supervisor present and the idea is that kids and teenagers teach each other useful and fun things, such as playing the guitar, playing ping-pong or writing a convincing speech. What all these places have in common is that they require a young person to be active. If someone wants just a place to "hang out", there are only commercial venues—shopping centres, restaurants and coffee shops—or socially marginalized options—the railway station or an abandoned construction site. The first category is essentially a limited range of cafés. For teenagers specifically, there is what is known as a "time café" (*Lemonade*), where youngsters pay for the time spent there but do not need to buy anything. It fulfils the function of a private youth centre; teenagers socialize, play games or just relax in a cosy atmosphere, supervised by the owner, a young man who maintains an easy-going relationship with his returning customers. In atmosphere the place comes closest to a Finnish youth centre, but with the big difference that it is not free of charge. This automatically excludes the young people from less wealthy families, but also those who (or whose parents) prefer to spend their money on something other than paying for the time spent in a place. The café-goers largely reflect the prevailing societal rift in the town created by the big gap in income between the "powerplanters" (*stantsionniki*) and the "non-powerplanters" (*nestantsionniki*), a difference sometimes described by the latter, less privileged group, as creating two "castes". A young female illustrates the situation:

> Some parents simply cannot afford that [time café] or they don't allow [their children] to go there. […] For instance, some friends may say 'let's hang out there' and others say 'I don't have the money', and so in the end we all end up at the railway station or the petrol station.

Thus, for many youngsters the only relatively attractive alternative is free "hanging out" in non-supervised public spaces. In summer, such places are the nearby woods and the backyard of the cinema; in winter, it is mainly the waiting room of the local railway station. Asked in a group discussion why they like to hang out at the railway station, a female teenager answered: "They don't chase us away from there. They don't ask for money; you can just sit there with your smartphone, and it's warm. That makes me happy."

Our comparison shows that in both Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki young people would like to have more places where they could meet up in their hometown:

> This skating place is like a second home for me. I come here almost every day after school. I hang out here with my friends because there is no other place where we can go and just be. Sometimes we skate, sometimes we just sit around and talk. Nothing special. Sometimes we go to the shop to get snacks and drinks and then we return.
>
> (young male, Pyhäjoki)

In Pyhäjoki young people are generally content with what has been provided, given the size of the municipality and the relative proximity of the bigger municipalities of Raahe, Kalajoki and Oulu. The nature surrounding the community has been mentioned in particular in many conversations as an important and empowering place of regeneration. Decision-makers in the municipality cite the possibility of carrying out young people's wishes once actual construction on the nuclear power plant starts and the town grows. In the meantime, local youth keep using the available services and continue to visit nearby towns on a frequent basis to meet their needs. The same applies in Polyarnye Zori. Both the surrounding nature and other urban centres, such as nearby Kandalaksha and even more distant Murmansk, offer opportunities to get away and enjoy a change. In both Pyhäjoki and Polyarnye Zori young people say they would like a place offered by the municipality where they could just "hang out" without necessarily having to pursue goal-oriented, constructive activities.

In both of our case sites, access to education becomes an issue after the level of basic school. In Pyhäjoki, the municipality offers upper secondary education (*lukio*) with a focus on entrepreneurship, which is a popular choice among local youth and also attracts youth from the neighbouring towns. However, after graduation, at the latest, young people need to move elsewhere if they wish to continue their studies. For any vocational training young people have to leave town and they will either have to put up with commuting long distances to school, inconvenienced by the inadequate

public transportation, or face having to move from home to another town at a relatively young age (around 15 or 16 years). Decisions on what to study tend to be taken on a very individual level of interest and these choices are rarely linked to the arrival of an industry in town. At the time of our research there were no specific industry programmes in place designed to train young people for professions in the power plant, yet educating local youth to work in the plant can be understood as a facet of CSR. However, the vocational schools in the region (Koulutuskeskus Brahe 2020) provide a variety of educational opportunities, which include qualifications in technical fields and construction.

Polyarnye Zori has one educational institution at the post-secondary level: a vocational school with several degree programmes to choose from. Originally, the school was conceived as a supplier of an educated workforce for the nuclear power plant. Today, as a result of the regional budgeting based on competition between educational institutions, the school is trying to diversify its educational offerings and also to attract students from outside of Polyarnye Zori. About half of the students come from other cities. However, attracting them is not easy and the school expends considerable effort in doing so. About half of the curricula are designed especially for the energy sector. Two-thirds of the students are male, one-third female, usually starting their training around the age of 15. Recently, the school introduced a new curriculum serving the hotel trade, diversifying its offerings to perhaps attract more female students and thus reduce the gender imbalance in the student body. The school has limited co-operation with the nuclear power plant. This centres on obtaining internships for students and does not include any employment programmes. The situation differs therefore considerably from that of other Russian Arctic single-industry towns, such as neighbouring Kirovsk and Apatity, Neryungri and Novyi Urengoy, where the dominant industry in town is heavily involved in educating specialists on the post-secondary level and offers employment for many graduates (see Simakova et al., this volume).

As a result, the employment situation for young people in Polyarnye Zori is not an easy one. Information gathered in interviews with the vocational school headmaster, pupils and power plant employees clearly indicates that the school produces far too many specialists for the nuclear sector. Students consistently report that it is very difficult to find a good job in Polyarnye Zori despite Rosatom being widely perceived as one of the most stable and well-paying employers in the entire region. According to the headmaster, only about 10 per cent of the young people graduating with a vocational education get a job at Rosatom. Local family ties play a significant role when it comes to getting a job with no more than a vocational-level education, with dynasties of power plant workers being a common phenomenon.

The nuclear energy sector also has an above-average need for specialists with a higher education, mostly in engineering. Indeed, about 40 per cent of the vocational school's graduates leave Polyarnye Zori to go on to complete a higher education. However, informants have repeatedly claimed that the

proportion of locals among the power plant's recruited employees with a higher education is low. Thus, according to several informants, among employees with a higher education an overwhelming majority are not from Polyarnye Zori. There seem to be informal loyalty ties (Ledeneva 1998, 2006) between several cities in the Urals and Siberia, which have specialized universities and from where some of the management come. A young male power plant employee described the situation as follows:

> Yes, unfortunately it's like that. There are loads of those who come from those few universities. It's as if they deliver them here in buses. As a local I feel frustrated about this. […] But if Mum and Dad work there then yes, chances are higher that you get in. Because they will trust you more.

On the other hand, there are plenty of job openings in medicine and in the school that cannot be filled because there are not enough specialists who want to move to Polyarnye Zori. The problem stems from the low salaries and lack of support programmes. For most of the local youth, what remains are less attractive jobs, such as being a salesperson or waiter, or moving away. A few become small entrepreneurs (see also Bolotova, this volume, on "forced entrepreneurship", pp. 53–76).

In Pyhäjoki finding suitable work is also a major concern for young people, as one male participant noted:

> There are certain sectors where you could get a job immediately if you wanted, like taking care of elderly people or working in some construction company. But that's not what I am interested in. If you want something else, you either have to commute or come up with creative solutions, like starting your own business. But sometimes you have no choice other than to move away if you want to find something matching your education.

Once young people have chosen an educational path and have graduated, it is important for them to find work that satisfies their expectations. This being the case, they tend to move elsewhere to pursue their career dreams and aspirations if they cannot find a suitable place in their municipality. However, there is a group of young people, especially young males, who express hope in being able to find a job in construction associated with the nuclear power plant. Not unlike their counterparts in Polyarnye Zori, many of our informants in Pyhäjoki assume that local labour will not be needed as much as external expertise and therefore hopes of getting employed by the power plant are not too high.

Interestingly, our analysis shows that environmental concerns in times of climate change do not seem to be relevant in the view of the northern youths in the two countries. It seems that young people are more concerned with the lack of services and infrastructure rather than with what the presence of a nuclear power plant will do to their environment. The nuclear power plant in Pyhäjoki is being marketed as "green energy", but this discourse

understandably does not include local environmental issues related to nuclear power, such as the risk of accidents, nuclear waste management and so on. The green in this setting is the potential of nuclear power to cut national and global greenhouse gas emissions if it is to replace energy produced from fossil fuels. In Polyarnye Zori, where the city's identity is strongly linked to Rosatom, nuclear energy has a special presence in school tuition, and for most of the local youth ecological concerns about nuclear energy are not an issue. This uncritical attitude towards potential ecological hazards does not mean that Rosatom dominates young peoples' perspectives on their lives and aspirations. The opposite is true for many members of the older generations in Polyarnye Zori, who actively participated in the place's coming of age as a city.

In this section, we have focused on comparing four major aspects of wellbeing that local youth in both places identify as vital from their own perspectives: hangouts, leisure activities, educational possibilities and future work opportunities. These four elements open up a wide field of issues. Young people in both places have emphasized the importance of functioning relationships and family ties as key components of their wellbeing. Besides work and education, these are important factors that determine youth wellbeing and thus the motives for staying in or leaving a place. Through our ethnographic examples, we have demonstrated how a "good life" is constructed from the perspective of young people. The connection to nature and a desire for purposeful activities through "eudaimonic" leisure opportunities play an important role in the perceptions of wellbeing, but even more striking is the importance of friends and rather "hedonic" pastimes that is reflected in the wish for more places where one can simply "hang out". While the "eudaimonic" components are valued by our participants and promoted by the industries, we conclude that "hedonic" components of wellbeing should be given more attention when creating viable towns for young people.

Conclusion: wellbeing rewired

With this chapter we contribute to the discussion of wellbeing that is embedded in specific, national policy frameworks. According to Larsen and Petrov (2020, p. 80), the Arctic region faces significant challenges related to regional and local economic development, industrial production and large-scale resource extraction. The role of nuclear power in the Russian Arctic region has been important traditionally.

Young people in both Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki tend not to associate their futures with the (potentially) strong presence of Rosatom/Fennovoima. The reason is perhaps that the employment opportunities for locals are perceived as rather scanty, or as not coinciding with their perception of a "dream job", despite the fact that in both countries the nuclear sector is seen as a stable employer. Working in the atomic sector is perceived as applying to a very specific occupational group and there are many other professions that appeal to young people. Income does contribute to achieving a satisfactory

level of subjective wellbeing but, as Fischer suggests, it is not everything: "Increases in happiness level off dramatically after people reach a relatively low income threshold" (Fischer 2014, p. 8). Even if the salaries at the power plant in Polyarnye Zori are satisfactory, working there is not an attractive option for many young people because of the burdensome hierarchies and rigid workflows, similar to what Bolotova (this volume) found in Kirovsk. In Pyhäjoki, the final phase of building the actual power plant seems remote to for young people, as the process of obtaining permits and building has been going on for years with no concrete completion date in sight.

Our research confirms that income alone from possible employment in the local nuclear power plant is not enough reason or motivation for young people to stay in the towns of Pyhäjoki and Polyarnye Zori. Rather, there are various other factors, such as family ties and friends, as well as educational and employment paths, that lead to an individual decision to either stay, leave or return. Our research also shows that policy analysis is relevant for the overall outcome, as it highlights the structural frameworks in which the companies operate and provides answers, for example, to the question of why significant investments are being directed to social programmes and the youth in this exceptional sector.

We have shown needs common to the youth of both Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki, such as places to hang out. A place for "purposeless" hanging out clearly is what the young people in Polyarnye Zori miss most. By contrast, the presence of a wide range of "educationally valuable" options to organize one's leisure time is seen as something provincial. Many informants look at the bigger cities, which offer more opportunities for freer and idler pastimes. For instance, some informants mentioned the municipal "Centre for youth initiatives" (Tsentr molodezhnykh initsiativ 2020) in the large city of Belgorod (southern Russia) as an example worth emulating. Similar to Finnish youth centres, this place offers a free and supervised space for spending time in ways that are not structured from above.

We suggest that hedonic happiness be taken more seriously as a factor for youth wellbeing. "Good life" scholars like Fischer (2014) tend to consider hedonic happiness as the less gratifying form of happiness because it is not long-lasting. However, they are presenting their arguments from the vantage point of a mature, adult person. In this perspective, wellbeing is framed in terms of permanent and stable levels, and these levels can only be achieved through eudaimonic happiness (purposeful activities). Implicitly, the same attitude can be identified among many administrators who organize teenagers' leisure time (an insight based mainly on observations from Polyarnye Zori). However, for young people, opportunities to fulfil one's needs for hedonic happiness seem to be a relevant factor for wellbeing and thus for staying in a single-industry town. Taking these wishes seriously implies creating more opportunities for short-term gratification, which is interesting to young people but which administrators and educators often dismiss as useless or even harmful. Such "hedonic", "useless" activities may include places to play computer games or to just "hang around" with peers. Based on direct

interaction and interviews with youth, we argue that having enough opportunities to experience positive emotions from "hedonic" activities is very important for young people (especially teenagers), while ideas about "higher" goals, purposes and achievements have lower priority before one's personality is fully developed, that is, around the age of 20 (Johnson et al. 2018, p. 8). Therefore, it is important to differentiate between the wishes of younger youth (approximately those under the age of 20) and older youth, who may have already returned or are considering returning because they value the peace, safety, nature, family-friendliness and relatives around them. Taking these different needs seriously has the potential to make small towns more liveable for their young population, especially in encouraging youth to return once they have finished their education.

Furthermore, we have argued in this chapter that finding suitable work in our case towns is not always easy for young people. Either the required social networks are missing or the jobs available do not match the education and aspirations of young people. However, we also met a substantial number of young people who were satisfied and had found work in their fields of interest. In both Polyarnye Zori and Pyhäjoki these were mostly "older" youth (over 20 years), who had already been elsewhere and then returned to start a family or be close to their family and relatives. It is understandable and unavoidable that people may have educational aspirations that they cannot fulfil in their hometown and therefore move away. It is also unavoidable that a large proportion of these people will not come back. The factors that motivate an eventual return to one's hometown are ultimately determined by a wellbeing surplus compared to the life in a big city. Coming to appreciate this surplus has much to do with one's biographical path: experiencing the difficulties or drawbacks of life in the "big city" and mirroring them against experiences of happiness in the place of origin. By showing that wellbeing is constructed of many different layers that are embedded in a particular policy framework, we have sought to contribute to wellbeing theories in anthropology and beyond. Our research suggests that the municipalities of Arctic atomic towns, such as the ones we have analysed here, would do well to offer activities, facilities and opportunities, which fulfil the youth's needs for both, eudaimonic and hedonic happiness.

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Rewiring remote urban futures? Youth well-being in northern industry towns

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ABSTRACT
Many small remote cities in the circumpolar North lose population. Our starting point is that such settlements have a viable future when young people see perspectives for their own well-being there. This article studies such perspectives using cases from northern Russia and northern Finland, based on empirically grounded fieldwork. Emphasising contextuality, we analyse how authorities, civil society and industrial companies provide conditions for youth well-being in northern industrial settlements. The results show, how a viable urban community could look like for young inhabitants: crucial determinants are education, social networks and family ties, nature, housing, comfortable infrastructure, meaningful work, mobility and good health. While many of the results resembled between the case study regions, among the differences in the two countries, we found that in Finland notions of a good life in the North base more on individual preferences than in Russia, where collective notions are more important. In conclusion, we suggest that youth well-being becomes a principal component of concepts of viable urban communities, including but not limited to such cases as Arctic peripheral single-industry towns.

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Introduction

What is a viable city, and can single-industry towns be viable in remote areas? Dependence on one resource often means little diversity not only in employment opportunities but also in options for social life. This is emphasised by the holistic approach to city viability in the UN Sustainable Development Goal eleven, according to which 'cities provide opportunities for all, with access to basic services, energy, housing, transportation' (United Nations 2020). But can young people who grow up in remote northern towns imagine a good life there? What can studies in Arctic and Subarctic urban communities bring to a theory of well-being for young people? Our starting hypothesis is that only if young people see opportunities to live well there, industry towns in our study region have a viable future. We define Arctic and Subarctic as the area with an expressed Arctic or

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northern boreal climate (Lu et al. 2021). Case towns in our study area share besides the coarse climate classification the remoteness from capital cities and a small size of the population. This associates our case towns analytically to the field of Arctic urban studies. The dependence of many Arctic and Subarctic cities of a single industry has made urban viability fragile and connected to fluctuations on the market for the main material that this industry produces – in our cases mining and forestry. Keeling and Sandlos (2015, 22) have attributed this to the 'ephemeral nature of the mineral economy'. As a result, some of these single-industry towns have been shrinking significantly or abandoned altogether (Florinskaia and Roschina 2006; Hill and Gaddy 2003; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012; Heleniak, 2009a, 2017; Khlinovskaya Rockhill 2015; Laruelle 2019, 7). Recent research on industrial cities (Hollander 2018) has emphasised that shrinking does not have to mean decline automatically, and called for more research on the positive sides of population decrease in cities. From the Arctic peripheries in what are some of the world's wealthiest countries, there is hardly any evidence of a successful smart decline (Hollander and Németh 2011) or right-sizing of settlements (Coppola 2019). We argue that this is because young people's ideas about a good life are not usually taken into account in programmes and policies, even though it is this group that is decisive for the long-term viability of settlements.

This article contributes with evidence from young people from the North to a theory of urban well-being, as 'an optimal state for an individual community, society, and the world as a whole' (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, 5). In our research area between 10% and 14% of the population are youth (between 15 and 24 years) according to the OECD definition (Ader and Igrioglu 2018). These people are vital for the future of Arctic and Subarctic settlements. According to the Finnish Youth Act (Nuorisolaki 2020) persons until the age of 29 years qualify as youth, while in Russia the age range is 14–30 years (Government of the Russian Federation 2014). Our studies work with these respective national legal definitions. Arctic and northern cities are small in terms of population (under 300,000), and many of them rely on a single industry as their prime *raison d'être*. In the Eurasian Arctic, the majority of the urban population are incomers or their descendants, although nowadays most indigenous youth also resides in cities. From these numerical considerations follows that the future of human settlements in the Arctic and Subarctic will significantly depend on how cities will be able to provide conditions for well-being of youth.

In order to clarify what these conditions are, we need to study the determinants of well-being for youth in the urban Arctic. In this article we take an ethnographic approach basing on fieldwork by three authors in four different settlements, two in the Asian Russian Subarctic/Arctic (Republic of Sakha Yakutia) and two in the Finnish Subarctic/ Arctic (Northern Ostrobothnia/Lapland). On the one hand, our research highlights some major structural shortcomings of Arctic settlements, which are impossible to overcome. We studied what conditions for youth well-being in our case cities authorities, civil society and industrial companies provide, and if their ideas overlap with the hopes and ambitions of the young people themselves. On the other hand, our results show that people see some competitive advantages in their small cities in what residents of capitals conceive as periphery. We found that some of the very same determinants can have the effect of increasing well-being for some young people, while they present a threat for well-being of others. Interestingly, this is less country-dependent than age-dependent. However, there are differences in perceptions, which are culturally determined.

Based on these findings, we explore what cities and regulators can specifically do to capitalise on their structural 'plus' factors that youth have mentioned as increasing their sense of well-being in their places, while on the other hand working on measures to mitigate the factors that young people have mentioned as threats pushing them to out-migrate from their Arctic communities. By including the perspectives of these young citizens, their voice can be heard when thinking about how to build sustainable small cities for the future in general, and the Arctic and Subarctic specifically.

Theoretical considerations

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal eleven is 'to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' (United Nations 2020). Gentile (2018) has shown that scholarship and theory building on urban sustainability has been too narrowly focused on a limited number of big cities, predominantly from the North-American hemisphere. To a lesser extent this is also true for scholarship on shrinking cities, much of which is inspired by North-American cases (Hollander 2018), although urban depopulation and city viability during industrial decline have also been studied in Europe more recently (Bernt et al. 2014). However, this scholarship has so far remained separate from studies of youth and human well-being – the way in which humans can build fulfilling lives. Human well-being has been studied in different social sciences, of which each has their own orientation. Most prominently, psychology focuses on individual fulfilment and mental health (Ryan and Deci 2001; Usborne and Taylor 2010), economists concentrate on measures such as GDP and public social budgets (such as in the Human Development Index), while educational sciences highlight the difference in policies between what they call 'objective' and 'subjective' indicators (Wright and McLeod 2015, 2). More explicit interdisciplinary integration of well-being as a concept has been attempted by Oades (2021) and Stammler and Toivanen (2021). The anthropology of well-being – the focus in this article – explores notions of people's idea of a good life in particular societies, cultures or places. The volumes edited by Mathews and Izquierdo and by Jimenez (both 2008) focus on this cultural diversity. However, Thin (2008, 36) notes that often this scholarship fails to identify clear criteria for that well-being. We aim to contribute in this article with such criteria, coming from youth in industrial cities in the Russian and Finnish Arctic and Subarctic.

The subjectivity and cultural diversity of well-being do not mean that social sciences should not have a say in shaping the concept theoretically. Thin (2008) makes the case for examining social determinants in a quest for identifying better the universals and diversities of the concept. We suggest that in this respect, scholarship on well-being must be pluralistic enough to consider not only different scholarly disciplines and currents (Smith and Reid 2018, 807), but also different age-classes and social and material environments. If as a universal concept well-being should be relevant for understanding the determinants of a good life, we must find out if there is something specific to those determinants among young people.

Some studies on well-being focus on social cohesion and cultural identity (Duhaime et al. 2004; Usborne and Taylor 2010) as related topics, while the few circumpolar comparisons that we have on Arctic indigenous youth have more an overview character with coarse generalisation (Ulturgasheva et al. 2014). We therefore explore in greater

detail the link between well-being and the pursuits of happiness among urban Arctic youth, by developing a finer-grained catalogue of determinants in such cities where the majority of youth of the region lives. These findings should contribute to our understanding about development perspectives for industrial urban spaces in the Arctic and Subarctic– a region which has received much recent international attention as resource-frontier and hotspot for climate change, but which is so far under-represented in urban studies.

On the contrary, it was in the global south where well-being became an element of development critique, through the related concept called *Buen Vivir* (good life) in Latin America, highlighting people's subjective perceptions and priorities in life for political agendas rather than ideologies of economic growth and restructuring measures imposed by western agents (Gudynas 2013, 35–41). It might seem obvious that inhabitants' well-being should have a prominent role in considerations of urban viability, and that cities in the periphery can retain their population best when the young generation feels that it is attractive for them to invest in a living in a smaller remoter city than in a metropolitan area. However, these links are often missing from the above-mentioned literature.

Arctic urban studies is a relatively recent field of research. After Hill and Gaddy's (2003) seminal volume on Siberia's economic decline, Orttung's (2016; 2014) Arctic urban sustainability network has been trend-setting in the field, focusing on Russian Arctic city vulnerabilities to climate change, to migration flows and multicultural developments (Zamyatina and Pelyasov 2016). First research on how remote industrial cities can become home for people who built them or came to work there touches upon place-attachment as one aspect of urban well-being (Bolotova and Stammler 2010; Heleniak, 2009b; Stammler and Khlinovskaya 2011).

Zamyatina (2013) has made first attempts to incorporate the perspective of youth for their present and future well-being in order to achieve a deeper understanding of urban community viability. In her article, she identifies desired outmigration destinations for youth from Arctic single-industry cities. However, she does not analyse the aspect we are interested in here, namely what could possibly attract young people to stay in their home towns and contribute to a viable city community in the Arctic and Subarctic. Pilkington (2012, 2014) has covered this aspect partially: she found that connections of people to their place in the city are emotional and sensual responses to the material and symbolic environment. This suggests that decision makers in cities can facilitate the emplacement of young people in their city by creating conditions for emotional and symbolic attachment to their city, through material agency (designing urban public spaces) and symbolic initiatives (initiating patriotic local narratives, creating reasons to be proud of one's city). Here Nuykina's argument (2014, 167) is relevant that in more marginal places the presence of innovative and charismatic city-leaders can make an even bigger difference than in bigger metropolitan areas.

In the Western European Arctic, studies have highlighted the structural problems of northern towns leading to gradual out-migration, especially among young people in search for satisfying their need for education and professional development (Karlsdóttir, Heleniak, and Kull 2020). It is not uncommon for rural towns to lose 40–60% of their youth as they migrate to bigger cities to more Southern regions (Karlsdóttir, Heleniak, and Kull 2020, 36; Penttinen 2016). In Finland, the academic discourse and public discussions tend

to represent the Finnish rural north as a region of inevitable decay and a 'marginal periphery' in comparison to the southern growth centres (Armila, Halonen, and Käyhkö 2016 & Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). Tuuva-Hongisto (2018) argues, in line with our findings, that questions of staying or leaving are at the centre of young people's future decision-making processes. Other examples from the Swedish North in mining towns have shown similar problems to those in Russia and Finland: 'The outflow of youth has been cited as a key social factor limiting community sustainability', as Zeff (2007, 33) describes the situation in Kiruna and Malmberget. A recent study by Rönnlund (2019) contributes to the discussion about relationships between space, place and identity. Furthermore, she shows how material conditions, social relationships and practices are connected to the choice of the place of residence. Along similar lines, Komu (2019) argues for greater attention to dreams and utopias for understanding people's priorities in remote northern towns. In Finland, the cultural expectation of mobility tends to characterise youth who stay as inferior (Adams and Komu 2021; Juvonen and Romakkaniemi 2018). While mobility and migration are being viewed as a way to 'realise one's potential', staying is often seen as unprogressive or even to some extent peculiar (Komu and Adams 2021; Hartikainen 2016; Ollila 2008). In addition, other key life changes work as triggers for staying or leaving, for example, starting a family or getting a career opportunity elsewhere (Stockdale and Haartsen 2018).

Our focus is on what is specific about Arctic and Subarctic urban youth's ideas of well-being, on their background of having grown up in an environment that is remote and marginalised, yet, on the other hand urban and industrial. It is along these lines that we see our contribution to concepts of viable communities in urban studies as well as of well-being: to test the claim of established scholarship on the general applicability of concepts with empirical material from youth in Russian and Finnish northern industrial cities.

Materials and methods

Our methodological approach in this research is holistic rather than distinct and is guided by the principle of integrating diversity and achieving comparability. This approach allows us to identify the common roots of youth well-being in different cities, countries and among different age groups, using methods grounded in ethnography, participant observation, policy and literature analysis, revealing different determinants and improve our understanding of what constitutes well-being. This allows to integrate such different findings as for example threats to youth well-being from the Western Arctic (Young and Bjerregaard 2008) with those of Russian research on Arctic youth (Osipova and Maklashova 2016) alongside those on sustainability of single-industry towns in the Arctic (Zamyatina and Pelyasov 2016).

Due to its non-interventional methods, our research did not require ethics approval and complies with Finland's 2019 ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences (TENK Finnish National Advisory Board on Research Ethics 2019, 61 in particular). All research participants involved were asked if they wanted to remain anonymous, and to what extent the anonymity should be implemented. If needed, we double checked after extensive conversations again. Some participants preferred not to be mentioned by name, but all agreed to have their

places of residence disclosed. This allows us to mention locations by name in this article. Further, all municipalities were consulted prior to the start of the research. They were supportive of the research project, and were interested in its results, which were shared in the form of a best practice guide (Adams et al. 2020).

Grounded in ethnographic participant observation, we wanted our interlocutors to determine their most important topics of the conversation themselves. Correspondingly, we refrained from asking standardised questions. However, in order to ensure comparability between cases, we developed a catalogue of possible determinants for youth well-being in Arctic industrial cities (see Figure 1), which we used as a guidance in our conversations and interviews. In forming this catalogue, we aimed to include determinants pointing towards both eudaemonic and hedonistic aspects of well-being. From visits to the field sites prior to this research we knew that these variables mattered in both countries. In many cases, these determinants evolved naturally during the extended conversations.

Having such variables in mind as topics for an informed conversation with practitioners, in this article our focus is on those aspects that figured most prominently among our field partners. In our data analysis we used 'soft comparison', which incorporates 'all the nuances of sociocultural context ethnographically portrayed' (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, 6). This is supplemented by our analysis of youth policy, measures and frameworks by authorities, industrial companies and the state.

We conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Finnish towns of Pyhäjoki and Kemijärvi, and in the Russian cities Neryungri, Nizhnyi Kuranakh (Yakutia) between February 2018 and August 2020 (a total of seven person months). The towns as cases offer insights into youth issues in settlements in pre-industry phase (Pyhäjoki), single-industry towns (Neryungri, Nizhnyi Kuranakh) and post-industrial phase (Kemijärvi). The significance of a single industry, the size of the city and its position as periphery in relation to metropolitan areas of their countries also guided the choice of our field sites more than just their northern latitude.

During this time, we lived in our field settlements and spent time together with young people, for example in public spaces outdoors and indoors. In our ethnographic fieldwork we made a deliberate effort to co-create knowledge jointly with the young people, for making sure that our findings focus on their own notion of well-being. Rather than

Figure 1. Catalogue with main variables of well-being.

representative sampling, we consciously chose conversation partners from the different groups we aimed to incorporate in our research, from all genders, such as students, employees from industry, municipality and elsewhere, those intending to leave, and those having come back after education. Youth centres, municipal services, companies and our long-term live helped to access these people, both in individual and collective settings (focus groups). However, in this co-production we acknowledge that there are power-relations, particularly in relationships between youth and adults (Leyshon 2008). A lot of the conversations were spontaneous, happening for example on the main square with youth 'hanging out', at a petrol station's restaurant, or with young people fixing their vehicles at a workshop, in youth centres and other common places where young people felt comfortable talking with us. Thus, living in the settlements was crucial for informing our understanding of the key determinants of community viability there. Besides important unstructured conversations, we also conducted 36 interviews and 14 focus-group discussions. In the Russian case cities, these were co-hosted by industrial companies who are the most significant employers in their settlements (Yakutugol', Kolmar, Polyus Zoloto Aldan) and therefore participants were mainly the older age-group of what is classified as youth (between 20 and 26 years). On the Finnish side the co-operating partners were mostly youth-centres, secondary and high schools and individuals, where the main age-group consists of young people between 15 and 22 years. We included young employees of industrial companies, young people living and working in and around the cities/municipalities, social workers in municipalities, religious organisations and youth activists.

Determinants of Arctic youth well-being

Among all topics from our catalogue covered during the fieldwork, the possibility to work, a well-organised education system, a functioning network of family and friends, a connection with the surrounding nature, sufficient and convenient infrastructure, a safe social environment, social security and personal mobility are key components of personal well-being addressed by young people. On the contrary, local youth mention that long distances, the absence of friends, loneliness, lack of activities, too limited offers for post-secondary education, poor shopping and leisure options, poor healthcare quality, the misuse of intoxicants and mental indispositions, are issues that they are struggling with. In the following, we discuss these well-being factors, showing the relevance of results from youth in northern small urban settings for our general understanding of well-being as a concept in social sciences.

One major reason for either staying or leaving the respective towns is connected to the access to educational opportunities and the possibility to work. Our field partners are satisfied with the general quality of education in the Northern parts of Finland. Similarly, in the Russian case towns school education is a highly valued asset both by the state and by the parents. However, the limited options of further education after finishing secondary and high school are constantly being thematised by young people across these regions. This results in young people having to leave the area if they want to pursue their individual career aspirations. If there is the possibility to study further after school close to their hometowns, the variety and the choice of specialisation is narrowed down to a few options to choose from.

Once the adequate and desired education is achieved, youth faces the challenge of finding an adequate job in their hometowns. Depending on the educational background, it can be hard or impossible to find work in the field of one's own specialisation, which often leads young people to make the decision to move away for an adequate job. In some cases, young people take on a job, which does not exactly comply with the applicable qualification, but enables them to stay within their social and family networks:

> I have been working at the local store, in my family's business and as a cleaner. These jobs have not much to do with my actual degree but if I want to stay here, I have to take whatever work I can get. (Young female, Kemijärvi)[1]

In both Yakutian cases, people were clear about whoever is willing to work in the extractive industries can find a job there. Correspondingly, the Neryungri branch of Yakutsk University, the Technical College there and the Aldan polytechnics have almost a 100% employment rate of their candidates in the mining, oil and gas professions among their graduates. Mechel Yakutugol' and Kolmar, the two big coal companies in Neryungri, literally compete for young local graduates, sometimes even with premia and award programmes for recruiting new employees:

> It's not hard to get a job in the company for a graduate from the college or the technical university. The Yakutian government also has a programme to support local young hiring. But there are not even enough locals that graduate so the company invites specialists from outside. (Young employee, Nizhnyi Kurannakh)

Some youth in our field sites have become very innovative in terms of starting their own businesses in order to stay in the area. These small enterprises vary from innovative food, clothes and brand marketing, to small servicing enterprises, to technology companies that can be located and operated anywhere. For example, young entrepreneurs in Pyhäjoki run during the summer months a small kiosk, where they sell ice-cream, cakes and coffee. With an uncertain future, the pressure in succeeding in education and finding suitable work is noticeably increasing anxiety among young people in the area.

Especially, in the Russian cases, a higher salary stipulated by law (Trudovoi Kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2001 article 146) in the North than in more temperate regions is also a relevant factor that makes living in northern cities attractive. In addition, the salary is even higher in those northern areas where extractive industries are active, as people working there own a higher than average salary (80–90 thousand RUB, which is seven times the existential minimum in Russia for 2020). Rather than just for the sake of getting money, in our fieldwork interviews and focus group discussions, salary figured as an enabling factor for well-being and a balanced life:

> Here (in Yakutugol') we can afford nice holidays and finance our hobbies. It's not only the salary. The company also pays us holiday flights for the employee and also the children, every second year. (Young coal company employee, Neryungri)

For example, their salary in combination with a longer yearly holiday enables them to spend quality time with family and relatives in warm destinations. If combined with other factors, salary therefore can be seen as a determinant of well-being in the northern industrial city in Russia. On the contrary, Finnish salaries are not higher in the North than they are in the southern parts of the country. Moreover, seasonal employment offers in the tourism industry are continuously being advertised, but temporal jobs in Finnish

Lapland are often not appealing enough for Finnish young people because of the relatively low salaries and the seasonality:

> There are some jobs in the nearby Pyhä-Luosto area. I have sometimes cleaned cottages there. But it's only a temporary employment during the winter season. It's nothing that you can rely on long-term. (Young student, Kemijärvi)

Another place-specific variable for well-being is housing, which we found of crucial importance especially among the age-group of young people beyond secondary school. Affordable housing of good standard and close to one's social network as well as necessary services importantly positively influences young people's sense of good life. Young northerners want to be emplaced, and the principal condition for this emplacement is housing. Correspondingly, in the Yakutian cases housing was among the most prominent determinants for well-being that young adults mentioned when asked about their present and future preferred living options. In Finland, the relatively low prices compared to urban centres to purchase or rent houses and apartments were mentioned as a key factor of well-being:

> My girlfriend and I just rented a brand-new apartment and it's so much cheaper here than for example in Oulu. We are happy that we returned because we are surrounded by nature . (Young male, Pyhäjoki)

The contact to nature is being described as an integral part of Finnish youth, meaning that they relate to the surrounding nature in a unique, personal and emotional way. Nature determines their daily activities and the connection to nature was apparent throughout our conversations with the local youth. Various activities, such as outdoor sports, gathering or/and hunting food and simply being outdoors potentially enhance personal well-being. Some youth emphasised how difficult the thought of moving to a bigger city or the experience of having had to live elsewhere has been because they were missing the connection with nature. On the contrary, for some young people having 'only' nature around them, results in a longing to move away to a city with infrastructure and more available services. Nature and the northern climate also figure prominently in the Russian conversations, but often from a very different angle: usually first of all Russian young northern city-dwellers repeat the narrative of their parents with more southern roots about the harshness of the northern climate and the negative effect it has on human health. Usually, only in answer to our question would they remember the advantages and beauty of the northern nature as a factor increasing their well-being. Hence – although differently – in both the Finnish and the Russian cases, the northern nature can be perceived as a push or a pull factor for staying or leaving the region, and as one increasing or threatening well-being.

In both study regions, distances and the importance of well-working mobility figured in discussions with youth. The scales and dimensions, however, differ significantly: from the Yakutian field sites, the best accessible metropolitan city is a six hours flight and one monthly salary away, while our Finnish case towns are much closer to the bigger cities of Rovaniemi and Oulu, which can be reached within a one-hour drive. The various means of transport were addressed by youth in these Northern areas as important for their personal well-being. From the youth's own perspective the access to transportation matters, as it is for the Finnish cases related to connecting them with their peers, and for

the Yakutian cases it is considered an indicator of independence from parents. Someone's status within a peer-group is often determined by the means of transport and the possibility of moving around without being dependent on others. For example, at a summer festival in Neryungri, the display of fancy cars equipped with high-capacity car hifi was an attraction that additionally provided background (or foreground) music for thousands of young festival visitors at the artificial lake of the city. In all our case cities, motocross, car and snowmobile races, and for older youth off-road jeep rallies are a prestigious means to show off in the sphere of transport:

> My friends and I like to race around town with our motor-bikes. When we were younger, we cruised around in our bikes. Now we are waiting for the day when we get our driver's licences. It would be a dream come true, if I could afford to buy my own car. (Young male, Pyhäjoki)

The access to services, such as a variety of free-time activities, cafes, fast-food chains, bars restaurants and shopping malls, is one continuously mentioned aspect by young people.

> Here we have great sports facilities, and it's all free of charge. We can give our children to all kinds of training here. This makes it easy to start life as a young family. (Young mother, working for Polyus Gold company, Niznhyi Kurannakh)

The company-sponsored sports facilities in town are indeed a pull-factor for Nizhnyi Kurannakh. According to company statistics, they counted almost 30,000 visits in the first half of 2018, at a total population of just 5300 inhabitants in town. A lot of the sports and hobbies is done through training in teams, which also enhances collectivity. This shows the benefits of having certain services close by to increase people's well-being. For the Finnish cases, young people need to travel long distances in order to satisfy their needs (also see Komu and Adams 2021). In Yakutia, travel in the region does not help. Differently from sports and hobbies, shopping malls and the quality of medical services were mentioned as so poor that they threaten well-being:

> You can't buy anything here, everybody looks the same, and everybody immediately knows from which shop you got your new dress. We try to buy everything during summer holidays. (Student, Neryungri)

The poorer medical services were more of a concern among youth who plan or already have small children. Some mentioned that they could not even give birth in their hometown and had to go to a bigger city for the imminent delivery. Further pressing health issues among some northern young people, in all our fieldsites, are extensive alcohol and drug abuse, mental problems, depression and different forms of violence. While we acknowledge and are aware of the problems, we restrain from dealing with such issues in this article as our focus is on well-being. In this respect, income facilitates well-being again, as people with an industry salary, as in our Russian cases, actually have the means to go to places with better healthcare for their needs. In smaller towns in the rural south of the country they would not be able to do so. This shows how we need to rely on empirical data from long-term fieldwork for understanding the nexus between economic and other determinants of well-being.

Our fieldwork shows that there is an expressed age-class bias in the perception of well-being among youth in our field sites. While the tendency of under 20-year-old youth is to move away because of a lack of activities and educational possibilities, the above 20-year-

olds who stay, mostly emphasise stability, opportunities for young families and good conditions for raising children. This is connected to the accessibility to work and income in both countries. Specifically, for northern industrial cities, the bottleneck in well-being is for teenagers, many of whom feel disadvantaged in comparison to their peers in big cities who have all the opportunities for activities, services and entertainment that they lack in the North. Even older youth in our conversations in Russia and Finland who value life in the North now, remember boredom during their teenage time.

Our Finnish – Russian comparison has shown that in both cases decision-makers could learn from each other's experiences. While patriotism in general has been on the rise in Russia for the last 20 years, its local form is a welcome opportunity for a northern industrial city to create attachment to place through group experiences among their youth – a factor that has been particularly emphasised in the existing works by Pilkington (2012, 2013, 2014). Patriotism for one's homeland is highly developed and valued in Finland as well, but its local form is currently not used much as a resource to create attachment of youth to their places in the North. Among Finnish youth the 'demand' for a collective pride and sense of belonging to their northern towns is also developing now, but still less than in the Russian cases, because group dynamics work very differently among youth of either country.

Discussion

Our research on the determinants of youth's well-being in our case cities shows three general key findings:

(1) Age matters: life-period is important for getting a more exact idea how each determinant of well-being possibly influences young people's decision-making for leaving or staying in a city. For example, while for younger youth entertainment and hobbies are more important (hence: hedonistic determinant of well-being), affordable quality housing determines youth well-being more during the life-period when they start thinking about leading an independent life (hence: eudaemonic determinant of well-being). The same goes for other determinants: Accessible diversity in education determines well-being while youth make decisions about choosing a profession. Availability of services and infrastructure in the cities matters while children are young and short distances to school, shop, kindergarten and hobby facilities save time and effort to access them. Correspondingly, such factors wake up from hibernation among those who value the North as a safe place for raising children.

(2) In spite of all similarities, a difference between the Russian and Finnish priorities for youth well-being we found was the prioritisation of collective approaches to well-being in Russia vs individual in Finland. We found that in the Russian cases more collective activities enhancing well-being were on offer than in the Finnish cases, and that young people actually make use of these offers for their own development. This is also due to the fact that in Russian society as whole, collectivism as an idea is still promoted as a high value, more so than in Finland. This became particularly obvious in the potential of access to nature and a clean environment: In Finland, Pyhäjoki and Kemijärvi youth expressed this as a source of individual mental well-being, while our partners in Nizhnyi Kuranakh and Neryungri emphasised the environment as an important space

for activities that they like to do in groups, such as picknicks, berry-picking, mushrooming, extreme sports, survival training, winter-sports and the like. The difference between the individual and collective also becomes evident in the urban settlement structures of our case cities: whereas in our Russian cases there is hardly any individual housing and everybody lives in apartment blocks, in the Finnish cases it is the opposite, which makes the cities much larger in territory relative to the population density there. This gives geographic evidence of an individualist vs collectivist approach to urban communities between Finland and Russia, as has been argued before (Stammler and Sidorova 2015). We therefore suggest that the key for understanding well-being lies in the socio-cultural context and the relevance of the age-group.

(3) in spite of national and political differences, determinants of youth well-being are often the same across borders. We see this also as corresponding to the general findings by Martinez-Ferndandez's et al. (2012, 245) on the factors that influence lifestyles: climate conditions, knowledge, education and health services, and transportation links. They mention as distinctive feature of single-industry towns that on top of such general variables, changing company-policies 'ultimately define' urban development in what they call 'capitalist economies'. Our research with youth shows that such arguments are valid also in countries such as Russia that can be labelled post-socialist. Our research results therefore empirically confirm Gentile's (2018, 1140) postulate that the category of 'post-socialist' confines the theoretical capacity of urban research. Comparison of cases in the Russian and the Finnish North show that the relevant variables do not lie in the political organisation of a country but in other structural factors such as geography, industry life-cycles, human individual and collective preferences, and municipal and corporate policies.

Therefore, general variables constitute the background for human well-being in urban space, while our research reveals what are the socially and culturally embedded factors that determine the status of those variables as 'expressed' or 'hibernating'.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to ideas about the viable city in the industrialised North from the point of view of youth determining the future of pre-, industrial and post-industrial urban communities in the Arctic and Subarctic. We argued that such settlements thrive if young people see their better perspectives for their future than in bigger urban centres in the South of their respective countries, and therefore suggested youth well-being as important research topic of urban sustainability research. We have contributed to filling the research gap identified by Hollander (2018) on the positive sides of population decrease in cities, highlighting access to a clean environment and compact comfortable size and infrastructure as positive factors for youth well-being. Focusing on specific social determinants, our research has highlighted some of the criteria for people's well-being in particular societies that Thin (2008, 36) identified as lacking for identifying the universals and diversities of the concept. In identifying such universals across the borders of the former iron curtain, we established that life-period and socio-cultural context contribute to influencing which of the determinants of well-being become significant and which remain dormant in a particular city and for particular people.

The question is, which indicators can be externally influenced in making such towns a good place for youth to stay, and what are the internal issues that every young person needs to deal with on an individual level. The individual is and will always be a principal subject in determining what well-being means in a particular urban environment. However, we have found that in Russia collectivism remains a crucial variable that shapes discourses and practices enhancing well-being. We have outlined common denominators that help us categorise preliminarily which indicators of youth well-being remain dormant and which become significant for particular people in particular places in particular periods of life.

To conclude, Arctic youth is a relevant group of research partners for contributing to concepts of viable urban communities in peripheral areas. Evidence about their well-being in smaller cities located in the circumpolar North shows that these places under-represented in urban research have not only disadvantages, but also several structural advantages that make them attractive as places for living of youth. While it is largely the same universals that determine well-being among Youth in the Arctic city, we caution against too coarse generalisations for this group. The same factor can function as a boost for youth well-being among one age group, while it works as limiting factor for another. In order to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' as stated in the 'United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' (2020) eleven, decision makers on national, regional and municipal level can learn more from their own young populations for making their cities attractive places to live, thrive and accomplish their dreams.

Note

1. All quotes translated by the authors from Russian and Finnish.

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2 Not wanting to be "Stuck"

Exploring the role of mobility for young people's wellbeing in Northern Finland

Teresa Komu and Ria-Maria Adams

Introduction

It is common for young people in rural Finland leave their place of birth. Like all the Nordic countries, Finland is experiencing population growth in its larger, urban settlements, and population decline in its smaller, rural ones (Jungsberg et al. 2019, p. 23). Among the Nordic countries, Finland has the largest number of rural regions with declining youth populations, and Lapland is one of the most seriously impacted regions (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020). The trend towards urbanization is largely driven by young people, who account for a significant proportion of Finland's internal migration, and it is peripheral, rural areas, in particular, that are losing young people (Aro 2018; Valtion nuorisoneuvosto 2019). Far from being solely a Finnish phenomenon, the outmigration of rural youth is a global trend affecting the entire Arctic and the developed countries in general (Carson et al. 2016; Farrugia 2016; Corbett and Forsey 2017). Indeed, it has been suggested that as part of growing up in rural places, young people have to "learn to leave" them (Corbett 2007; Kiilakoski 2016, pp. 47–49).

Many researchers have referred to a "mobility imperative" when discussing the outmigration of rural youth: young people are being driven out by structural inequality whereby cultural and economic capital becomes concentrated in cities, leaving rural living symbolically portrayed as inferior to urban life (Armila 2016; Farrugia 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016). Such a view not only casts migration in a predominantly negative light but also risks overlooking young people's own views and agency. Furthermore, research on youth migration has shown that a desire to migrate is not tied to local conditions and that youth outmigration is not a specifically rural phenomenon (Tuhkunen 2007, pp. 10, 145–146). Young people in general are highly mobile and tend to leave rural areas, whether or not these are in decline (Seyfrit et al. 2010; Carson et al. 2016, p. 382).

We suggest that one might approach rural youth outmigration in northern Finland as a manifestation of a "culture of migration" (see Massey et al. 1993; Horváth 2008). In addition, we wish to focus on young people's own understandings of wellbeing and on the kind of role mobility plays in these. We understand migration as an act of individual agency,[1] one driven by

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future aspirations that are facilitated and constrained by material, social and cultural conditions (Carling and Collins 2018). We further the discussion started by recent anthropological research on the relations between place and wellbeing (see Ferraro and Barletti 2016), in particular the article by Neil Thin (2016) dealing with the interplay between wellbeing, place and mobility. Thin argues that research and policymaking often assume that wellbeing is rooted in being in a particular place and that certain place characteristics, as well as place attachment, determine a person's wellbeing. Instead, he calls for an understanding of wellbeing as the result of people's dynamic interactions with places, in which purposeful relocations may play an important role in the pursuit of wellbeing (Thin 2016, pp. 6–11).

In the following, we argue that mobility, in the form of both everyday mobility and long-term migration to another place, is necessary for the wellbeing of young people in rural areas, whose lives are characterized by long distances. Further, we suggest that outmigration has come to represent a key transitional phase in young rural Finns' pursuit of individual life paths and self-actualization—components of the "good life" in modern Western societies. To date there has been little discussion between the fields of youth migration and the "anthropology of the good" in the context of the Global North. By combining these perspectives, our research aims to fill gaps in the present knowledge. Next, we discuss how the relations between mobility and wellbeing appear in our case study of young people living in, leaving and returning to their place of birth, Kolari, a municipality in the northern "periphery" of Finland.

Northern culture of migration

Around the world, especially in remote areas, "cultures of migration" have arisen in which youth migration is normalized, valued and expected (Easthope and Gabriel 2008). The current generation of young people is increasingly mobile (Robertson et al. 2018) and is arguably affected by discourses that normalize mobility (Jamieson 2000; Kiilakoski 2016; Rönnlund 2019). According to several prominent authors, Western societies have experienced a fundamental shift in values over the last century and have begun to encourage and value individualization and mobility over social stability (Taylor 1989; Giddens 1991; Bauman 2001). No longer bound to kinship relations and place, people have gone from "living for others" and from prioritizing local communities to pursuing self-actualization and a "life of one's own" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, p. 54). Instead of following in their parents' footsteps, people in modern societies are encouraged to pursue individual life paths. Migration may offer a means to realize one's individualistic pursuit of the good life (Tuhkunen 2007, p. 12, 159).

When mobility is the cultural norm, people who stay rooted in their home places become regarded as anomalies. Especially in the rural context "stayers" often find themselves negatively stereotyped as being "left behind" and disadvantaged (Jamieson 2000; Stockdale and Haartsen 2018). According to Timo

Aro (2007a, 2007b), migration from rural and peripheral areas has a long-standing history in Finland. Migration trends in the country have flowed in the same directions since the nineteenth century: from rural areas to urban growth centres, from north to south and from east to west. In the 2000s, a major proportion of those migrating internally consist of young people and students (Aro 2007a, 2007b, p. 375). Outmigration has been a part of life in the remote rural areas of northern and eastern Finland for several generations and has reportedly become a social norm for young people. For them, moving is a way to "realize one's potential", while staying is a sign of being "stuck" (Ollila 2008; Hartikainen 2016). In fact, some scholars have argued that, especially in rural areas, leaving one's birthplace has become part of adolescence (Tuhkunen 2007, p. 159; Robertson et al. 2018).

Throughout the twenty-first century, young people in Finland have expressed a high readiness to migrate to search for employment.[2] A willingness to migrate seems to be highest in rural and peripheral areas, and it is not uncommon for municipalities there to lose 40 to 60 per cent of their young population (Penttinen 2016, p. 149; Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, p. 36). However, "movers" are also the dominant group in urban areas (Tuhkunen 2007, pp. 10, 145–146). A birth cohort study that followed all Finnish children born in 1987 indicates that by the age of 28 only 4 per cent had never moved and more than half (52 per cent) had moved on between four and nine occasions (Moisio et al. 2016, pp. 34–35).[3] When examined by municipal borders, 90 per cent of the area of Finland experiences outmigration (Heleniak 2020, p. 46). Young Finnish people, and Nordic youth in general, also tend to leave their childhood homes 10 to 12 years earlier than youth living in southern Europe (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, p. 34).[4]

Nevertheless, attitudes towards youth migration are twofold, and young people are both encouraged and criticized for following their individual aspirations (Corbett and Forsey 2017, p. 430). It seems that especially in rural areas youth outmigration causes a conflict between the individual pursuit of wellbeing (young people) and the promotion of collective wellbeing (local communities). Current policy discourses tend to encourage youth mobility and educational aspirations (Robertson et al. 2018). Modern societies need flexible, mobile labour, and young people are encouraged to become educated and to be willing to move to search for work. At the same time, young people are urged to be loyal and to stay to rebuild their local communities, whose viability and social cohesion are seen as threatened by modern individualism and mobility (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, p. 3; Corbett and Forsey 2017, p. 430). In peripheral and rural areas, educational mobility and youth outmigration prompt concerns, such as "brain drain" (Pitkänen et al. 2017, p. 95), demographic and economic decline (Carson et al. 2016, p. 382) and the concomitant increase in the median age of the population (Hamilton 2010, p. 7). Young people are left with a conundrum: they should leave for their own good and, at the same time, stay for the good of their communities (Corbett and Forsey 2017, p. 440).

Attitudes towards migration and mobility reveal implicit assumptions about their relation to wellbeing and "good" or normative ways to live. Migration has been seen both as beneficial and harmful for the wellbeing of individuals and societies. According to Liisa Malkki (2012), research and common sense generally posit stability and attachment as natural states of being, and mobility and migration as pathologies that demand explanation. In Western thinking, place attachment and being "rooted" has historically been given a positive value, whereas mobility and displacement have been considered sources of ill-being and forms of chaos (Tuhkunen 2007, p. 18; Malkki 2012, pp. 30–41). A prominent cause of the criticism directed at "mobile modernity" has been the assumption that displacements pose a threat to wellbeing (Thin 2016, p. 11). As noted by Aro, in agrarian Finland migration and urbanization were perceived as harmful and problematic, and people who migrated as morally dubious. Historically, migration has been encouraged, but it has also been restricted through various governmental actions (Aro 2007a, 2007b).

In various cultures, ritual displacements and deliberate dis-attachment are, in fact, considered essential for both individual and collective wellbeing (Thin 2016, p. 11).[5] We suggest that the normalization of rural youth outmigration and its positive associations implies that in modern Finnish culture it serves as a necessary transition in a young person's quest for "self-actualization" and pursuit of the good life. The sacrifice that comes with leaving one's birthplace and social network is necessary if a young person is to be able to fulfil the modern demand of individualism and of realizing his or her "potential". In turn, those who never leave their birthplace "fail" to meet these expectations, which could explain why stayers are disparaged even if their decision might benefit the community. In sum, in a culture of migration, the wellbeing and self-fulfillment of an individual require mobility.

Methodology

This research is based on ethnographic fieldwork in the municipality of Kolari in Finnish Lapland. All data were collected during multiple fieldwork periods between February 2019 and August 2020. The definition of "youth" varies from culture to culture (Clark 2011). Here, we apply the national, legal definitions of the Finnish government. The 2017 Finnish Youth Act defines persons up to and including the age of 29 years as youths. Our research participants are between 16 and 29 years of age. Participants were informed throughout the research process that our aim was to examine different aspects of wellbeing from the young people's own perspective and consider how they figure in their decisions to either stay or leave Kolari.

Our main research methods were participant observation (Bernard 2006; Robben and Sluka 2012) and unstructured interviews; the latter were conducted in the form of conversations in which interaction between the participants was encouraged. (Sardan 2015). Participant observation included involvement in local family sports events, the local circus's spring show,

penkkarit—a traditional Finnish event on upper secondary school students' last day of school before starting their studying break—and several visits to the local upper secondary school and youth centre. Furthermore, time was spent at the "hot spots" of the region's winter tourism centres, where young people work and spend their leisure time. In addition, all the shops, "hang-outs" and restaurants favoured by local youth were visited. During times of physical absence, social media accounts, such as Instagram and Facebook, were used to "stay connected to the field".

Most of the research material consists of unstructured interviews with young people. The interviews adhered to specific, prepared questions and were conducted while participating in everyday activities of the youth. These conversations lasted from a few minutes to two-hour in-depth conversations that included biographical stories. In addition, two focus group interviews were conducted in two different settings with between three and six participants. Such an arrangement offers a forum in which young people are stimulated by each other´s comments, which has advantages for understanding peer-to-peer influences and shared understandings (Clark 2011, p. 72). Furthermore, one in-depth interview was conducted in the neighbouring municipality of Rovaniemi, with an informant who had recently left Kolari for educational reasons and to experience living in a larger city. Fieldnotes were recorded on the participant observation as well as the unstructured interviews.

We received additional information from institutional youth workers and teachers who, by virtue of their profession, provided valuable insights. They served as key persons in initiating contacts with the local youth and made it possible for the research to take place in a setting that was familiar to our informants. During data analysis, the fieldnotes were transcribed, coded and categorized and then analysed in the light of existing research. The quotations that we use in our analysis are taken from the fieldwork notes and the interview transcriptions. Because we are dealing with a small community, all of the names in the quotations are pseudonyms, and we have chosen not to use specific information regarding the names of particular places or the exact ages of our informants.

The municipality of Kolari and the Finnish "periphery"

Finland is one of the Nordic welfare states, whose policies support individual pursuits of self-actualization and wellbeing. Such welfare countries are characterized by comprehensive social security, free education and a high level of social trust. Nordic countries score well in the international rankings of human development, wellbeing, quality of life and happiness (Lundgren and Cuadrado 2020, pp. 130, 138).[6] Finland is a sparsely populated country, most of whose area is classified as "predominantly rural"; it is characterized by strong centralization of the population in southern growth centres (Nilsson and Jokinen 2020, p. 17). Around 5 per cent of the population in Finland lives in remote rural areas, which make up 70 per cent of the country's surface area. By contrast, over 70 per cent of the population lives in urban areas

(Helminen et al. 2020). Generally speaking, rural areas in Finland are experiencing a decline in services, a decreasing and ageing population and outmigration (Sireni et al. 2017, pp. 46, 14–15).

The lives of young rural people are often affected by a lack of transportation, educational opportunities and leisure activities (Wrede-Jäntti 2020, pp. 7, 13), and this is also true of Kolari. Long distances and their effect on everyday life in remote, sparsely populated areas is well recognized in previous research on rural youth (see, for example, Armila et al. 2016). In the case of Kolari, long distances influenced various aspects of the young people's lives from education to shopping, leisure and medical care. Many of the young people whom we interviewed lived either quite long distances from the municipal centre or school or had to commute long distances to see their friends or relatives.

Educational and regional policy decisions have contributed to the outmigration of rural youth. Peripheral areas are losing educational institutions as public services and leisure activities are being concentrated in growth centres (Kivijärvi and Peltola 2016, pp. 5–6). On the other hand, favourable support structures and educational support policies, such as study grants and youth housing, allow young people to become financially independent from their families quickly, supporting them in leaving the parental home (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, p. 34). Thus, in Finland, while there are young people who wish to move but lack the resources to do so, finances are not as critical a consideration as, for example, in the Russian context (see Bolotova, this volume). This is an example of how welfare politics can encourage and support certain ways of living and how welfare is one way of ensuring the creation of educated, self-managing citizens needed by modern societies (Gulløv 2011, p. 31).

Our case municipality, Kolari, is located in northern Finland close to the Swedish–Finnish border and approximately 120 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. It is one of Finland's sparsely populated, northern rural municipalities characterized by a narrow economic structure, low intensity of land use, a harsh climate, long distances and remoteness from shopping centres, health care services and urban settlements (Helminen et al. 2014; Borges 2020, p. 73). Kolari is a relatively small municipality; its population of 3,834 and population density of only 1.5 inhabitants per square kilometre (Kuntaliitto 2019a) are characteristic of northern rural towns. In 2018, only 7.2 per cent of the population in the municipality were aged between 15 and 24 (Kuntaliitto 2019b). At the time the fieldwork was conducted, Kolari had 40 upper secondary students, a number reflecting the population dynamics of many northern municipalities, which tend to have many pensioners and few young families and many of whose young people have already left to pursue an education.

Tourism is the most important and a growing livelihood in Kolari,[7] which boasts the ski resort Hiihtokeskus IsoYlläs[8] on Yllästunturi Fell and the popular Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park[9], as well as the thriving tourism village of Äkäslompolo. During the high season in the winter months, thousands of international and national tourists visit the fell villages without ever passing through or visiting the actual centre of Kolari, where the schools,

town hall, library, and youth centre are located. The tourist-oriented villages have their own shops as well as a variety of restaurants and bars, which are busy during the tourism season. Many temporary workers arrive from southern parts of Finland during the winter season, but once the season is over, the villages become silent.

While the municipality's tourism villages have a growing number of inhabitants, the overall population and economy in Kolari is declining (Similä and Jokinen 2018, p. 155). Employment and youth outmigration continue to present challenges to the municipality, which is seeking new ways to employ people year-round. For example, since 2006 two different mining companies have been making plans to re-open the old open-pit Hannukainen mine. Although the local tourism industry has protested against it, the mine is expected to bring new job opportunities, boost the regional and local economy and breathe new life into the municipality (Similä and Jokinen 2018; Komu 2019).

Leaving to pursue one's dreams

The pursuit of individual happiness is highly valued in Western cultures (Thin 2009, pp. 30, 35) and this is reflected in our young informants' reasons for moving away from Kolari, where they were born. It is well established in the literature that a significant driver of rural youth outmigration is a desire to find employment and education opportunities (see, for example, Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016). However, in the case of Kolari it is not a lack of job opportunities per se that has been driving young people to leave. In fact, young people indicated that they knew there was work available in Kolari in certain sectors, such as tourism or elderly care. The nearby Swedish border makes commuting across national borders an attractive career opportunity, providing higher salaries in some sectors, for example health care. The key motivator for young people, however, was to have the opportunity to do work that would be worthwhile and *meaningful* from their perspective, as the following excerpt shows:

> I am interested in interior design or economic studies and not in elderly care. I know I could get a job immediately in the caregiving sector, but I just don't want that.[10]
>
> (young female)

The participants in our case study area are not primarily seeking temporary employment (*kausityöntekijä*), readily available in the tourism sector. Needless to say, they take jobs to earn some money by cleaning cottages or working at a local enterprise, but in the long run they generally dream of having work that corresponds to their education and aptitudes and is more permanent. Often, young people from southern Finland come to work during the winter tourism season and, once the work is done, they return to their homes. To be sure, some of the local youth dream of being part of the

growing local tourism business, in which they see enormous potential for finding future employment.

While the planned mining project could offer future work opportunities and breathe new life into the municipality, young people remained ambivalent toward it. The positive effects of an active mine are visible in the neighbouring town, Pajala, on the Swedish side of the border. A better infrastructure and range of local services—direct benefits of the mine—are shaping the community into a more attractive place to live. On the other hand, the young people in Kolari are unsure if and when exactly the Hannukainen mine would open and what specific jobs it would provide for them. Even though the tensions around the mining project overall are high in the municipality, it did not seem like a relevant issue for many of the young people. As one noted:

> I don't really care about the mining project. Who knows if it really even ever opens? I don't really have an opinion. There is so much for and against the mine. I just stay out of the discussion.
>
> (young female)

Overall, the mining project did not seem like a big attraction compelling young people to stay in Kolari. Again, the *types* of jobs it could provide was a more important factor than its overall ability to provide jobs. Our preliminary findings are in line with previous research, which has demonstrated that even though large-scale industrial projects may create new job opportunities locally, they do little to stop young people from moving away from rural communities (Seyfrit et al. 2010).

An important aspect of the good life and wellbeing for young people in Kolari is being able to work in a job that they consider both meaningful and sustaining (see also, Myllyniemi 2016, p. 27). What makes life meaningful is understood in different ways at the individual level, but it is also conditioned culturally. A cross-cultural study by Gordon Mathews on Hong Kong, Japan and the United States found that in all three societies family and work were the most common answers participants gave when asked: "What makes life worth living?" (Mathews 2009, pp. 176–177, 180). While the opinions on what kind of work was considered meaningful varied individually in our case study, most young people shared a view of work as something that should bring meaningfulness to one's life and provide an outlet for self-fulfillment.

The selectiveness regarding job aspirations observed in our case study seems to be an expression of the previously discussed modern outlook that encourages the pursuit of individual life paths and dreams. An important difference between the Finnish migration of the past and the present is that while migration has perhaps always been sparked by the pursuit of a "better" life, today it is motivated more by personal ambitions and visions of wellbeing than by a compelling need to make a living (Aro 2007a, 2007b, p. 371). This is largely a reflection of the conditions of life in the current welfare state. For example, for the generation born in the beginning of the twentieth century, who experienced war and the rebuilding of the country, chasing a

personal "dream job" was probably not a priority amidst the struggles of everyday life (Häkkinen and Salasuo 2016, p. 185).

In pursuing one's dreams, the choice of the right education path becomes an important factor. Lack of secondary education is statistically the strongest indicator for future marginalization and ill-being for young people (Armila 2016, p. 11; Ristikari et al. 2016, p. 97). As in many peripheral municipalities, only upper secondary education is possible in Kolari. For anything else—vocational schools, universities or universities of applied sciences—young people need to move elsewhere. The municipality tries to actively strengthen different educational paths that would not require young people to move away by offering local apprenticeships and distance learning opportunities. Yet after upper secondary school there are only a few options in distance learning classes, causing young people to leave the community to pursue their desired education. Some of the youth already leave after graduating from comprehensive school to attend vocational school or an upper secondary school with special emphasis (e.g., languages, music or art). As the excerpt below indicates, many wished to continue to visit their hometown even after moving away to maintain their relations with family and friends:

> I don't want to leave Kolari except for my education I have to go to Kittilä during school weeks. Whenever it is possible, I return back home.
> (young female)

While adolescents (youth under 18 years) tend to still be in the process of deciding whether or not to stay or leave, some of our older informants had already undergone the process of leaving and returning. As noted by Stockdale and Haartsen (2018, p. 2), leaving or staying is indeed not a one-off decision, but one made multiple times over the course of a person's life. The reasons for these decisions vary individually, but they often have to do with returning to "one's roots". Given that remote regions, such as Kolari, are often unable to provide a variety of educational options and services, it has been suggested that the outmigration of young people could be perceived as beneficial, rather than harmful, in supporting their viability in the long run. Instead of trying to stop young people from migrating when leaving is the "social norm", these regions could concentrate on encouraging them to return after they have acquired qualifications that could be much needed in the region (Borges 2020, p. 74).

The perks and perils of "everyone knows everyone"

Anthropological studies on the "good life" generally emphasize the importance of the social dimension for wellbeing (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). Social relations, instead of place, can act as a grounding and defining factor in one's decision to either leave or stay (Kivijärvi and Peltola 2016, p. 7). While social interaction is a source of wellbeing, individual wellbeing may also be constrained by the dynamics of social life. Kolari is a small community where,

as the young people describe it, "everyone knows everyone". Depending on who was being asked, this close connection with peers could be perceived as either a positive or a negative factor.

For some young people, close connections and knowing each other well were connected to feelings of security and familiarity. In some cases, the desire to find a partner in their own community or another "northern" community was an important criterion, as only people from the North would understand their "northern way of life". The importance of maintaining close social relations and their connection to this particular place was the most important factor of the "good life" for some youth, as the following excerpt shows:

> I moved to Tornio during my secondary education, but I returned almost every weekend to see my friends and to hang out at home. I could not find work matching my training, so I decided to retrain for another job so I could stay here and wouldn´t have to move far away. For me it is important to be able to stay where my friends and family are.
>
> (young male)

In order to sustain close relations and friendships, young people in Kolari long for more public meeting places and hangouts. They often meet in private locations, such as their homes or cottages, because there is a lack of suitable places in town to gather without being supervised. Being just across the Swedish border, young people regularly visit Pajala for shopping and other activities. However, young people understand that from an economic standpoint it does not make sense to run meeting places in a small town. For adolescents, the municipality has organized a meeting place in the form of a youth centre called "Laguuni", which is very popular especially among adolescents. Professional guidance is provided by social and youth workers, who have a warm-hearted relationship with the local youth. Young people come there to talk about issues that concern them, play billiards, have a coffee or some snacks, play in the newly added "gaming room" on computers (that some of them would not have access to in their homes) or use it as a space for personal regeneration and leisure. These youth centres are essential institutions in enhancing young people's wellbeing in remote towns and are highly valued among younger local youth.

Mobility and, on the other hand, immobility affected social relations in various ways. Living in a culture of migration shapes the way young people learn to conceive the nature of relationships and their temporary nature (Kiilakoski 2016, pp. 37–45). Many of the young people still currently living in Kolari mentioned family, friends and work colleagues who had left to work and live elsewhere. The absence of important people is a recurrent theme in the conversations, and "missing friends and family" was mentioned as a negative aspect of living in a remote place. Yet people who had already migrated could serve as an anchoring factor in prospective migrants' decision to leave. Young people wanted to move to cities where they already "know

someone", wanting and needing a contact person (often a relative or a friend) whom they could trust and spend time with.

When it comes to local mobility, the story of one young female participant exemplifies the lived reality of local youth regarding the role of transportation and the importance of the ability to be mobile for upkeeping social relations:

> The only means of transport that I can use on my own is the school bus. I live around 25 km from the centre of Kolari and if I want to hang out with a friend, I have to pre-arrange everything and stay over for the night if my parents are not willing to pick me up. Also, if a friend wants to visit me, she or he has to join me on the school bus, which the friend would have to pay for, which makes things more complicated. Also, I have friends who live on the other side of Kolari and I need to travel 50 km one way if I want to visit them. If I want to do any free-time activities I have to stay here after school and arrange for someone to pick me up afterwards.
>
> (young female)

Social relations often played a role if one decided to return to Kolari after moving away. Starting a family on their own certainly brings some young people "back to their roots", where the social network of a family plays a vital role. While youth migration flows from rural areas to growth centres, migration of parents with children generally flows from cities to rural and semi-urban areas (Moisio et al. 2016, p. 29). Finnish people in general perceive rural areas with ready access to nature as good places to live and raise children (Sireni et al. 2017, p. 45). Leaving may enable a young person to "self-actualize", to get an education and possibly start a family, after which they are "ready" to move back. The proximity to a partner or to family plays an essential role in staying, leaving and returning, as this excerpt demonstrates:

> I left when I was young and stayed many years in southern Finnish cities. But once I got children of my own, I started missing the network of my family. I married someone who is also from here and after a while we decided to move back. Now we both have jobs here and are happy that our kids can grow up here as well. I had a great relationship with my grandparents, and I want the same for my kids.
>
> (young female)

Then again, for some, the narrow social circles of their home area were a reason to leave. Some young people have an urge to experience "something new" and to get to know new people, which, in a peripheral place, where new people only arrive occasionally, is rather impossible. Moreover, as our informants noted, finding a suitable partner is not always easy if "everyone knows everyone" and options are limited.

The importance of having "something to do"

In the participants' perception, having access to a variety of free-time activities, especially winter sports and other outdoor activities, is an important factor for wellbeing in Kolari. On a general level, the informants were satisfied with the leisure activities on offer. The positive examples mentioned include various sport possibilities, which range from downhill skiing to skidoo-driving, and from active soccer, hunting and ice-hockey clubs to the possibility to perform circus art. In addition, there are possibilities to attend a variety of music classes. Some young people also actively engaged in sports activities outside of their municipality borders. For example, some dance classes were provided in the neighbouring municipality of Kittilä, while the circus activities and soccer attracted the youth in Kolari. However, the main consideration was whether transportation could be organized enabling the young people to take advantage of these options as one participant said:

> This is the only place we have been living at so far, so we can't really miss something that we have never had. I am satisfied with what we have, and we have plenty of activities to choose from. The question is how we can organize transportation to and from the places.

As the above excerpt shows, the issue of transportation came up often when the young people described their everyday activities. If young people want to go to the movies, for example, they need to drive about two hours to Rovaniemi. Interestingly, young people do not regard the distances as such as an issue if there is a way get where they want to go. There is a clear distinction between those who are dependent on other people to drive them and those who own a vehicle. The young people who have access to a vehicle did not regard the distances as a problem, while those without access to a vehicle more often had feelings of "being stuck". The issues of insufficient public transportation were raised throughout conversations and interviews as a decisive element of living in a rural area. Young people value independence and want to be able to move between places on their own. Having to rely on a what is a scanty public transportation system creates the negative feeling of being "dependent" on other people.

According to the Finnish Driving License Act (Ajokorttilaki 286/2011) (Finlex 2021) young people can get a driver's license as early as the age of 17 under "special circumstances", which include living in rural places. This law has been well received by local youth and it is applicable to almost every young person living in the Kolari area. However, getting a driver's license is also a financial consideration and not everyone can afford to get a license and a car. For some, the current transportation, which is inadequate, hampers their lives to the extent that they want to move to a bigger city, as explained by a young man who had moved to Rovaniemi:

> I used to live quite far outside of Kolari's city centre, literally in the middle of nowhere. Of course, there were outdoor activities but otherwise it was so boring. All my friends lived far away, and it was hard to get to their place. My parents or a friend's parents needed to drive us kids, which was not too easy. Sometimes we travelled with the school buses, stayed overnight at the friend's place and went back to school together on the next day. But it was not an easy way to get around.

What sets living close to a tourist destination apart from other rural places is the variety of restaurants and bars the tourism area offers. However, these are often expensive locations that young people do not find particularly attractive or affordable. During the winter season, several famous musicians and artists come to the tourism villages, but for the local youth the issues of cost and transport are still an overriding factor. The tourist area is located around 35 km from the centre of Kolari, with no public transportation allowing young people to travel back and forth between their homes and the tourism hotspots.

"Something to do" was often the answer when we asked young people what they want to have in their municipality. Even though they expressed satisfaction overall with the free-time activities offered, they said that some additional sports activities, such as dance classes, a swimming hall or a frisbee golf course, would add to their happiness. In their narratives young people noted wistfully that there had previously been more shops and places to hang out in town, such as a kiosk and a pizzeria, but that these had closed because of financial difficulties. Then again, young people understand why it is uneconomical to run a business in Kolari given the small population, especially the number of young residents.

A "dead place" and a place of "beloved nature"

While some young people view Kolari as "a dead place with only little to do", others view it as a safe environment with "great access to nature activities". According to Anne Ollila (2008), young people's migration tendencies in Finland are shaped by discourses that associate rural areas with impending marginalization and urban settlements with success. But "peripheries" have a number of meanings. For example, Finnish rural areas are associated with closeness to nature and safety, but also with conservatism and stagnation. Urban areas are associated with individuality and endless possibilities, but also with loneliness and insecurity (for the full list, see Tuhkunen 2007, p. 155). These perceptions were shared by our informants.

Studies have shown that rural youth may have strong bonds to their home places and often enjoy their rural lives, especially the close connection to nature, regardless of their decision to move away (Armila et al. 2016; Farrugia 2016; Kiilakoski 2016; Penttinen 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto, Pöysä and Armila 2016; Rönnlund 2019, p. 2). A connection to nature plays a big role in the youth's personal wellbeing in our study area and young people described how

important it was to just have access to nature, even if they did not always actively make use of it. For some people, access to the specific kind of nature found in the North was the reason to return to Kolari. During the fieldwork we heard extensive descriptions of the surrounding nature: the calming aspect of nature, the beauty, magic, roughness and harsh weather conditions. Nature was described as an energizing and nurturing place. It was the connection to nature that young people missed if they had lived elsewhere. They described how the forests in the southern parts of the country were different and how the feeling of space was lacking when compared to their rural home area, as this young man pointed out:

> The forest is different in the south. I don't know how to explain it but it just feels very different than here. The trees are different and so is the sense of space.

Nevertheless, researchers have pointed out that young people do not leave their home regions only because they are forced to do so, but also because of dissatisfaction with their current rural lives and their longing for city life (Pedersen and Gram 2018, p. 630). Some of our research participants said that their longing for "something different" is so strong that as soon as they could, they would move away. One young man said:

> Mainly I wanted to get away because there was not much to do … it's a dead place. Did you see the centre? There used to be a few more shops but everything is closed now, except for the two grocery stores and one burger grill.

Urban lifestyle itself can be perceived as something worth pursuing, especially by young people (Penttinen 2016, pp. 149–150). David Farrugia has argued that with their opportunities for consumption and leisure experiences, cities may attract young people by being symbols of modern life and youth culture. Compared to the perceived possibilities offered by cities, rural places may come to be seen as places where "nothing happens" (Farrugia 2016). The experience of the good life is also to some degree relative and results from a comparison between what one has and what others have. Research on stress, for example, has shown that feeling that one does not have enough or *as much as others* is as a major psycho-social stressor (Sapolsky 2004, pp. 372–374). In our case study, dissatisfaction with rural life seems, at times, to have arisen from comparing one's life to what life was imagined to be like elsewhere.

If one's hometown is perceived as a "dead place", moving away is essential to ensure a future for oneself. Migration may offer a way to escape marginal conditions and to actively better one's life. The young people in our case study had clear visions or a direction for their life goals, informing their decision to either stay or leave. In this respect, youth outmigration is an expression of the ability to dream of a better future (Fischer 2014) as well as of the

feeling of being able to control the direction of one's life, both of which are important aspects of one's sense of wellbeing (Jankowiak 2009).

Conclusions

In this chapter we have been exploring the role of mobility in young people's wellbeing in northern Finland. Our results suggest that the ability to be mobile is necessary for the wellbeing of young people in rural areas, whose lives are characterized by long distances. The importance of mobility is highlighted also when its counterpart, the inability or refusal to move, results in feelings and accusations of being "stuck". It was common that to access the things they perceived to be most important for their wellbeing—social relations, meaningful activities and work—the young people interviewed needed to be mobile either within or between localities. It is important to point out that for our informants it was not long distances per se that were perceived as a problem, but access to the transportation needed to travel those distances. While previous research on rural youth has discussed the role of long distances in young people's everyday lives, this research is the first attempt to spell out how mobility is connected to young people's wellbeing in sparsely populated rural areas.

In light of our findings, we would also argue that the phenomenon of Finnish rural youth outmigration can be understood as an example of a prevailing culture of migration. In this context, a young person "needs" to leave his or her birthplace to be able to fully pursue the good life in modern Western society, which values individualism and mobility. Discussions of rural youth outmigration often deal with the clash between individual pursuit of wellbeing and the viability and wellbeing of the rural communities affected. Our decision to focus on young people's viewpoints has shown that while rural youth outmigration may have negative impacts on the community level, on the individual level it may be a way for a young person to better his or her life. Migration may offer the means for a young person to pursue his or her dreams or to escape marginal conditions. At the same time, it is important to note that some of the young people interviewed in the present study dreamed of being able to stay in their home region. For them too, mobility could offer the means to realize this dream by leaving their birthplace temporarily to get qualifications that would allow them to come back. While the young people under 18 years often wanted to leave, returning seemed to be the most attractive option for young families and the "older" youth who had already acquired an education.

Account of our study, we have seen that the same considerations can serve as push and pull factors, with no straightforward causation between place characteristics and wellbeing. Our findings support the argument of Thin (2016) that wellbeing should be understood as the result of people's dynamic interactions with places rather than of people having access to certain place characteristics. We extend the argument to the context of rural youth outmigration and demonstrate the key role that various mobilities play in the lives

of young people in rural areas. With this chapter we hope to have done justice to young people's multivocal views on wellbeing and the importance of mobility in northern Finland.

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Notes

1 Our definition reflects the highly individualistic culture in Finland. In some other cultural and geographical settings, migration is understood more as a collective decision, as discussed by Alla Bolotova in her chapter on Russia in this volume.
2 In 2016, more than three of four respondents on a survey were prepared to move to get a job, while nearly half would be fully ready to do so (Valtion nuorisoneuvosto 2016). That same year, among the EU countries Finland had the third highest number of young working-aged people to move within the country for a job (Palen and Lien 2018). Another survey reported that at the time the research was done, 81 per cent of the respondents, young Finnish people, were planning to move to another region (Tuhkunen 2007, pp. 10, 145–146).
3 Migration was most frequent between the ages of 15 and 21 (Moisio et al. 2016, pp. 34–35).
4 Currently, the average age at which children leave the parental home in Finland is 22 years (Karlsdóttir, Heleniak and Kull, 2020, p. 34).
5 As examples Thin mentions long-term ascetic withdrawals and the Indian custom whereby newlywed women are ritually assisted to leave their old homes and to embrace their new ones (2016, p. 11).
6 These rankings are based on measurements such as life expectancy at birth, education and gross national income per capita.
7 Forty-eight per cent of the municipality's economy and 40 per cent of employment came from tourism in 2011 (Matkailun tutkimus- ja koulutusinstituutti 2013).
8 It has the fourth-largest annual revenue of all the ski resorts in Finland (Jänkälä 2019).
9 The park, which recorded 561,200 visitors in 2019, is the most popular national park in Finland (Metsähallitus 2019).
10 The excerpts have been translated by the authors from Finnish.

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Radically Ordinary Lives: Young Rural Stayers and the Ingredients of the Good Life in Finnish Lapland

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Abstract

This article focuses on young people who, despite the general tendency towards youth outmigration in rural areas, have decided to stay in their home town. We explore the agency of young, conscious stayers, as well as the process of staying in the northern Finnish town of Kemijärvi. The stayers' values and perceptions of the constituents of a good life could be taken as an alternative to the prevailing Western ideal that emphasizes mobility and ambitious educational and career plans, and is, in part, driving young people to leave their rural hometowns. The stayers in this study are active participants in their own fate and are content with their choice of staying. Applying ethnographic methods, we undertake to learn what rural stayers consider the building blocks of a good life in a small-town setting, one offering comparatively limited options in terms of jobs, education and leisure activities.

Keywords

Well-being, Arctic, rural youth, rural stayers, youth agency

Introduction

A recently published regional newspaper article (Molkoselkä, 2020) titled 'Young people in Kemijärvi drive around town because there is nothing better to do'[1] illustrates a common perception of what the lives of Finnish rural youth are like. Quoting four local young males, the article points to the lack of things to do in a rural

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town from young people's perspective and highlights the perceived decline of the town. One of the young men captures the attitude of the four when he says: 'I have not heard of any young person moving back here'[2] (Molkoselkä, 2020). This implies that life for young people in Kemijärvi is as idle as driving in circles. Certainly, many young people do end up leaving Kemijärvi. The local statistics indicate a decline of 50% in the number of 15-to-24-year-old residents in just 10 years (Tilastokeskus, 2020), which seems to underscore the young males' perception of their home town as an undesirable place for young people to live in.

Kemijärvi is not alone in this development. Youth outmigration is one of the key challenges to the viability of peripheral and rural communities worldwide and in the Arctic. Like other Nordic countries, Finland has experienced population growth in larger cities and population decline in the surrounding smaller ones (Jungsberg et al., 2019, p. 23). The loss of young people due to outmigration is especially pronounced in peripheral and rural areas, and Lapland is among the country's most seriously impacted regions (Aro, 2018; Karlsdóttir et al., 2020; Valtion nuorisoneuvosto, 2019). Due to the prevalence of outmigration, studies of young people living in rural areas initially focused on mobility and decisions to leave (Forsberg, 2019), but the past decade has witnessed a rising interest in studies of staying, returning and the life of young rural adults (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Haartsen & Thissen, 2014; Rönnlund, 2019; Stockdale et al., 2018).

In this article, we turn the spotlight on those young people of Kemijärvi who have decided to stay in their rural home town. We focus on the everyday life of young rural stayers and explore their thoughts on what constitutes a meaningful, 'good' life. In doing so, our case study discusses what could be considered an alternative view to the mainstream Western ideal of what the 'good life' should be like and how one can achieve it. We draw on similar studies (Looker & Naylor, 2009, p. 2021; Mærsk et al., 2021; Trell et al., 2012) on rural youth and analyse the young people's everyday context through an ethnographic case study showing how they develop a sense of belonging to their local place. The young stayers in our study have acted contrary to the prevailing discourse of mobility (Forsberg, 2019), where the expectation is that young people will move away from rural areas and moving is seen as a 'rite of passage' into adulthood. When mobility is the cultural norm (Komu & Adams, 2021), a conscious decision to stay represents a deviation from the norm, arguably making it 'radical', as the title of the article suggests.

We agree with Leyshon (2008) that the lives of young people in the countryside are multidimensional and complex and demand further analysis. He argues for the importance of conceptualizing young people as active agents who make their own decisions and form their own identities in rural areas (Leyshon, 2008). This view counters discourses that treat rural stayers as passive onlookers of their own fate who have merely been 'unable to leave'. Their reasons for staying may be harder to articulate and may well be as complex and multi-layered as those for leaving or more so (Hjälm, 2014, p. 569). In this light, we argue against the putative assumption that people who stay do not really know why they do so, or that they just stay because they cannot drum up the initiative to leave. In the spirit of Stockdale and Haartsen (2018, p. 2), our case study defines the act of staying as a conscious decision and an ongoing process that may change during a person's life course. In addition to the transition into adulthood, other key life changes work as triggers for staying or leaving, for example, starting a family or getting a career opportunity elsewhere

(Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018, p. 2). In this respect, it may not always be useful to put people into fixed categories as 'stayers' or 'leavers'.

We have decided to use the term 'stayers' in reference to the young people in this study because it is a notion they identify with and apply to themselves. We also distinguish between those who have consciously wanted to stay and those who have been unable to leave, for example, due to a lack of resources. Our informants could be described as 'conscious and content stayers', after Morse and Mudgett (2018), for they value their home place, have consciously decided to remain—or have expressed their will to remain—and are content with their decision. We want to contribute to the discussion on youth motivations for staying and the factors influencing this decision by focusing on the experiences of this category of stayers (see also Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018).

To date, there has been no work with an explicit focus on conscious rural stayers in Finnish Lapland. Most of the Finnish studies describe the lives of rural youth, in general, with a focus on Eastern Finland (see, e.g., Armila et al., 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto, 2018; Tuuva-Hongisto et al., 2016). Research elsewhere includes studies on life planning and perspectives of young people in the border region between Denmark and Germany (Yndigegn, 2003), as well as on the motives of young adults returning to their rural home regions in the Netherlands (Haartsen & Thissen, 2014). For their part, Fischer and Malmberg (2001) analyse the life course of (im-)mobility and attachment to geographical areas in Sweden, while Looker and Naylor (2009) focus on the life-course transitions of rural young people in Canada. We seek to complement these recent studies by describing rural places as seen by young people who are satisfied with their lives.

Rural Stayers: Going Against the Grain

Rural regions, as well as their young residents, are often the target of negative stereotypes. Rural youth are depicted as marginalized and disadvantaged (Leyshon, 2008) victims of a 'mobility imperative' that inexorably drives young people to leave their rural homes (Farrugia, 2016). Even among researchers, the term 'immobility' in the case of young people often has negative connotations (Looker & Naylor, 2009; Mærsk et al., 2021; Pedersen & Gram, 2018). Despite the concerns over the demographic decline of rural areas driven by youth outmigration, rural stayers often become negatively stereotyped as 'lacking the agency to leave' and 'staying behind' (Jamieson, 2000; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018).

In Finland, the academic literature and public discussions tend to represent the Finnish rural north as a region in inevitable decay, one emptying of people and services, a marginal periphery in comparison to the southern growth centres (Armila et al., 2016; Lanas et al., 2013). Life in rural areas seems miserable when it is discussed in terms of statistics depicting declining economies, unemployment, outmigration, ageing of the population, lack of prospects, loneliness and high morbidity (Karvonen & Rahkonen, 2004, p. 77). What is more, these discussions seem to draw on an underlying assumption that having fewer options for services, a social life, education, work and leisure is tantamount to having a life that is less desirable or fulfilling.

Young people's desire to move is shaped not only by structural constraints and a culture that normalizes migration but also by conceptions of the kind of life imagined

to be possible in their home region. In contemporary Western societies, definitions of success include a good career and material well-being, and discourses on mobility imply that this can be achieved by moving out of rural areas. Previously, it has been argued that in Finland, especially its rural areas, a 'culture of migration' prevails in which outmigration has become a key transitional phase in young Finns' journey towards the 'good life' (Komu & Adams, 2021). To the Finnish youth, migrating appears as a way to 'realize one's potential', while staying is seen as a sign of being 'stuck' (Hartikainen, 2016; Ollila, 2008).

In a culture characterized by mobility, the decision to stay may be taken as a waste of one's skills and potential, thus framing the person as inadequate in some respect and his or her rural life as somewhat lacking. In turn, in Western societies, mobility is associated with success, higher social capital and life progress (Mærsk et al., 2021, p. 2). Indeed, most young people in Lapland see their future as being elsewhere, a common perception being that a 'successful life' is not possible if one stays in the region (Ollila, 2004, 2008). Young people find themselves under pressure to 'make progress' and educate themselves along their life paths—highly valued aims in Finnish culture. Adding to this is the legacy of the Protestant work ethic with its strong emphasis on individualism and work (Ollila, 2004). Among those young people who stay in rural areas, the cultural expectation of mobility may cause feelings of inferiority and failure as well as low self-esteem (Juvonen & Romakkaniemi, 2018, p. 7).[3]

Nevertheless, some young people choose to stay in their declining home regions precisely because life there resonates with their understanding of what the 'good life' should entail. When young people envisage the good life for themselves in Lapland, the picture they paint is different to one of 'success'. It consists of family, friends and relatives, social relations, hobbies and animals, as well as being close to and enjoying the peace and quiet nature offers (Ollila, 2004, 2008). A survey on the future dreams of Finnish youth found that rural centres like Kemijärvi were associated with notions of community spirit and a connection with nature, and that the small size of the community was considered a positive feature (Kuhmonen et al., 2016, p. 20). Moreover, the Finnish youth find remote rural areas attractive due to their association with the self-made life, in which entrepreneurship, personal freedom and nature-based activities play a key role (Kuhmonen et al., 2016).

In Finland, rural stayers are typically male, which is partly explained by the greater readiness of women to seek higher education (Sireni et al., 2017, pp. 31, 126). However, no further statistical information is available on what defines rural stayers. In any case, due to favourable government support structures and educational support policies, like study grants and youth housing, a lack of resources is not as common a problem preventing young people living in Finland as it might be in countries lacking similar benefits. The influence of socio-economic class on young people's migration decisions has been studied, for example, in the UK (Jamieson, 2000). Because class differences in Finland, especially in its rural areas, are much less pronounced than in societies like the one in the UK, it is difficult to determine within the limits of this study the extent to which class background affects decisions to stay in rural areas. However, the lack of aspirations for higher education among our young informants, which we will discuss later, might be related to their having a more working-class family background.

Previous studies on rural stayers have emphasized the various ways in which stayers contribute to sustaining otherwise depopulating rural regions, maintain the local quality of life and act as potential contacts for those who have moved away (Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018, p. 6). Here, we turn the gaze from what rural young people can offer their communities to what their communities can offer *them*. In this vein, we discuss, as Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006, p. 290) do, how 'identification with a particular community has increasingly become a matter of personal choice and individual taste'. Furthermore, we argue that while these young stayers build their lives individually through dynamic interactions with their rural home town, a common feature of such lives is that they offer an alternative view to the Western norm on how to achieve the 'good life'.

Materials and Methods

This work is an outcome of a larger research project titled 'Live, Work or Leave? Youth well-being and the viability of (post)extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia', which examined the ingredients of youth well-being through qualitative, ethnographic research in northern Finland. This article is based on data that were collected between August 2018 and February 2020 in multiple visits to Kemijärvi, with these ranging in length from 2 weeks to a single day. The young people were mainly found through personal contacts of the research team members and through the local upper secondary school. Some contacts, like a former youth worker, were essential for linking us to young people, and through 'snowballing', we were able to locate additional young stayers.

While the majority of our young research participants expressed a desire to leave their home town, our focus, here, was on the minority among them who could be categorized as conscious stayers. We did not enter the field specifically searching for stayers, but they became a valid and interesting group of young people while researching the topic of well-being. For this study, we conducted 18 interviews (structured and unstructured) as well as three focus group discussions; the number of participants in the latter, who ranged in age from 16 years to 25 years, varied from three to seven (Flick, 2014). The participants in all focus groups were female stayers, which could reflect the fact that females were more likely, in general, to participate in research projects; moreover, the participants were a group of friends. In the individual, biographical interviews, we found several male stayers. Altogether, we met 12 young people who expressed their willingness to stay.

We refrained from asking standardized questions because we wanted our interlocutors to determine the most important topics taken up in the interviews themselves. The questions centred around the topics of what factors of well-being are important from their own viewpoints, the reasons why they had chosen to stay or leave and how they perceived life in their home town. While some interviews were arranged beforehand by directly contacting young people, other conversations took place during the field stays in Kemijärvi, with the participants being approached casually in different locations in the town centre. The data analysis followed a process of classifying and interpreting the material, which consisted of field notes, jottings, logs and interview transcripts (see Bernard, 2006, p. 389).

Various locations in the town of Kemijärvi served as meeting places, including the local upper secondary school, cafes, bars, restaurants and a campground. Through repeated visits to the field (Vitebsky, 2012), to some extent interviewing the same people in various settings, every return provided new opportunities to gain insights into processes young stayers go through and the choices they make. We were aware that we are dealing with sensitive personal life stories, and throughout the research process, we were open with our informants about how we would process and store the data. To protect the young informants from any possible exposure, their identities were anonymized. We considered the risks and vulnerabilities of conducting fieldwork in a small town, where 'everyone knows everyone', and paid special attention to emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation. Moreover, we refrained from telling the young people who our other informants were. The focus groups were initiated by young people themselves; they chose whom they felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and stories with.

The Post-industrial City of Kemijärvi

Finland is a sparsely populated country most of whose area is considered predominantly rural. Its demography is characterized by a strong concentration of population in southern growth centres (Nilsson & Jokinen, 2020, p. 17). Educational and regional policy decisions have led to the closing of educational institutions in rural areas and to the centralization of various public services and leisure activities in growth centres (Kivijärvi & Peltola, 2016, pp. 5–6). Generally speaking, Lapland and other rural areas in Finland are seeing a decline in services, shrinking and ageing populations, and outmigration (Sireni et al., 2017, pp. 46, 14–15).

The municipality of Kemijärvi is located in Finnish Lapland around 12 km north of the Arctic Circle. It is categorized as a 'rural centre', which is a population centre located in a rural area (Helminen et al., 2014, p. 11). While outmigration from rural areas is a long-standing trend in Finland, the decline in population of rural centres like Kemijärvi only began in the 21st century (Sireni et al., 2017, p. 27). In 2019, Kemijärvi had 7,274 inhabitants with a population density of 2.07 inhabitants per sq. km (Kuntaliitto, 2019a). In 2019, only 6.3% of the population was between 15 years and 24 years of age (Kuntaliitto, 2019b). Today, 45.1% of the residents are pensioners, and the current yearly decline of population is around 1.3% (Tilastokeskus, 2020). Kemijärvi is located close (84 km) to Rovaniemi, which is the regional centre of Lapland.

In the 1960s, Kemijärvi, the centre of the municipality, was a rising industrial city with a population of 16,000 at its peak (Kemijärvi, 2017). The past of the city features big industries, like the pulp mill owned by Stora Enso Ltd. and the electronics company Salcomp Ltd. (the latter acquired by Nokia in 1983), which provided stable jobs and a solid basis for material well-being. When Stora Enso closed down the mill in the spring of 2008, it had a lasting impact on the entire city, as no industry sprang up to replace the companies that ceased operating as a result. Kemijärvi fast became a city where the percentage of residents' income from government social benefits was among the highest in the country (Muhonen & Saarinen, 2018). Along with the population decline, specialized stores, such as those selling clothing, shoes, furniture and home appliances, closed their doors. At its peak, Kemijärvi had

45 local stores; currently, there is only one such store in addition to those of the big grocery chains in the city centre (Takala, 2018). Kemijärvi has three comprehensive schools (*peruskoulu*), one upper secondary school (*lukio*) and one vocational school (Kemijärvi, 2020).

The nature that makes Finnish Lapland an attractive tourist and recreation destination also provides the local young people with many options for outdoor activities, such as trails for mountain biking, walking and skiing, and public fireplaces. The other leisure activities supported span ice hockey, hunting, various music school courses, frisbee golf, water ski jumping, swimming and Brazilian jiu-jitsu classes. The community's cultural centre (*kultuurikeskus*) houses the library, youth services, exhibition rooms and space for cultural happenings (Kemijärvi, 2021).

Staying and Living a Radically Ordinary Life

Mærsk et al. (2021, p. 1) distinguished four categories of people with respect to (im) mobility: 'local stayers', 'regional commuters', 'regional in-movers' and 'distant in-movers'. We focused on the 'local stayers'—those who had deliberately chosen to stay in Kemijärvi for the time being. Among 'local stayers', we included those who had lived for short periods elsewhere with the intention of coming back as soon as their education was completed or their employment ended. Some of the young people in our case study were in the process of finishing up their education, while others had already gained work experience in various jobs. None of our participants were married, nor did any have children at the time of interviewing. Some had already left their childhood home, while others were still living with their parents. Our participants consisted of both present and future stayers, who explicitly expressed their wish to stay in Kemijärvi.

Our young informants were aware that their decision to stay in their place of birth was a rather 'radical' one. From their perspective, their rural homes were not defined by inadequacies or a lack of options (see also Tuuva-Hongisto, 2018). Ironically, in some cases, it was precisely the 'lack of things' that made Kemijärvi attractive:

> I like living here because I don't need anything else. Seriously, I don't even miss having any other kind of life. (Young Male, finishing his formal education)[4]

Moreover, from the young people's viewpoint, it was urban areas that lacked the necessary elements to provide a good life. During a focus group discussion among young females, when asked what they wished for in their home town, the participants answered quite modestly: 'a Chinese restaurant and a flea-market with some nice used clothes'. Young stayers in Kemijärvi mentioned a number of positive aspects of the town that made life there desirable, with those ranging from the clean and peaceful nature and the possibilities for various nature-based activities to the social life, as well as the convenience and comfort a small place can provide in comparison to urban centres. They also expressed a strong attachment to their home community and to its nature.

Much as in the case study of Estonia's Järva-Jaani, where the social life of young people revolved mainly around two places (the House of Culture and a local hamburger kiosk; Trell et al. 2012), the young people in Kemijärvi organized their

lives between their hobbies, their homes and driving around with vehicles during their leisure time. Depending on the group of people, they would either meet up during their hobbies (e.g., at the hunting association or music school) or in private homes. Younger youth would also meet at the local youth centre, but this represented an environment supervised and controlled by professional adults.

Thin (2016) argues that research and policymaking often tend to assume that well-being is determined by certain characteristics of places as well as place attachment. Instead, he calls for an understanding of well-being as the result of people's dynamic interactions with places; these figured prominently in our case study. Previously, we have argued that the same place characteristics may prompt a desire to stay or a desire to leave, depending on the person in question (Adams et al., 2021). In the following, we discuss the various factors that comprised a satisfactory rural life for young stayers.

Willingness to Compromise: Education and Employment

One of the most common reasons why many young people move away from rural and peripheral areas is a lack of educational or employment opportunities. We suggested, however, that this is more a question of whether the area offers the kinds of job opportunities that correspond to individual desires (Komu & Adams, 2021). What really seemed to differentiate the stayers from the other young people in our research was their willingness to accept compromises with regard to employment aspirations in order to be able to stay. In fact, the stayers emphasized their willingness to adapt to different jobs because they valued staying in Kemijärvi more than their most sought-after job, which, according to them, would 'just' provide an income. The stayers in our study did not seek academic success or have plans for higher education, aims which usually prompt young people to leave rural areas (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 103); rather, they had chosen their educational paths according to what the local community had to offer (see also Juvonen & Romakkaniemi, 2018, p. 326). Some young people did go elsewhere for education but with the resolute goal to return as soon as possible.

The above-mentioned finding differs from the results of a recent Norwegian study indicating that, among girls, those who did not expect to go on to higher education were the ones who wanted to move, whereas a larger number of those who wanted to pursue an education wished to stay in their home town (Eriksen & Andersen, 2021). Our results indicate that being content to stay may be easier for those who do not have strong educational or career ambitions, unless the desired career is possible in their specific rural home area. Given the small number of participants in our study, no extensive generalizations can be made.

Most of our research participants did not have great career ambitions, but they showed considerable diligence in searching for jobs that would allow them to stay. Despite their relatively young age, some of the stayers had changed jobs a number of times and adapted repeatedly to what was on offer. One young female told us that after graduating from upper secondary school, she worked in a grocery and hardware store as a cashier, cleaned trains, helped out in the family business and completed an internship in the elderly care sector, although she decided not to pursue employment there due to a lack of interest.

Another young female had commuted during the tourist season to Pyhä, a ski resort some 50 km from Kemijärvi, to clean cottages, and worked at a local store. For both women, work was not the most important 'life goal', but at the same time, they pointed out that they would do not just any job, citing elderly care as an example, which in their view 'requires more skills and genuine interest'. Employment was considered important, but if there was nothing available in the region, the stayers would rather commute or remain unemployed than move away:

> I would rather drive to Rovaniemi daily than move there. In fact, I did that for quite some time. I did not want to move to Rovaniemi during my education and I arranged with an elderly man who was commuting daily to get a ride to Rovaniemi and back. I would do the same for work. At times I have been unemployed but that is okay because I don't need that much and if I lived elsewhere, my living costs would be a lot higher. (Young Female, finished formal education)

The Perks of Living in Kemijärvi

The importance of nature and the space, peace and freedom it offers, as well as a family-centric way of life, have been noted in previous studies on the lives of the Finnish rural youth (Tuuva-Hongisto, 2018; Tuuva-Hongisto et al., 2016). For the young stayers in Kemijärvi, the surrounding nature was an essential part of their well-being:

> It's hard to find the right words to describe how much nature means to me. It's hard to explain to an outsider what exactly peaceful nature is. You have to experience it yourself and you will feel the difference once you don't have access to it anymore. (Young male, upper secondary student)

For the stayers, the connection to nature had a high priority because so many of their activities were outdoor-oriented. This evoked the way of life where mixed economies played a role and where part of one's subsistence had to be hunted, caught or collected. In bigger cities, this lifestyle would not be possible to the same degree. It was precisely nature that separated the urban from the rural, physically and mentally (Tuuva-Hongisto, 2018, p. 29).

In examining the fact that people have fewer options when it comes to services, social life and leisure in rural places, we found that our research participants did not feel the need for more options as they were satisfied with what was being offered or saw the positive side of living in a declining town. For example, the living costs were much lower than they would be in a bigger city elsewhere in Finland, and the local real estate market showed that housing was quite affordable (Mykkänen, 2015). Two of our research participants bought a house for just €20,000 and were convinced that they could not be the owners at such a young age (in their early 20s) in another town. With lower living costs, one's standard of living could be higher with a lower income. This presented the perceived marginality and decline of such towns in a different light.

Also among the frequently cited negative features of rural places were long distances. However, the young stayers did not perceive these as a problem if they had good means of transportation (also see Komu & Adams, 2021); quite the contrary,

they said that they did not mind driving longer distances. Accordingly, owning a car was essential for many rural young people because it meant the ability to move around freely and more possibilities to reach more distant workplaces. While the young man quoted in the newspaper article claimed that he and others drove around 'because there is nothing else to do' (Molkoselkä, 2020), for the young stayers in our study, driving around was a pleasure:

> Of course I have a car! It's old and a bit rusty but it works and it takes me and my friends places. Sometimes we just drive around and enjoy the ride without having a specific destination. (Young Female, recently finished formal education)

As the aforementioned example shows, one of the popular free-time activities for young people was driving around town in their cars. Other potential activities included hunting in the vast forests, hiking, skiing, playing an instrument with peers at the music school and intensive computer gaming. The desire for 'something else' was not particularly pronounced. Rovaniemi, being relatively close (around 80 km), provided young people with a movie theatre, a variety of shops, restaurants and bars, all of which they made use of on a regular basis. It was vital to recognize that rural youth also enjoyed 'urban' forms of entertainment but, at the same time, were keen to signal that they were different to urban youth by locating themselves both within the rural area and beyond (Leyshon, 2008).

Our participants made a clear distinction between what they required for living (housing, food and relationships) and what they viewed as 'extraordinary entertainment that one doesn't require on a daily basis' (movies, restaurants, cultural events and the like). In some cases, this meant that playing computer games was so central to individuals' understanding of a good hobby that no other entertainment was really required. These findings indicated that the perks of living in Kemijärvi were determined by individual preferences and assumptions of what a 'good life' meant. Next, we highlight considerations that are beyond individual choices and enhance the personal well-being of young people: the role of the community.

Being One's True Self and Belonging to a Community

To be content with their lives, the young stayers said they had to feel that they could embrace who they are as individuals. Depending on the person, the small social circles of their home town could feel restrictive and leaving could seem like a way to gain more freedom, for example, to dress as one wishes. However, the stayers felt that they could be 'their true selves' only in their home town. They expressed that they felt alien in other towns, and that they could 'be as they are' in their home town, where everyone knew them:

> Here a person is recognized through actions. In a bigger city it's more about appearance. Nobody knows how you are and who you actually are. But here everyone knows you. (Young Female, active church member)

Rural places, in general, are known for strong social ties, which for young people can result in a desire to either stay or leave the community (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 102). The value given to close family and kinship ties and the desire to maintain

these, evident in our case study, has figured prominently in similar rural studies. For example, in the case of Vermont (Morse & Mudgett, 2018, p. 267), fondness for rural place–based attributes and family ties were the key drivers in conscious stayers' residential decision-making. Other studies have noted that a positive social life in rural places may outweigh the negative impact of the sparse and distant services (Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018). The desire to remain close to significant others may be valued more than the opportunities available in urban centres (Cook & Cuervo, 2020).

As an example of their desire to maintain close social ties, many of the stayers in our study live close to their parents or even share a household with them. In Finnish culture, staying with one's parents is generally viewed as peculiar and immature, unlike in other cultural contexts, where young people might even be expected to stay at home. Indeed, leaving one's parental home is often seen as necessary for a youth to become an independent adult. The young stayers in Kemijärvi are very much aware that they are acting against the 'common cultural norm' by staying with their parents.

Moreover, for our young stayers 'being one's true self' meant finding a suitable partner who would also be willing to stay in the region; this was not always easy in a small town where 'everyone knows everyone' and new arrivals were a rarity. According to our informants, dating platforms like Tinder were difficult to use because of the degree of familiarity within the town. In addition, from the young stayers' perspective, there always seemed to be someone from the family who had left and was missed. Many of their friends had left Kemijärvi after secondary school, at the age of just 15 years or 16 years.

Therefore, the role of various communities, such as religious congregations, sports clubs, workplace communities, hunting associations or music schools, was an important one in creating a sense of belonging and being connected to others, and the majority of our informants were engaged in one or more such communities. Our participants said that they were not only actively engaged in youth activities but also held different positions of responsibility within their respective communities. Being active in organizing events, taking responsibility for 'passing the traditions on to the next generation' and being part of keeping the community active could make young people feel that they were needed and their input was valued, which became apparent in their conscious decision that they had a purpose in staying.

Conclusions

The choices made by the stayers in our study challenge the assumption that the life of young people in rural towns is determined by the mobility imperative, that is, that success and a 'good life' can be achieved only by moving out of rural areas. Indeed, the stayers' values and perceptions of the constituents of the good life could be taken as an alternative to the prevailing Western ideal that emphasizes mobility, ambitious educational and career plans and is, in part, driving young people to leave their rural home towns. Our title is a reference to the fact that, as ordinary as their lives may sound, the idea that a young person could live his or her life to the fullest in a small town, one with a limited number of options available, is a radical notion contrary to the current cultural values of mobility, progress and 'success'. Moreover, by continuing to live with or close to their parents, our informants challenge the contemporary Western way to categorize 'life stages', which assumes that one must leave one's childhood home in order to become 'independent'.

However, 'content staying' seems to require a set of priorities in which the small scale of social life and the characteristics of the rural way of life are put above the pursuit of individually meaningful work and conventional ideas of success. All of our participants shared a hesitance with regard to pursuing a higher education, which made their decision to stay easier. While the lack of educational and career possibilities in rural areas is typically taken as a feature that exposes rural youth to marginalization and vulnerability, the youth in our study challenge this notion by building desirable lives for themselves despite these apparent shortcomings. We have shown that young, conscious and content stayers have found balance in their community and therefore do not see their rural home town as a place that lacks certain features but rather as one that provides them with the most important elements affording them a good life. From this perspective, it is the urban centres that appear to be lacking the features that could provide one with the 'good life'. Thus, this study answers recent calls to discuss rural staying and immobility also in terms of the advantages it can bring, not only its shortcomings (Mærsk et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown that staying in rural places can be advantageous to urban life in maintaining close social relations and social capital (Eriksen & Andersen, 2021; Mærsk et al., 2021). Close social relations are also considered an ingredient of the good life by our informants and a reason to stay—even though, unfortunately, rural life is simultaneously marked by people leaving and the small social circles making finding a partner more difficult. As showcased by our example of our young informants buying their own homes, our results demonstrate that staying can also provide material benefits by offering affordable but high standards of living. Easy access to nature and the feeling of 'having space' are also unique benefits provided by rural living that could be given more attention.

It is important to acknowledge that young people can have a different perspective on place over time (Leyshon, 2008), that is, our research participants might choose differently later on in their lives and leave Kemijärvi at some point. Therefore, we emphasize that staying is best discussed as a process. At the same time, we need to remember that moving to urban centres is not the ideal thing that everyone is striving for (Tuuva-Hongisto et al., 2016, p. 28). In light of our results, we call for serious public and scholarly discussions that would address the advantages that declining rural regions can provide in terms of well-being over urban growth centres. Our empirically grounded insights have shown that there are various ways of perceiving a 'good life', and that one such alternative can be a 'radically ordinary life' like that described and analysed in this study.

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Notes

1. Title translated by the authors from Finnish.
2. Quotations translated by the authors from Finnish.
3. *Peräkammarinpoika* (roughly translated as 'boy who lives in the back room'), for example, is a derogatory Finnish term that can be used to refer to unmarried young men who continue to live with their parents or in their rural home regions beyond the age when men are expected to move out. The term suggests that such men are lethargic and somewhat 'pathetic' in the eyes of society. Interestingly, no corresponding term exists for women in a similar situation.
4. The quotations have been translated from Finnish by the authors.

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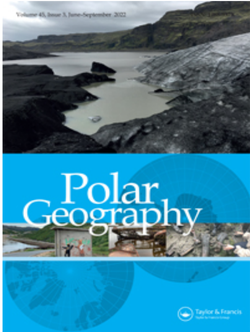

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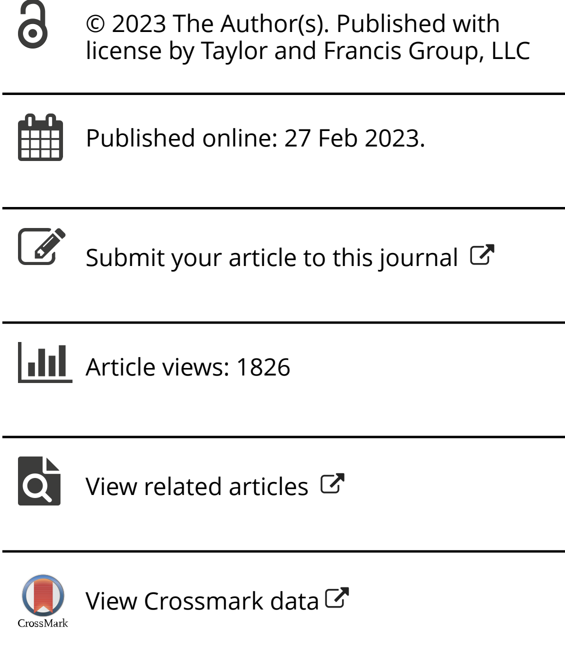

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Hunting a ‘good life’: young lifestyle migrants in Finnish Lapland

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ABSTRACT
This article focuses on young lifestyle migrants in Arctic Finland, individuals who can be described as active agents of their own fate in having made a conscious choice to move to a place they consider worth living in. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research, the study brings to light newcomers’ motivations for migrating to a geographically remote area and discusses structural conditions that support the process of moving to Finnish Lapland. The search for personal wellbeing and a desire to construct “authentic” lifestyles in rural environments emerged as driving factors for young people who consider moving to the Arctic. While access to nature and nature-based leisure activities proved to be the most attractive feature of the region, opportunities to work in the tourism industry, well-connected transport infrastructures and educational opportunities also figured significantly in the migrants’ decisions. Social media channels play a pivotal role as a platform promoting their lifestyle. In engaging regularly with young people who have moved to the Arctic, where they pursue their chosen lifestyle in a harsh climate with high living costs, the research challenges the prevailing argument in the lifestyle migration debate whereby middle-class people move to places with lower living costs and sunny climates.

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Introduction

On a cold winter night in March 2022, I find myself a passenger in a mini-van speeding on ice-covered roads in Finnish Lapland alongside three enthusiastic tourists from South America who are eager to spot the northern lights. Equipped with cameras, meteorological apps, navigation aids, hot tea and snacks, we are heading north to find a cloudless spot and an unobstructed view. Our driver and guide, a 20-year-old lifestyle migrant, moved to the northern Finnish town of Rovaniemi four years ago, and is pursuing his dream: hunting for the northern lights. During the northern lights season this young entrepreneur and student spends his nights outdoors, either alone or in the company of tourists or friends, in the hope of capturing what is a the mesmerizing spectacle of nature. On a broader level, he has been captivated by the lifestyle that the Arctic region offers him:

> I found out that this amazing adventure is actually called my life. Since I came to Finland, I believe that I have learned how to enjoy little things like a hike, a sunset and hanging out

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with friends. But the one thing that always makes me happy is nature. I just love being outdoors hiking or hunting the northern lights. (young male)

This young man is part of a growing group of young migrants discovering the Arctic region as a place that fulfils their aspirations of a good life. A documentary titled 'Lapland Dreaming' aired in early 2021 by Yle, the Finnish national broadcasting company (Satimus & Neuvonen, 2021), tracked young people in their life-changing processes of moving from urban areas to remote towns in northern Finland. The success of the documentary reflects a growing interest among young people in constructing lives that differ from the mainstream, urban lifestyle. Like the lifestyle migrants in this research, the people featured in the program emphasized their individual agency by implying they had been able to transform their lives through their own actions (also see Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Korpela, 2014). Tellingly, their search for ways to live a good life went beyond seeking a high income. Eimermann (2015) suggests that lifestyle migrants should be studied in the context of social rather than economic motivations for moving. Indeed, rather than being concerned with earning high salaries, they were content with jobs that allowed them to pursue 'authentic' lifestyles enabling them to live in unique landscapes (Benson, 2013).

Three research questions underpin this study: (1) What motivates young lifestyle migrants to move to an Arctic environment? (2) What underlying structural conditions contribute to the young people's decision to choose Finnish Lapland as their place of residence? (3) How do they promote their lifestyle through social media to the public? Together, these questions comprise a multi-dimensional framework yielding a better understanding of lifestyle migrants, one highlighting how young lifestyle migrants express their search for a 'good life'.

The Arctic region of Finland is often pictured and romanticized through images of rough landscapes, magnificent northern lights, vastness and emptiness and an exotic winter wonderland. As Barraclough et al. (2016) point out, the North is imagined as a supernatural place where myths and metaphysical phenomena have prevailed until the present day. Eimermann (2015) notes that romantic perceptions of the rural North are among the main reasons why lifestyle migrants might choose to move to rural Sweden. These images are shared through social media channels such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, and attract not only large numbers of tourists to the region (Huddart & Stott, 2020) but also lifestyle migrants. Benson and O'Reilly (2016) categorize the motives of moving for lifestyle migrants under the headings 'the rural idyll', 'the coastal retreat' and 'the cultural/spiritual attraction' (p.6). It is the outdoor idyll, which offers nature-based activities, that seems to be the main driver for young people moving to the Arctic region. Seeking out an idyll, an environment that is geographically remote, climatically extreme and inspirational to live one's life in, reflects the increasing individualization of society, in which the self has become responsible for inventing and defining the course of its life. In other words, the self has become a project that needs to be actively shaped, developed and expressed (Korpela, 2014). Surprisingly, the young lifestyle migrants in the present study view where they live as a rural idyll, even though the majority of them reside in the capital of Finnish Lapland, Rovaniemi, which offers access to infrastructures that rural towns lack. They readily drive far into rural areas to hunt the northern lights and to engage in a variety of outdoor activities. The images on their social media accounts reflect their outdoor activities, the pristine nature and promote the rural idyll, rather than capturing the everyday life in an Arctic city.

I draw on the work of Benson and O'Reilly (2016), who distinguish lifestyle migrants from other migrants in that their 'search for a better way of life' (2016, p. 3) reflects the wider lifestyle choices that individuals make in the hope of achieving a good life. Lifestyle migrants often describe their choice to move as motivated by living a 'more meaningful life' (Benson, 2016). The term 'lifestyle migrants' in academic debates is mostly used to refer to older persons moving to southern destinations in their 'golden years' (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015; Benson & O'Reilly, 2016; Fauser, 2021; Korpela, 2014). This work challenges the perception of age as the primary driver and argues that young people have mobility patterns and motivations similar to those of older persons, making the former an important group for study and comparison. Young lifestyle migrants hope to find a new way of life that resonates with their aspirations of a fulfilling life in a remote place (also see Benson & O'Reilly, 2016). Moreover, they illustrate how the search for the 'exceptional individual' stands out against going along with the masses (Grønseth, 2013). What is more, projecting such a presence on social media has grown to be a significant tool in promoting the chosen lifestyle.

To date, there has been no work focusing specifically on (young) lifestyle migrants in Finnish Lapland. In fact, a large gap remains in the literature on what is a growing group of lifestyle migrants in communities throughout the Arctic, where living costs tend to be higher than elsewhere and weather conditions extreme. Lifestyle migration has mostly been discussed in the light of people moving to places with a 'pleasant climate', lower living costs and a 'slow pace of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014b; Korpela, 2020). Eimermann (2015) has contributed to closing this gap through his research on Dutch migrant families in rural Sweden, who were not daunted by the prospect of going to a place with a colder climate, stagnating economy and decreasing population. Carson et al. (2018, p. 183) consider personal motives for migrating to the Arctic to be location-specific in terms of desired consumptive experiences, previous familiarity with the destination, business-related goals, as well as 'the temporal and technological dimension of mobility and self-employment'.

In studying lifestyle migrants in the Arctic in detail, the research makes the following contributions: First, it challenges the perception that lifestyle migrants search for 'warm and sunny' destinations with lower living costs. Indeed, it highlights that lifestyle migration can also take place in cold and remote regions with harsh climatic conditions. Secondly, it adds a perspective to the Arctic immigration debate beyond the discourses highlighting hardships and the difficulty of integration, focusing on structural conditions of why Finnish Lapland is an attractive location to settle in. Thirdly, it aims to understand the motivation and experiences of young lifestyle migrants who search for the authenticity of rural Lapland while living in the region's more urban areas.

A conceptual framework: young people in an era of lifestyle choices

Young people all over the world live in an era where cultures are fluid clusters of norms, and find themselves confronted with constant change (Collier, 2013). Woodman (2020, p. 40) reminds us that youth studies by definition are concerned with questions of temporality. Thorpe (2012) emphasizes that lifestyle migration among young people is a facet of young people transforming their identities in complex ways as part of a reconfiguration precipitated by globalization. Cultural practices of young people, including decisions on migrating, are fundamental elements in the phase of personal transition into adulthood.

According to Collier (2013, p. 61), the social consequences of migration depend upon how immigrants relate to their host societies. Cohen et al. (2013) distinguish between lifestyle mobility and lifestyle migration, the latter typically associated with a 'one-off lifestyle-led transition'. The concept of 'neo-nomadism' highlights mobility, fluidity and individual agency, while 'bohemian lifestyle' places more emphasis on structures and destinations (Korpela, 2020).

In this study I use the term 'lifestyle migrants' to refer to young people from affluent nations who have moved to northern Finland in order to find a more meaningful life, one in which nature-based activities play a key role (also see Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Korpela, 2020). In contrast to the case of refugees and work migrants, for lifestyle migrants, nationality, residence permits, visas and insurance play an important role in being able to stay (Korpela, 2014).

The lifestyle of young migrants can be well characterized, in terms used by O'Reilly and Benson (2016, pp. 4–5), as seeking 'authenticity, implying simplicity, purity and originality' and an effort to go 'back to the basics'. Lifestyle migrants are relatively affluent individuals of all ages who move and take up full- or part-time residence in places that signify, from the perspective of the migrant, a better quality of life (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009, p. 609). The growing phenomenon of lifestyle migration has implications on a societal level in addition to its impact on individual life courses (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). In lifestyle migration, agency and creativity are viewed as vital capacities in adjusting to novel daily routines, including enhancement of personal wellbeing (Grønseth, 2013, p. 4). Long and Moore (2013) talk about the 'sense of achievement' and how satisfaction with life and the 'feel-good factor' have become important constructs to explore in research on lifestyle migration. For young lifestyle migrants, migration is a key step in their self-realization project and in the process of searching for the 'intangible good life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p. 1). This group of migrants can be characterized as people who have made a conscious decision about *how* and *where* to live (Torkington, 2010). Arctic regions seem to be particularly attractive as a place for people seeking self-transformation, featuring as they do relatively small communities surrounded by extensive wilderness. Moreover, the Nordic welfare state enables young lifestyle migrants to pursue their chosen lifestyles in a safe environment, as it offers reliable infrastructures, accessible health and social services as well as promising employment and educational opportunities.

Encouragingly, a look at the literature on adventure tourism helps to understand the reasons for lifestyle migration in high latitudes. Huddart and Stott (2020) emphasize that 'adventure' is not only a matter of how wild, high or extreme activities are as such, but rather reflects the attitude that shapes the values of adventure tourists. The scholars argue that key to adventure travel – its added value – are opportunities to get to know the destination through physical activity, cultural encounters and experiences in nature (Huddart & Stott, 2020, p. 3). In adventure tourism research, ecological and economic aspects are highlighted in addition to social and individual changes. Tervo-Kankare et al. (2018) suggest that tourism industries in Finland should focus more on the impacts of tourism activities on the environment and the sustainability of the Arctic tourism regions. On a similar note, Fay and Karlsdóttir (2011) have argued that we would do well to reflect on tourism-related employment and to track social changes brought about by the expansion of Arctic tourism resulting from climate change. van Rooij & Margaryan's (2019) findings show how entrepreneurship in the tourism industry can be a powerful catalyst for lifestyle migration, yet at the same time may inhibit integration into the local

community. According to a study among lifestyle migrants in Norway by Iversen and Jacobsen (2016), the motivations for becoming entrepreneurs in the tourism industry are driven by lifestyle choices. Berbeka (2018, p. 393) has examined the value backcountry skiers give to remote Arctic destinations and concluded that the experiences, motivations and meaning that the skiers gained from the region derived from the connection to nature ('beauty, wilderness and remoteness'), ski touring in unspoiled powder, access to independent trails and a bond with like-minded people. Thorpe (2012) looked at young lifestyle migrants through the community of snowboarders and concluded that this group of young people could be analyzed through the lens of 'action, alternative and extreme sports economy' (2012, p. 317)

Early work by Giddens (1991, p. 6) points out that 'lifestyle' refers only to the pursuits of the more privileged groups or classes and that 'the poor are more or less completely excluded from the possibility of making lifestyle choices'. Indeed, it is a privileged group of migrants who have access to certain forms of self-actualization. This privilege is systemic and structural, and is negotiated through the actual practice of lifestyle migration (Benson, 2014; van Rooij & Margaryan, 2019). Their privileged status notwithstanding, the young migrants discussed in this study struggle at times with finding sufficient financial means to maintain their chosen lifestyle. It is vital to recognize in their case that choosing a certain lifestyle does not automatically imply they have the financial means to sustain it; in other words, young lifestyle migrants are not spared from working hard towards their goal of being able to stay in the host country. Significantly, applying an ethnographic approach has yielded insights into the creative ways which young lifestyle migrants maintain and sustain to finance their way of life, these including a willingness to do work in jobs which they may be overqualified for. In the literature, life as a lifestyle migrant is not primarily characterized by economic hardship or the search for financial security (Torkington, 2010, p. 102); rather, it appears to be driven by the search for a better life in a broader sense than a high(er) income. Hence, I argue that lifestyle migrants are not necessarily motivated by lower living costs – given that living costs in the Arctic are significantly higher than in more southern regions. What draws young lifestyle migrants towards the Arctic region, and northern Finland in particular, is the desire for an authentic lifestyle, one they believe will resonate with the 'idealized versions of the self' (Benson & Osbaldiston, 2014a). This entails engaging in of a variety of nature-based activities and often documenting and promoting the lifestyle through social media.

Research methods and ethical considerations

This research was mainly conducted between October 2019 and March 2022 in the course of several periods of fieldwork in Finnish Lapland ranging from one six-month stay starting in the winter of 2020 to several visits that varied from two weeks to an entire summer in duration. Altogether I spent one year in Finland, in the towns of Kolari, Kemijärvi, and Rovaniemi, conducting empirical research focusing not only on lifestyle migrants but also studying Finnish young people's wellbeing and (im)mobility more extensively (Adams et al., 2021; Adams & Komu, 2021; Komu & Adams, 2021). The research was funded by three different projects.[1]

Multiple returns to the field, an approach discussed by Howell and Talle (2012), have allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my participants, their processes and contradictions regarding lifestyle migration. As Barnard (2012) notes in this regard, each return to

the field yields new empirical data and new insights in different periods of time. I have met up with some of the participants frequently over a period of four years, which has allowed me to gain broad insight to their personal lives and to see changes in their ways of living.

The material consists of interviews, focus group discussions and detailed field diary entries based on periods of participant observation during the fieldwork. While in northern Finland, I actively participated in activities popular among the young lifestyle migrants: I went on northern lights hunts and nature hikes, hung out at popular cafes, bars and restaurants, attended gatherings and parties, visited nature destinations during all seasons, visited some of the migrants in their homes and traveled with some of them for many hours in the region. In addition, for several years I have analyzed and followed the migrants' Instagram accounts, these being key tools through which they share their life(style). Following Brettell's (2003, p. 4) advice to listen to the voices of immigrants themselves, examining *how* the lifestyle migrants tell their stories and *what* meanings they assign to their actions has been essential in my understanding their agency. The analysis proper was preceded by a manual process of classifying, coding and interpreting the material following Bernard (2006), who emphasizes the value of finding and coding themes that appear in both fieldnotes and interviews.

The participants in the study comprised 16 young people representing 14 different nationalities who had lived at least six months in Rovaniemi and surrounding towns. Most of the young lifestyle migrants were based in Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland, a safe and comfortable urban environment with access to services, education and health services as well as ready transportation links to a variety of destinations. The migrants ranged in age from 16 to 29 years. For purposes of this research, 'young' is defined as in the Finnish Youth Act (Finnish Youth Act, 2017), which regards persons up to the age of 29 as youths. The majority of my interview participants had lived more than two years in northern Finland and intended to stay longer. All of the interviewees had moved to Finnish Lapland on their own, without their parents or relatives. The youngest had come to study in Finnish high schools (often as exchange students) and extended their stays. Most of the young people were located through personal contacts, with 'snowballing' then serving as an effective tool to find more interlocutors. None of the research participants were married or had children at the time of conducting the research. Some were in relationships with other lifestyle migrants, some were single, and still others had formed romantic relationships with locals after coming to live in Finnish Lapland. While some of the young lifestyle migrants were still enrolled at colleges and universities in their home countries and in the process of finishing their education, others already had a profession. Interestingly, many of them chose not to pursue careers in the fields they were trained in but opted instead to work in the tourism sector. Some migrants worked for established tourism companies (especially at the beginning), while others started their own businesses with 'northern lights tours' – catering to the most popular activity among tourists.

In keeping with a general ethical practice, I refrain from mentioning the participants' countries of origin or ethnicity because of the risk of their being identifiable. In northern communities, where people tend to know each other well, being the only immigrant from a particular country would make a person immediately recognizable. All potential participants were made aware that participation was voluntary and that they would be anonymized. Research among young people requires a sensitivity to the fact that power relations between the researcher and the young people are unequal in terms of age, resources and

status (Cieslik, 2003). In addition, I have been careful not to share sensitive interview content within the community to protect the research participants' anonymity and maintain their trust.

Structural conditions of the region and its migration context

Migration between countries and regions is increasing and the Arctic is no exception to this trend (Heleniak et al., 2020). With outmigration being a problem in the region, the debate on the viability and sustainability of Arctic towns has frequently pointed to the importance of young people in the community (Karlsdóttir et al., 2020). This concern stems from the tendency of local young people to leave remote northern towns, these being communities which offer fewer education and work opportunities, are far away from other towns and are perceived as lacking leisure activities (Adams et al., 2021; Komu & Adams, 2021). Running counter to this tendency is the growing number of lifestyle migrants who are discovering the Arctic as a mesmerizing place, one they feel attracted to and where they see opportunities to live a fulfilling life. Many of the young lifestyle migrants are based in the capital of Rovaniemi; only a very small percentage live in the rural municipalities of Lapland. The migrants perceive themselves as nature-based enthusiasts who feel connected to and use rural areas for their work and leisure-time activities. Paradoxically, in living in the city and making use of the vast nature outside it, the migrants do not significantly contribute to the 'viability and sustainability' of rural Finnish communities.

Heleniak (2018) remarks that the policies of Nordic countries have long been generally welcoming towards work migrants, who are especially important for rural regions with declining populations. Given the strong economies of the Nordic countries, Finland, among other Arctic destinations, is likely to remain a highly desirable destination for all types of immigrants (Heleniak, 2018, p. 57). These circumstances urge a keener discussion of immigration in Finnish Lapland, one that focuses on groups of migrants who consciously choose to come and stay in this region.

Finland's population is aging and declining faster than that of any other European country, and the country will need immigrants during coming decades to maintain its labor force (Heleniak et al., 2020; Somerkoski, 2021). From the migrants' point of view, the Nordic countries are billed as having the world's highest living standards, in terms of not only personal income but also well-functioning public services and social equity (Collier, 2013, p. 19). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2019, Finland counted around 270,000 foreign-born immigrants, which is around 4.8 percent of the total population (Busk & Jauhiainen, 2022). By 2022, the number had risen to 444,031, or some 8 percent of the population despite the pandemic (Statistic Finland, 2022). The estimate for the year 2050 is that the number of immigrants will reach the one million mark (Somerkoski, 2021). In 2020, there were 3060 foreign-born residents in Rovaniemi, a city with a total population of some 63,500 inhabitants (Statistics Finland, 2022).

Following this demographic development, migrants can be seen as a valuable asset in making Arctic regions more viable while at the same time benefiting local communities more than mere tourists, as they earn and spend money locally. Increasing immigration could offset the anticipated trend, and yet not many immigrants are expected to settle in Lapland. In this light, the young lifestyle migrants are a possible exception to this negative trend, as they consciously seek to move to and settle in the Arctic region.

Grenier (2007) highlighted the importance of Rovaniemi as a polar tourism destination that stands out in northern Europe, offering a variety of services with a well-developed tourism infrastructure. Tourism has grown steadily since 2007, with the estimated number of incoming flights in 2022 exceeding the pre-pandemic level of 2790 (Finavia, 2022). This growth has resulted in a greater demand for tourism providers, which young lifestyle migrants are eagerly responding to. In addition, the increasing number of flight destinations makes it easier for young lifestyle migrants to travel and connect with their places of origin. With hunting the northern lights and other tourist activities in Finnish Lapland largely confined to the winter months, young entrepreneurs have limited opportunities for a steady income. Accordingly, many of them travel during the summer months and return to Rovaniemi when the tourism season and the university year start. Carson et al. (2018) question the seasonal lifestyle and its longevity; I would argue that it in fact accords quite well with that of the young lifestyle migrants, who are not concerned about having a steady job with a regular income.

In order to understand why lifestyle migrants distinguish themselves from other migrants, it is helpful to look at the prevailing immigration literature on the region. The topic of immigration in Finnish Lapland is mostly examined from the perspective of integration and resilience (Uusiautti & Yeasmin, 2019a; Yeasmin et al., 2020) although there is work discussing the integration process in more positive terms, such as 'hopes and happiness' in the context of labor market integration (Yeasmin, 2017). Immigration to the Arctic region has been criticized as lacking effective ways to integrate immigrants into the region (Uusiautti & Yeasmin, 2019b, p. 2). The social adaptation and integration processes of marginalized women have been discussed from a socio-ecological perspective (Yeasmin & Koivurova, 2019), highlighting successful integration and offering suggestions on how immigrants and locals can better adapt through increased interaction (Yeasmin & Koivurova, 2019, p. 84). Yeasmin (2018) urges that socioeconomic support be provided for the integration of immigrants to the Arctic, with special attention to be paid to the marginalization of immigrant women.

Negative images seem to dominate the Finnish academic debate in immigrant youth research, with educational trajectories being one frequent topic (Holmberg et al., 2018). Other concerns include imbalanced membership contests (Harinen et al., 2005), criminality (Salmi et al., 2015) and imbalanced working careers (Busk & Jauhiainen, 2022). Complex positionalities among ethnic minorities in peer affiliations are frequently highlighted (Kivijärvi, 2014), as is the risk of peer victimization (Strohmeier et al., 2011). When discussing immigrants in Finland, one frequently hears words such as 'respect', 'cooperation' and 'cultural tolerance' (Somerkoski, 2021), especially in the context of realizing that the future economy needs more immigrants. According to Somerkoski (2021), attitudes towards labor immigrants and children in Finnish rural areas are more positive than attitudes towards unemployed immigrants and refugees. Moreover, Western immigrants are viewed more positively than immigrants from war zones and crisis areas (2021, p. 207).

The group of lifestyle migrants in the present study differs significantly from the above-mentioned groups – labor immigrants and refugees – as their primary goal is not integration into the mainstream society's culture. In fact, they narrate their migration as a trajectory away from negative images of immigration towards a description of 'a fuller and more meaningful way of life' (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p. 4). Instead of highlighting struggles, although they have their share of these, lifestyle immigrants seemingly shift their focus to positive features of their new home, such as the beauty of the nature

around them. This redirects the focus of research on lifestyle migrants accordingly. While my research results show that young lifestyle migrants also experience frustration with their host culture, have language issues (most of them do not speak Finnish fluently), feel lonely and misunderstood, their prevailing perception still is a positive one, as they claim to have consciously chosen a particular way of life in a particular location.

Pursuing a good life: motivations for moving

The main reasons why young lifestyle migrants choose to move to Northern Finland lie in the perception that the area has a relatively good infrastructure that affords easy access (by plane, train and car), offers a high standard of education, is a safe place to live and features a unique nature, including temperature extremes. Hence, the structural conditions discussed earlier on can at the same time be perceived as principal motivations for moving.

In my earlier work (Adams, 2020) I have pointed out that young migrants move to Finnish Lapland to pursue a high-standard education. Eimermann's (2015) findings bear out this perception; that is, in the case of lifestyle migration opportunities to study – as well as to work if possible – play an important role in the decision to migrate,

> I wanted to go north and not somewhere south of Scandinavia. I wanted winter and snow. I really didn't want to go to one of the partner universities in the south. I had never been in Scandinavia before and I was very happy when I was accepted here [University of Lapland] for my studies. (young male)

Like this young man, some of the research participants had come for internships or short-term, seasonal work and then decided to extend their stays after discovering the quality of life in the Arctic region. This accords with the findings of Cook and Romei (2020, p. 83), who argue that in young people's lives 'the relationship between place, education and employment' matters in combination with 'immaterial aspects of place such as experiences of belonging and attachment'. Moreover, young people tend to invest in education and training that enable them to remain or return to places in which they experience belonging (Cook & Romei, 2020).

Another example is that of a young female who had moved to Northern Finland for studies, claiming that the quality of education would be better but, even more importantly, the pressure to succeed would not be as overwhelming as in her home country. This argument echoes Maehara (2013, p. 97) observations among Japanese immigrants, who problematize the heavy pressure to succeed in Japanese education and thus dream of migrating to places that which offer an education that will be highly valued on the (Japanese) job market but which also offer them a more relaxed way of life. Finnish Lapland offered some of the young people exactly that kind of life, with the additional attraction of peaceful surroundings and safety.

The majority of newcomers to Finnish Lapland only stay for the duration of their internship, studies or work contract. However, the lifestyle migrants continually point out how they have come to value life in Lapland so much that they are constantly on the lookout for ways to extend their stay: Some have started their own businesses (mostly related to the tourism industry), found local employment or enrolled in Finnish universities. Lynnebakke's (2021) work reminds us, however, that lifestyle migrants' migration processes may change over time; her findings show the significant incidence of changes in aspirations and decisions to migrate within migrants' new country of residence (2021, p. 776).

What the young immigrants in this study have in common is that they are newcomers from other cultural backgrounds and have moved to Finnish Lapland with no or very limited previous social connections to the place. In other words, they did not have family ties, a partner or friends living there prior to their arrival. This, however, does not mean that they did not have strong connections to their social networks and families in their home countries. In fact, their situation back home was not a key factor in their decision to immigrate. They could mitigate feelings of not belonging to their chosen community in Lapland because many of them were able to maintain connection with their families and had frequent trips back 'home'. For some lifestyle migrants, it is geographically and financially feasible to visit their countries of origin on a regular basis, while others lack the means to travel the long distances back home. With the travel restrictions during the Covid pandemic some of my interlocutors were unable to see their families for more than two years. But despite the hardship of not being able to spend time with their families and friends back home, their perception of Finnish Lapland and willingness to pursue their lifestyle there did not change.

To conclude, the structural conditions that the Finnish welfare state provides, including job opportunities, especially in the tourism industry, emerge as principal motivations in addition to pursuing a nature-oriented lifestyle. Despite the distance to their countries of origin, young lifestyle migrants in Finnish Lapland each seem to find ways to keep up family ties, greatly facilitated by the region's ready access to transportation infrastructures.

Hunting a good life: a nature-based lifestyle

What makes northern Finland, along with Sweden and Norway, exceptional when it comes to pursuing outdoor activities is a right called *jokamiehenoikeus* (lit. 'every man's[2] right'), or 'freedom to roam' (Ministry of Environment, 2016). This right allows everyone in Finland to move freely on foot, skis or a bicycle everywhere except for private yards or farmland. It also applies to waterways in all seasons. Furthermore, everyone is allowed to stop and stay overnight (for example in a tent) as long as the site chosen is a 'good distance' from settlements. Other provisions include permission to pick berries, mushrooms and flowers and to fish with a rod and through ice. The restrictions when moving freely in nature take the form of prohibitions against littering, disturbing others (human and animals), harming and cutting trees and collecting moss, lichen, soil or wood. Hunting and fishing are also prohibited, as is the use of motorized vehicles without permission (Ministry of Environment, 2016). Young lifestyle migrants make great use of this 'freedom to roam' and have repeatedly mentioned how 'lucky', 'blessed' and 'privileged' they feel to live in a place with such extensive freedoms.

However, according to some town officials of Rovaniemi, the 'freedom to roam' is not always understood correctly, especially by young foreign entrepreneurs. Apparently, small, independent tour operators – some run by (lifestyle) migrants – bring their customers to public fireplace shelters rather than building, renting or buying their own facilities. Young lifestyle entrepreneurs tend to see such complaints as directed towards 'others in the industry', not them.

When asking young lifestyle migrants about their perceptions of nature, they give extensive descriptions featuring words such as 'calming', 'beautiful', 'magical', 'rough' and 'energizing'. This attitude towards nature is also captured in statements like the following:

We live in a perfect place (young female)

My happy place is under the northern lights (young male)

The best adventures happen on the road (young male)

To have access to such nature, young lifestyle migrants need to have mobility. Like their Finnish counterparts who have stayed in Lapland (also see Komu & Adams, 2021), they mention the importance of owning a car, snowmobile or bike in a place where public transportation is insufficient. Cars are their main mode of transportation and despite high fuel prices a car is still the cheapest, most convenient and efficient way to access the nature destinations in the north. While the young lifestyle migrants of this study said they respect nature, they did not address the effects of their lifestyle, which consumes a great deal of resources: driving long distances in the region or flying between Rovaniemi and their home countries. Tervo-Kankare et al. (2018) suggest that tourism industries should pay more attention to the impacts of tourism activities on the environment and the sustainability of the Arctic tourism regions in Finland. From the young migrants' perspective, purchasing a car and getting a driver's license is a major milestone in access to the region. Road trips in Finnish Lapland are popular, but travels often extend to Swedish Lapland and Northern Norway, as these also offer many locations where one can hunt northern lights, camp or hike and engage in water sports, ski-tours, snowboarding, nature photography and the like:

> I really value the nature here. I love it here. I come from a big city and to have all this space here around me – it's just amazing. I feel this connection to nature here and I feel that I belong here. In my heart I am a Finn, because I love everything about this place. (young male)

The difficulties that young lifestyle migrants experience are often connected to Arctic weather conditions: Cameras may not work properly for long periods of time in low temperatures; road and weather conditions may make driving dangerous; cars can get stuck in snow; or bookings may be canceled due to bad weather, resulting in lost income. Moreover, the outdoor activities which the young people engage in require clothing and equipment that keep them warm in the extreme winter conditions. Interestingly, Torkington (2010, p. 99) discusses how lifestyle migrants tend to look physically similar, wearing the same style of clothes, which is the case also among the lifestyle community in Finnish Lapland. The clothes need to be practical and are usually of high quality in order to make long winter outings possible.

It can be argued that easy access to nature, a desire to pursue a nature-based lifestyle, as well as the equipment needed to do so, become central elements in the search for the building blocks of a good life. The equipment, clothes, cars and activities all cost plenty of money, which motivates the young migrants to find work. Indeed, the lifestyle migrants in Northern Finland are re-creating themselves through nature-based activities, supporting the argument put forward by Benson and O'Reilly (2016, p. 3) that lifestyle migration is 'an escape to self-fulfillment and a new life – a recreation, restoration or rediscovery of oneself, of personal potential or one's 'true' desires'. Thus, it can be said that they are active agents with regard to their own lives, consciously 'hunting' for what they consider a good and meaningful life.

Promoting a good life: social media showcasing lifestyle

As important as it might be to live to the full what one has chosen as a good life, it has become fashionable to promote that lifestyle to others. Today, young people live in an

era where social media are an essential part of their lives and where images of distant places are visible on small screens everywhere in the world. In recent years, the number of 'social content creators' has exploded worldwide, a trend which has naturally brought with it more social media accounts promoting rural regions such as Finnish Lapland. Social media has made young people's lives more visible and outwardly oriented (Wyn, 2020) and, according to Torkington (2010, p. 104), the trend towards international lifestyle migration is flourishing partly because of the spread of mass information and the possibilities of social media. The Arctic region is a unique destination for many nature photographers who want to share their experiences through various social media channels. Social media accounts with Arctic images have gained popularity, with thousands of followers waiting for new images of the North. The stories and feeds on platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube and TikTok provide them with images of the region's expansive nature, snow, northern lights, adventurous hikes, wilderness cabins, campfire shelters (*laavu*), ice swimming, snowmobile or biking tours, sunrises, sunsets, night skies, ski tours, nature spectacles, animals and – center stage in those images – the lifestyle migrants themselves. The pictures and short videos are accompanied by music with titles such as 'Paradise', 'Happy', 'Inner Blossoming', 'I will die here' or 'Lovely'. Posts also include short comments highlighting the feelings evoked by the place:

> Stunning views, untouched nature and an incredible feeling of adventure. Have you ever felt that feeling of having done something amazing? It was this feeling that I had climbing the hill and watching the sunrise. (young male)

> Collect beautiful moments, not things. /We will never get enough of seeing this beauty in one of my favorite places in Finland. (young female)

> Look at the sky and wonder. /Celebrating the lifestyle of the Arctic/So blessed to live in this paradise. (young male)

The self-chosen descriptions for Instagram profiles highlight the outdoor connection and include portrayals of the authors such as 'aurora hunter', 'wanderer', 'outdoor person', 'discoverer of the tranquility of northern nature', 'nature photographer', 'storyteller', 'content creator', 'arctic lifestyle photographer', 'Nordic-souled' and 'traveler'.

Some of the lifestyle migrants have tens of thousands of followers on their social media accounts, which they use not only to share images of the region but also to promote their tours for tourists. These tours often set out to view the northern lights and offer a money-back guarantee if there are none to be seen. The price of such northern lights hunting tours during the time of research was around 150 euros per person. Depending on the where clear skies could be found, the guides would drive hundreds of kilometers during a single tour, crossing borders into Sweden and Norway to find clear skies. Some of the lifestyle migrants also offered packages including road trips to the neighboring countries, with Rovaniemi being the starting and returning point. Here, one sees lifestyle migrants using social media accounts not only for self-presentation but also as platforms to earn income, making their way of life possible. In this respect, using social media is not only a choice but also a necessity.

This era of social media could be seen as part of the reason for an increase in young people wanting to move to an area depicted through images of 'wilderness', 'silence' and 'periphery'. According to Somerkoski (2021, p. 220) the influence of social media makes communication easier, with English being used as the primary language of communication

targeting an international community. None of the participants in this research discussed the downsides of social media.

While the majority of my interlocutors might be active in maintaining social media accounts, there is, interestingly, also a group who have consciously decided not to be on social media. One of the latter mentioned during an interview that she 'didn't feel the need to promote her lifestyle to anyone' and she 'hadn't considered signing up on any social media accounts'. Again, it becomes apparent that the young lifestyle migrants act as individuals, with each one creating precisely the kind of lifestyle they perceive as meaningful. In this light, it can be argued that lifestyle migration is an exercise of the ability to live what one considers a better kind of life as well as of the feeling of being able to control the direction of one's own life, both courses being important aspects of personal wellbeing (Fischer, 2014; Stammler et al., 2022).

Conclusions

In this contribution I have shown that the concept of lifestyle migrant is applicable to young people who move to rural Arctic regions. Accordingly, there is reason to expand the scope of the debate from middle-class people moving to sunny and warm destinations with low living costs to include the growing group of (young) people seeking a good life in harsher and more expensive regions. What makes young lifestyle migrants' way of life remarkable in the Arctic is the way in which they construct their daily lives around nature based-activities and promote their chosen lifestyles on social media. An unexpected insight of this research has been the extent to which lifestyle migrants engage with the nature around them while opting to live in the city of Rovaniemi, a comparatively urban environment.

The motives explaining why young lifestyle migrants choose to move to Finnish Lapland spring from a combination of ready access to nature and encouraging employment and educational opportunities. Also facilitating the lifestyle is the popularity of Finnish Lapland as a winter tourism destination.

Their entrepreneurial spirit and their resourcefulness in earning a living in order to stay in Lapland is notable. The empirical examples have shown the special connection that they have formed with the surrounding nature and how they make use of this nature in their daily lives. Moreover, the insights in the present case suggests that the hardships of integration that are highlighted in the Arctic migration debate (Uusiautti & Yeasmin, 2019a; Yeasmin et al., 2020) are only partly applicable in the case of particular groups, such as the lifestyle migrants. This shows that a more nuanced perspective on immigration is needed, especially in Arctic communities. In this light, this work puts forward a new analytical perspective on immigration in Arctic regions beyond Finnish Lapland.

It is important to acknowledge, as Benson and O'Reilly (2016) suggest, that migration is not a one-off move to a single permanent destination but that the search for a good life continues as an impulse in the migrants' daily lives. The participants in this study might choose a different lifestyle later on in their lives and leave Finnish Lapland at some point. Ultimately, it is the agency of the young migrants that will determine how long they stay and if and when they move again. Thus, it can be argued that lifestyle migration is aspirational in terms of what people can become but also what the specific kind of life they choose offers them (Benson & O'Reilly, 2016, p. 5; Lynnebakke, 2021). While, as I have noted, the literature on Arctic tourism can partially help to understand the phenomenon of lifestyle

migrants, more contributions from a social science perspective are needed if we are to gain insights into the challenges of changing communities throughout the Arctic.

It is important to point out, however, that not all young immigrants to Lapland fall into the category of lifestyle migrants who intend to stay long term. In fact, where suitable work, educational opportunities or social networks are lacking, most young immigrants, like their Finnish counterparts, opt to move to bigger cities in the southern parts of the country or make plans to move to other countries (also see Adams, 2020; Yeasmin et al., 2020).

The Arctic can be perceived as a place where, in O'Reilly's (2016, p. 117) words, individuals are 'free to hunt out their own, privatized version of a good life'. In this sense, hunting a good life in the distant, cold Arctic communities can be seen as individual lifestyle migrants fulfilling a goal of self-realization. These empirically grounded insights should enhance further academic discussions in other Arctic regions where the group of lifestyle migrants is increasing. It would be especially important to target future research on local communities and people who have lived in the Arctic for generations and to chart their perceptions of newcomers pursuing their individualistic lifestyles. The young lifestyle migrants are contributing in many ways to Finnish society: They spend money, pay taxes, use local services, pursue their education in local institutions and rent homes, which, given the current demographic, calls for further research on how to find better ways of integrating this group of migrants into Arctic communities.

Notes

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2. This right applies all to genders.

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