

Chapter 10

Practices of Living Well Among Youth in an Arctic Region



Gørill Warvik Vedeler, Merete Saus, Tatiana Wara, Hilde Sollid, and Astrid Strandbu

Abstract Global challenges related to health, climate, the economy and political tensions have affected many, including those living in remote areas. We explore how youth live and appreciate life in the Arctic region of Norway. We facilitated four dialogue café sessions where participants talked about the everyday lives of young people. Based on these conversations in this chapter, we ask: *What future prospects are present for youth in the Arctic? And What transformations are needed for them to live well in this region?* This dialogic approach develops site-ontological knowledge to use when educating teachers and develop schools that promote youth's well-being and growth. We use the term '(re)orientation practices', along with Anthias' concept of translocational positionality, to expand the debate on prospect identity and belonging from a focus on culture, nation, ethnicity or place of upbringing to intersections of social positions and social divisions in complex practices. Three themes emerged through analyses: youth's reasons for choosing to live in this region; to live sustainably and well in this area; and the tension between the southern and northern parts of the country. The students' conversations revealed negotiations on translocational positionality, and how tensions are scaled by a central-periphery dichotomy, diverse reasonings and socially-biased semantics.

For an episode of the World Worth Living In Podcast connected to this chapter, please click here: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2Frt3piW7gDbP59CAGdr9M?si=9b572c33cc5b446b>

G. W. Vedeler (✉)
Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway
e-mail: gowave@oslomet.no

M. Saus · T. Wara · H. Sollid · A. Strandbu
UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway
e-mail: merete.saus@uit.no

T. Wara
e-mail: tatiana.wara@uit.no

H. Sollid
e-mail: hilde.sollid@uit.no

A. Strandbu
e-mail: astrid.strandbu@uit.no

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This Arctic Region and Our Questions

The importance of this book's posed questions—*What does it mean to live well?* and *What is a world worth living in for all?*—has increased due to COVID-19, climate challenges, growing economic inequalities and increased political tensions across the world. These challenges greatly affect young people. Youth across the world have at times had their daily routines, even their future prospects, interrupted. Their sense of security has also been challenged due to climate, health and political concerns, resulting in their becoming more place-bound. In this context, we draw attention to how youth live and appreciate life in the Arctic region of Norway. We do not directly address the global challenges mentioned above, but it is important to know how those challenges have intruded upon our research participants' lives. In this chapter, we explore perceptions of what it means 'to live well' for youth in this Arctic region—a sparsely populated and large area that has long, dark winter seasons and short summers with sunny nights.

Polar Norway¹ is the most populous Arctic region in the world. Thanks to the Gulf Stream, ocean currents from south run upwards along the Norwegian coast causing the climate to be milder, and the sea does not freeze compared to other regions north of this Polar Circle. Yet, Norway's Centrality Index, developed by Statistics Norway based on people's access to work and services, confirms the country's Arctic region as peripheral; most municipalities in the area are classified as low on the centrality index (Høydahl, 2020). There is a concern about the decline of the youth population in this part of Norway. Projections show a decrease in this area compared to the rest of the country, where the number of young people is expected to increase (SSB, 2022). An analysis of the United Nation's sustainable development goals reveals some regional challenges and disadvantages (Mineev et al., 2020), for example, the decline in the number of young people along with higher disease and mortality rates. On the positive side, however, and which may motivate the younger generation to settle in the area, Mineev and colleagues (2020) report economic growth, low unemployment and increased tourism in the region.

This complex picture of challenges and possibilities is also intertwined with the colonial history of the region. Olsen and Sollid (2022) describe how the state used the education system as one of the main tools to colonise the Indigenous Sámi and Kven people in the region (see also Minde, 2003). Although Norway abandoned these colonising policies after World War II, the colonial past still shapes and influences

¹ Norway is an elongated country extending from 58° N to 81° N. The Polar Circle crosses the country slightly north of the centre at 66° N. The capital is in the most populated area at 60°N, and the university conducting this research is at 70° N. (The distance apart is 1740 km.) Northern Norway contains 9% of the Norwegian population and 35% of the country's land area.

people's lives (Saus, 2019). Also relevant here is that the north is still perceived (narrated) as somewhere particular—a place different from the more central areas in the southern parts of Norway in terms of culture, history and geography.

Knowledge about young people's preferences and the assessments they make about living in this area is important for future development. Young people are not necessarily strangers to life in periphery and rural areas, especially those who grew up in them or have positive feelings about them. One study showed that choosing rural life in Norway is about having access to nature, being attached to a small, local community, being able to live in a detached house, having a secure job, living with less pressure and ensuring that children grow up in good conditions (Nordtug, 2021). For young people, a well-functioning local community that has access to work, welfare services, Internet, mobile phone coverage and public transportation is important (Myhr, 2021).

Based on our experiences teaching in the teacher education program for secondary schools, we, the authors of this chapter, believe in the importance of young people telling their own stories. As a result, we facilitated four dialogue café sessions; 64 first-year teacher-students spoke to us about the everyday lives of youth in Norway's Arctic region. This dialogic research project intends to develop site-ontological knowledge to be used when educating teachers and developing schools that promote youth's wellbeing and growth. In this chapter, we provide answers to the following questions: *What future prospects are present for youth in the Arctic?* and *What transformations are needed for them to live well in this Arctic region?* In the next section, we present the theoretical framework applied when analysing the café dialogues.

Conditions for Positioning Due to Scaling

We encouraged the participants to share their impressions, reflections and opinions about youth's prospects to live well in the Arctic region of Norway. Our purpose was to understand what effect this particular site's ontology had on young people's everyday practices by discussing conditions for youths living in this area. Youth's live-well practices are shaped by the site's historical and material conditions; they are the 'practice architectures' that keep practices in place and enable, or constrain, them such that they happen in certain ways (Kemmis et al., 2014). Kemmis et al. (2014) propose 'practice architectures' as part of an ecological perspective on practice. That is, they focus on how entangled practices develop, survive and become extinct at a site by exploring how language, history, tradition and politics prefigure a wide range of practices (Kemmis, 2022). The theory of practice architectures explores how practices unfold through the lens of conditions that influence how they are conducted; these conditions include cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political ones (Kemmis et al., 2014). We draw on this theory to explore the conditions and circumstances in which social, physical and political aspects of practices affect youth in Arctic Norway. This focus on the site helps us to understand how practices shape young people's everyday experiences as well as influence their choices, ideas and desires.

To investigate how these aspects of practices are reflected in youth's everyday experiences, we use the term '(re)orientation practices' (Wara, 2016a, p. 20) to highlight the concrete interweaving and frictions in narratives about the north by outlining the directions young people take in life. This perspective is juxtaposed with Anthias' (2008, 2013) concept of 'translocational positionality', which expands the debate on identity and belonging from focusing on culture, nation, ethnicity or place of upbringing to focusing on intersections of social positions and social divisions in complex practices. Anthias (2008) elaborates:

The concept of translocational positionality addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions. As an intersectional frame it moves away from the idea of given 'groups' or 'categories' of gender, ethnicity, and class, which then intersect (a particular concern of some intersectionality frameworks), and instead pays much more attention to social locations and processes which are broader than those signalled by this. As such, the notion of translocational positionality attempts to address some of the difficulties found within intersectionality approaches and attempts to push the debate forward on theorising identity and belonging. (p. 5)

The term 'translocational positionality', as we use it, helps us to operationalise statements in the dialogues as social positionings, which is understood as a process that takes shape in and between concrete places as well as in social and linguistic contexts. For Anthias (2008), belonging is about not only identifications but also sharing values, networks and practices at the intersection of diverse social relationships. Translocational positionality involves social actions that take shape in and between different contexts and can thus be said to articulate aspects of a larger social, cultural or geopolitical context (Wara, 2016b). We also draw connecting lines to cultural and socialising aspects from the participants' childhoods and how understandings shaped during their early years are challenged and reassessed. An important point is to address how students from Northern Norway use familiar narratives as (re)orientations to (re)negotiate the dominant narratives about the north.

This chapter points to processes of 'scaling', here understood as comparing and measuring dimensions in social life (Carr & Lempert, 2006). When our participants talk about living well, they also say something about what is less good. The dialogues also involve dichotomous ideas of north/south, periphery/centre, past/present and younger/older. Although the concepts of 'scale' and 'scaling' are not without controversy (see Jonas, 2006; Marston et al., 2005) or problems (Carr & Lempert, 2006, pp. 4–7), we find them relevant for our purposes. We use the concepts to shed light on how different places and times become relevant and interrelated in youth's ideas of living well. As Gal (2016) argues, 'scalemaking' as a process is "a relational practice that relies on situated comparisons among events, persons and activities" (p. 91). Scaling thus refers to a process in which both space and time are crucial. This process is ideological and works as a framework of understanding, and, as Gal shows, scaling as a social practice also implies scale-makers who are positioning themselves. In some cases, scales are perceived as unquestionable, a perspectival frames for comparison and measurement. In other cases, more dynamic processes unfold. The youth's social positioning in terms of personal choice, ideological prospects and societal politics become evident in the results presented in this chapter. Before we explain and discuss the youth's social positioning further, we present our study.

The Dialogue Cafés

We recruited teacher-students at our university to participate in dialogue café sessions to converse about youth's lives in the Arctic. The purpose was twofold: first, to increase students', lecturers' and researchers' awareness and understanding of the youth population in Northern Norway, and second, to develop methodologies to increase students' awareness of how site-ontological understanding matters in the teaching profession.

In four café sessions, 64 first-year teacher-students shared stories and experiences and reflected together. The participants considered themselves as young people, based on their being in the youth² age group, and as future teachers for adolescents, based on the relevance of the topic for them. The participants were between 19 and 25 years (50% were either 19 or 20), and 28 were male, while 36 were female. They were currently living in the university city Tromsø but came from different parts of the country (from 54 different postcodes) and consequently brought together experiences from different places. The majority (73%) of the participants grew up in one of the three northernmost counties in Norway. The four café sessions were conducted on one day in August 2021; each was 90 min in duration, and they were conducted consecutively in the same classroom. The participants received information beforehand and signed informed consent forms. The project received ethics approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data before the data collection started.

The dialogue café as a research method involves large groups of people participating in exploratory conversations to illuminate a theme or phenomenon (Löhr et al., 2020). The method, also referred to as 'world café' (Brown, 2010), proposes that participants share, explore and discover their own and one another's insights, reflections and questions related to the topic being explored. There are seven principles for carrying out the café process: (1) clarifying the theme and context; (2) creating a hospitable and safe environment; (3) exploring questions that are relevant for the participants; (4) encouraging sharing and involvement; (5) connecting different perspectives; (6) listening together to create insight; and (7) sharing collective discoveries (Brown, 2010, p. 40). One author was the material-manager and organised the students when they arrived; another welcomed the participants, set the scene, introduced the topic and described the dialogue process (15–20 min); while two others were available during the café process (60 min). This process was repeated four times. The student body was previously divided into four regular seminar groups; therefore, the participants were already somewhat familiar with each other. In each café session, the participants were distributed randomly³ at four café tables. At each table, a table host was chosen. The hosts stayed at the same table throughout the dialogue process to welcome new groups, to introduce the assignment, to tell what previous groups had talked about and to lead the conversation. Participants rotated

² The UN defines 'youth' as the age cohort of 15–24: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youthdefinition.pdf>.

³ Distributed to tables as they arrived; 3–6 were at each table.

from table to table three times and participated in a total of four 15-min conversations (see Fig. 10.1). The dialogue process went undisturbed by the facilitators/authors, but one was always present in the room, and participants could reach out. The conversations (between 50 and 65 min) were audio recorded, and all recordings were subsequently transcribed (350 pages of text).

There were four overarching themes for the dialogues, and each rotation added a new sub-theme (see Table 10.1). In this chapter, we draw particularly on the theme ‘youth and living in the Arctic’ (Café table 4).

This dialogic research approach facilitates individual and collective discovery, in which a democratic ethos positions the participants as participating experts in the construction of meaning (Vedeler & Reimer, 2023). The participants started the analysis process at each table, individually and collectively, and we, as researchers, continued our analysis after the dialogues were transcribed, first individually and then collectively. We began without a theoretical framework or predefined categories. The researchers explored the café sessions’ dialogues in a joint analysis-seminar: each researcher had prepared by reading and preanalysing the transcriptions. In this seminar, we shared impressions and initial interpretations with each other before we processed and edited these dialogues. Parts of these analysis are presented in this chapter. We then worked on theory. Based on the empirical analysis, we all searched for and suggested theoretical perspectives before we put together the framework for this chapter. The data collection was time efficient; the data material is extensive and robust in that it involved many participants and was gathered in four separate café sessions to increase its validity. The analysis will be used when developing this

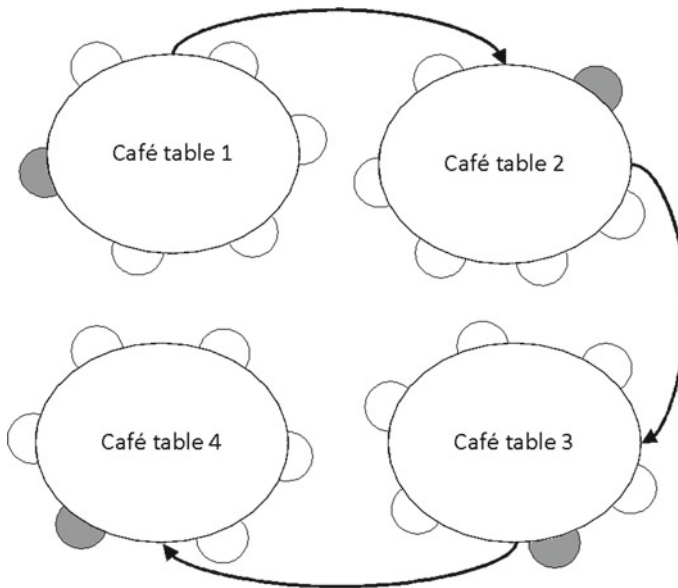


Fig. 10.1 Dialogue café process for exploratory conversations

Table 10.1 Overview of the overarching themes, sub-themes and participants' rotations

		Café table 1	Café table 2	Café table 3	Café table 4
Rotations	<i>Overarching themes</i>	Youth and social media	Youth and sustainable development	Youth and identity	Youth and living in the arctic
	<i>Subordinate themes</i>				
1	The good life	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
2	Oppose/rebellion	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
3	Generations	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1	Group 2
4	Gender and diversity	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 1

Overarching themes refers to youth and social media, youth and sustainable development, youth and identity, and, youth and living in the arctic

Subordinate themes refers to the good life, oppose/rebellion, generations, and, gender and diversity

research project further. In this chapter, quotations and concepts taken from the data are translated from Norwegian to English and marked in italics.

Conversations About 'to Live Well'

In this section, we introduce three themes that emerged from the analysis. The participants talked about the youth's prospects for living in the Arctic area, their commitment to live sustainably and well in this area and the tensions between the centre and periphery. We illuminate each theme in turn.

Living in the Arctic Area

Given that all the participants are teacher-students currently living in the north, in the city Tromsø, it was unsurprising that one of the themes they discussed was about *choosing to live* in this area; for 73% of the participants, this meant choosing to continue to live in the north, and for 27%, this meant choosing to move to the north from other parts of Norway to start their teacher education.

When the participants discussed why they chose to live in the north, the relationship between the centre and periphery was a factor. For those from the rural villages in Northern Norway, Tromsø—the biggest city in the north—still occupied a central position. At the same time, Tromsø was also referred to as a rural district when compared to the larger cities in southern parts of the country. For many of the participants, Northern Norway and the city Tromsø held a marginalised position, labelled by one of the participants as *up there*. The connotation of 'up there' is somewhere

far away, and beyond the place where many would like to be. Some participants also drew attention to the government's lack of awareness of youth's desire to live in the north by questioning the burden of government taxes, for example for motorway tolls or studded snow tyres. As one put it: *If they want people to live in Northern Norway, they have to offer them something. They cannot just collect duties and governmental dues. They must make people want to live here.* Several of those who had chosen to move north had never been in Northern Norway before. The relationship between the centre and periphery, feelings of being marginalised living in the north and the radical choice it was to move to the north are highlighted in this dialogue:

- *When I said that I would move to Tromsø, they said like; 'Are you crazy? What has happened to you?'*
- *Yes, people think that Northern Norway is kind of 'ghetto'. Yes, it is a bit like, 'Are you out of your mind?'*
- *People think we live in an igloo, kind of.*
- *Yes, but at the same time, I think the same about those from further north – that all of them are doing reindeer herding.⁴*
- *No, come on. Really now!*
- *Yes, I mean, that they do not live like us. Tromsø is one thing, but Finnmark county, that is even further north, that is really...*

One of the themes appearing in the dialogues is the participants' reasons for choosing to live in the north (when negotiating translocational positionality). Some gave pragmatic reasons, related to particular regional policies; the northernmost public university has lower entrance requirements and places set aside for a number of students from the region.

Moreover, if students choose to work in the north after studying, a part of their students' state loan will be reimbursed. Others gave leisure-based reasons, emphasising the plethora of outdoor activities to be found in Northern Norway. As one participant said: *I am engaged in almost all forms for outdoor activities, such as climbing, skiing, hiking, mountaineering, camping and fishing. That is really the reason why I am here.* Several of them emphasised the peculiar and beautiful nature as part of their reasoning, including the midnight sun,⁵ the spectacular mountains, the particular bluish light, the polar nights⁶ and the white winters. As one put it: *I do enjoy it when it is light all day and night. When you can go home at 11 p.m. or midnight, and it is still bright light the whole way home. That is really nice.*

We also found romantic-adventure reasons. Some people sought new opportunities and possibilities; one said that he would *challenge himself* and another said she would *experience something new*. Another contrasted the winters in Southern Norway to those in the north: *We don't have any snow during the winter at home. I*

⁴ Reindeer herding is the primary agriculture industry for the Indigenous Sámi people in Norway.

⁵ In the far north, in the summer, the sun does not fall under the horizon during the night; you can see the sun all night.

⁶ During the winter, the sun does not rise above the horizon.

*am really looking forward to the winter here. When only slush and rain during the Christmas holiday, it is tragic.*⁷

Several participants also sought a calmer life, with fewer people and more space and nature. The participants emphasised rural lifestyle or comfort reasons. They wanted quiet and spacious surroundings. Additionally, they loved having nature so close to them. One participant said: *...there is so much space here. It feels more open and not so.... it is a city; however, you feel there is more room to breathe.*

Some participants moved to the north because their friends had. Others wanted to be close to families: *If I had moved far away from my mother and sister ... that would have been tragic. I want to see them much more often than once or twice a year.* These are relational reasons. Thus, participants moved to the north for a variety of reasons.

In the dialogues, the disadvantages and drawbacks of living in the north were also discussed. The participants emphasised the harsh climate, including the rough winters and the dark polar nights, poor infrastructure, lack of comprehensive public transport and high house prices. In one of the dialogues, participants talked about identity challenges. Some stressed that it is difficult to be themselves in small villages. However, most felt that these problems were surmountable and were not enough to dissuade them from living in the north. In one of the dialogues, the participants talked about how hard it can be to sleep during the midnight sun period and that during the polar night period, they often feel tired and worn out. One participant spoke about the low temperatures, even during the summer, to which another replied: *The coldness has never been a hindrance for me, at all, really. We live in well insulated houses and have heaters. We have wood stoves and warm clothes. It is not a problem at all.*

Sustainable Living

The participants were concerned with the climate and nature and how this affects living in the north; and their commitment to live sustainably and well in this area. They discussed sustainability as a naturalness. The question was not if, but how, they can live in environmentally friendly ways. They debated among themselves the different ways to live a sustainable life. Not only did they question the conformity they find in customary environment protection, but they also interrogated the biases of more urban and centralised interpretation of environmental protection. They questioned the justness of these discourses:

- *Yes, I do believe it is sort of a city thing. We have always talked about sustainable development, and I am from a larger city.*
- *Yes, I do think that is relevant if you come from a rural district or from a central city in terms of sustainable development. That is because many of the cases people talk about regarding sustainable development are so irrelevant for us from the*

⁷ 'Tragic' is a common expression for Norwegian youth 'to describe something they really dislike.

rural districts. For example, using public transport. It is easy for them to talk about that. I mean the ones living in the cities, but for us, we've got another reality.

This dialogue demonstrates how public transportation, such as taking a bus or train, is out of the question for people living in the north because there are no trains and only sparse bus services. This lack of public transportation precludes the young from pursuing a sustainable lifestyle. In other dialogues cafés, the participants had similar discussions regarding second-hand stores and vegetarian diets. In the north, there are no such stores, and the Arctic climate is not suitable for plant-based diets since it is too cold for any large-scale vegetable cultivation. They argue that a vegetarian diet actually contradicts the ambition of promoting local food to maintain a sustainable lifestyle.

Some participants questioned whether environmentalists have solutions for those living in northern regions. Do the standards for sustainable living exclude those living in the Arctic and remote places? Do the norms of how to live well, which originated from cities in the south, also apply to Arctic conditions? This scaling debate, which the participants broached, is vital to the discussion about how to live well in the Arctic. The participants felt that these norms for sustainable living were elitist and exclusionary. They did not believe that the sustainable norms of Norway's southern centres were appropriate for northern conditions. In this way, by revealing tensions between dominant discourses and Arctic realities, the participants challenged the green shift and asked for approaches to environmental change that include Arctic life conditions. We have previously labelled the participants' demand for an inclusive interpretation of sustainable life as 'a blue shift' (Saus et al., 2022), using the colour blue to reference the bluish impressions of the north's harsh weather, its clean and pure cold water and the long winter period of darkness. The participants also criticised global environmental activism, seeing 'the green shift' as less relevant for rural and Arctic conditions. In this dialogue, the participants addressed different positionalities by emphasising how social locations need to be included to transform and understand sustainable living:

- *I get upset when someone thinks people from Northern Norway are a special race. That they say, 'they are like this or act like this' and that this is something far different from the rest of the country.*
- *Yes, but I mean, I am from the south, and people tried to prepare me for the Northern Norwegian people I will meet; how they will treat me and those kinds of things. They have said it is totally different than what I am used to and have seen before, and it is different from the rest of the country.*
- *How come? In what way?*
- *That the people speak directly and straightforwardly and that they think I should feel stupid and little because I am from the south.*
- *I feel the opposite. I feel that when you are not from here, from the north, you are welcomed, and people are very accommodating, if you understand what I mean.*

This discussion seems to be about how people in the north treat newcomers from the south. However, it is rather a discussion about how the Northern Norwegian

identity is related to both the southern identity and the Norwegian identity in general. The participants challenged the power of defining others solely based on location or place. They continued by focusing on the historical repression of Northern Norway:

- *Yes, but people from Northern Norway have always been patronised and treated in a condescending manner.*
- *No, we are on our own planet. Like even if we are not, people treat us like they think so.*
- *Earlier, they just cut us from the map. [...]*
- *And I feel the politicians, they do not know anything about half of the country. - But that is the thing about Norway. We have so much district-area [rural], that district policies are like ... difficult. I think the district politics might anger the youth of Northern Norway because they do not know anything about half of the country.*

In this dialogue, we see how the participants understand the mutual scepticism between the north and the south as a reaction to repression and political practice that is not inclusive nor enhancing the country's diversity. The prospects the participants ask for are for development, both regarding sustainable development and rural development, adapted to northern conditions. Talking about sustainable living in the Arctic, they demonstrate, must include the Arctic world in terms of its particular social, climate and political conditions.

Tensions Between the Centre and Periphery

The participants focused on social, natural and climate factors when they spoke about the conditions for living a good life in the Arctic. Two main perspectives are represented in the dialogues. While some said these conditions provided an exciting outdoor life, others saw these conditions as too harsh and something you just need to endure or want to escape from. Together, these viewpoints create a scalar view of the north—from a 'ghetto', or 'planet', or somewhere exotic to a place of harsh conditions. Such a viewpoint in turn, positions participants in the dialogues (and beyond) on a scale between northerner and southerner and between insider and outsider. This way of scaling and contrasting the north is also found elsewhere in the data, providing a frame for seeing the north in relation to other places as periphery and a place of contrasts and tensions. In the following extract, living well in the north is connected to national policies that take regional conditions into consideration:

- *There are so many policies around living in Northern Norway. They [politicians] have introduced a lot of good policies so that people will live here. [...]*
- *And the Northern Norwegian quota,⁸ that is a positive thing.*

⁸ This is a system in higher education in the north that provides youth from the region access to study programs.

- *Yes, because that is an attempt to keep [people], because it prevents people [from the south] from moving here [...]*

In this, the participants connected living in the north to Norwegian policy, which is about creating structural and societal measures to create a stable settlement in the north ('to keep people'). These measures are often designed to counter the power imbalance between the north and south, more specifically, with the intention to pull young people to the north. At the same time, to live a good life in the north, it is important to have access to social services as in the rest of Norway, which requires enough people and a comprehensive welfare system. One of the political measures aimed at the younger population is the previously mentioned quota system, which provides Northern Norwegian youth access to higher education study programs in the north, including medicine and law. The participants evaluated this quota as something positive because it keeps youth in the north at an important stage in life. Statistics show that students studying welfare-related programs choose a higher education institution close to their place of upbringing and they also tend to settle in the area where they come from or study. Those who do not return home often stay in more populous places and central (but still local) areas in the north. This suggests that the university cities in the north, like the city of Tromsø, are important for encouraging people to stay in the north (see Moafi, 2022).

It is of national interest that policies ensure a stable population in the north. It is a region with valuable natural resources, and it is of geopolitical interest, but the number of people living in the area is declining. District-oriented policies target people already living there, who are already well aware of the living conditions. Among our participants, some questioned this privilege, as it could be read as counter to the ideas of equal opportunities and access to higher education for all ('it prevents people [from the south] from moving here'), but there is no sign of abandoning this measure for keeping people living in the north. These regional arrangements underline how living a good life in a northern welfare society is political, and it is an example of the scalar relationship between an overarching national and a more regional or even local perspective of what it takes to live a good life in the north.

Negotiations on Translocational Positionality

Our analysis draws attention to conversations related to prospects, sustainability and policy in this Arctic region and how they also acted as negotiations on translocational positionality. The participants revealed how tensions are scaled by a centre-periphery dichotomy, diverse and contradictory reasoning and socially-biased semantics. Our study shows how site-ontological interpretations of 'to live well' occur when people encounter each other from different subjective spaces. Our young participants contributed to negotiations on translocational positionality by repeating, adjusting or transforming layer upon layer of semantic, physical and relational spaces of practices. Ongoing discourses, negotiations and positionings proceeded based on their

past and present experiences and future expectations. Particular practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) shape practices that happen in this Arctic site. For instance, ‘sayings’ include marginalising rhetoric and scepticism; notable examples include the use of words like ‘ghetto’, ‘race’ and ‘planet’ to position the north as different, separate and outside what is perceived as normal. The stories about the ‘doings’, for example, how the transport system limits mobility and the geography itself hinders access to products, illustrate how youth experience a lack of options. Policy also affects encounters and peoples’ self-image and relations. The dialogues represent (through the marking of gender, age, social status, life outlook and place of birth) positioning efforts among and between a multitude of discourses.

The participants infiltrate an already differentiated practice. They identify with or against places and thus also (re)construct being ‘in place–out of place’ (Cresswell, 1996). Some add site-specific categories to Northerners, making them completely different from Norwegians living in the south, referred to as a special race. Others described Northern Norway through exotic stories by referring to its wilderness and beauty. We have shown how stories are driven by pragmatic, leisure, nature, romantic, comfort or relational reasons to move to, or to stay, in the north (or despite these reasons). This shows how interpretations of living in Northern Norway involve negotiations along the different scales that take place among people. These encounters will always be shaped by both the particular and the general (Massey, 2005), and the participants’ individual experiences and preferences are thus always intentional, that is, framed by a wide range of power relations. Young people position and (re)orient themselves towards or from different narratives that tend to marginalise Northern Norway as a place on the outside. Young people’s translocational positionalities, as we use them in this chapter, include both economic, political and cultural relations as well as the entanglements and intersections of diverse relations and representations that extend across time and space. When the participants discussed the mutual scepticism between the north and the south, they were addressing the north–south as a struggle in terms of power, not the north–south dimension as primarily places or cultures. We understand that translocational positionalities, where identities are not fixed to places, give meaning based on the social practices that react against, for example, historical repression, policies and social processes that uphold negative attitudes towards the north.

Sustainable living is a central part of what it means to live well in the Arctic because the northernmost part of the world will feel the effects of climate change most extensively (Smedsrud & Furevik, 2021). This creates geopolitical interest in this Arctic region, but despite economic growth in the north, there are still challenges related to creating stable employment that take into account the society and environment (Dybtyna & Mellemvik, 2019), which has caused much consternation among the younger generation, leading to comprehensive worries and youth-driven actions and demonstrations (Sinnes, 2020; De Wever et al., 2019). The discussions in the dialogue cafés can be understood as challenging the uniform and standardised norms of what ‘a green shift’ might be. It is not the idea ‘to live well is to live sustainably’ that our participants challenged but rather the idea that there is one, uniform way to do this—this scale is already outlined by more urban and affluent people.

Our participants interpreted ‘the north’ and their relationship to it based not only on their own previous experiences but also on how others labelled and described the north. They were also affected by actions and activities that may or may not be adapted to the regional conditions and by tensions in the cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political spaces they operate within. They expressed the need for transformation that positions the north by how national and regional policies—both social, physical and political aspects—narrate the scale-based relationship between the centre in the south and the periphery Arctic. They want future prospects that are associated with living well where they see themselves, such as in the north, in the periphery, in the present and for the young. There is a need to take the living conditions of the north into consideration in order to counter the power imbalance between north and south. Our participants’ awareness of the different views of the north seems to be relevant for pointing to their future prospects of a good life for youth in the Arctic. Scale-making is found in the interplay between structure and agency and by comparing and causing kinds of friction. We have shown how individual and collective positionings amplify differentiation, whether you are with or against. It is about how young people enact what it means to live well in a world worth living in for all in Arctic surroundings. We have explored how youth construct stories in these ‘bigger’ stories, and we wonder if youth themselves are about to transform towards living a clearer Arctic-site-story. Youth’s identity connections are nurtured by the environment, nature and culture, which are experienced by the individuals as inclusion or exclusion through the feelings of being on the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ and of being ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’.

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Dr. Gørill Warvik Vedeler is Head of Research in the Department of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway. Her research and teaching interests are related to pedagogy, teacher education and dialogic methodology, focusing on adolescents' wellbeing, collaboration with parents and design of teacher education programs. Vedeler worked at The Arctic University of Norway when this chapter was developed.

Professor Merete Saus is currently a researcher and teacher in the Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway. Her research and teaching interests are related to pedagogy, Indigenous research, minorities and child welfare. Lately, she has been conducting research on improving teacher education, child welfare for minorities and parental guidance for refugee families.

Associate Professor Tatiana Wara is a researcher and teacher at Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway. Her teaching and researching take place within the field of pedagogy.

Professor Hilde Sollid is a researcher and teacher at Department of Language and Culture, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway. Her field of teaching and research is sociolinguistics, focusing on language policy, language ideology, multilingualism and Indigenous minorities in educational contexts in Northern Norway.

Professor Astrid Strandbu is Assistant Head of the Department of Education, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway, and is responsible for further education programs. Her teaching and research interests are related to pedagogy, teacher education and child welfare, focusing on professional development, children's rights and decision-making processes.

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