Is a multi-locational lifestyle the future for the Nordic Arctic Youth?

Presentation of a study on youth perspectives in the Nordic Arctic

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Outline of the presentation

- Case study areas, and methodology
- Examples of visions and influence of life stage
- Comparisons across regions
- Involvement of youth in political democratic processes
- Findings and suggestions
Geographic focus in the study:

Working group for sustainable regional development in the Arctic
Youth Case Study Areas

- National boundary
- Regional boundary
- Rivers (selection)

Scale varies in this view
Urbanization as a condition

- A megatrend that cannot be shunned for planners and policy makers

- Individuality and self expressions is easier achieved in urban settlements according to the youth
Life stage and mobility are interconnected

- The majority of the young people from the rural areas in the Nordic arctic regions expect to move to get an education and well paid jobs

- Age, life situation and frequency are connected to mobility

- Young people want to travel

- Mobility are encouraged by many student programmes e.g. Erasmus, voluntary exchange programmes, and it is often also valued among employers.
Multilocational lifestyles wanted

- The young people explain it also depend on resources and qualifications.

- The multilocational lifestyle can also be seen as a way of examining the current zeitgeist.

- The zeitgeist pushing even further on existing trends of urbanisation and individualism.

- Social medias are a new element in the daily life of people and to an extent they are amplifying urbanisation in for example role models.
Visions for the next 20-25 years

• Looking 20-25 years ahead a large proportion of the rural youth have gone back to their region of origin if their prospects will come true.

• But in most cases it is the larger urban entities of the region rather than the rural part which will be the places where they will settle.

• Thus smaller villages in the Nordic Arctic are likely to continue to experience a population decline.
Perspectives and expectations for the future

The future is imaginary
Experiences from past and present shape future expectations
- Family as a point of reference
- Education and a well-paid job
- Mobile lifestyle and travel experiences
- Optimism (a driver for future actions)

Photo: Nanortalik, South Greenland. By Leneisja Jungsberg
My life as a 35-year old (in Finland)

8th graders describe their own life when they are 35 old:

- Life with nuclear family
- A tightly disciplined well-managed everyday life
- A secure well paid occupation
- Traditional gender roles
- Sportive freetime
- Global problems are solved

Young people are trusting in their futures (no unemployment, no financial crisis, crime).

Increase in family centeredness and a ‘loving’ everyday life compared to similar studies conducted 20 years back.
Young people in the Sami community

- The historic events of colonisation and suppression still affect the self-perception among young people in the Sami community today.

- Tensions were identified between the interests among the Sami community and the mining projects.

- Insecurity of the future i.e. access to land and water for reindeer herding, for fishing and for being able to drink water from the streams.
Teenagers in Norway sketching a future

- Local communities look outwards – global challenges
- Students pick mass media as their inspirational source
  - World food shortage
  - Climate changes
  - Health and epidemic challenges
- The student had many aspirations about their own future and felt confident about choosing education – on the societal level they seemed to be insecure about what could happen and whether they can affect it.

Adapting to the future: ”Framtiden kommer liksom bare – vi kan jo ikke påvirke den, liksom”.
Social media and impact on relations

- An embedded part of life – not one day is passing without using social media.

- A gateway to role models which amplify urbanisation and higher educations (lawyer, doctor, pilot, firefighter, photographer, artists etc.).

- An empowering tool – example from Sapmé illustrate how Social media are used as an empowerment tools in the fight for land use rights – initiated by the young generation.

- Can ensure and nurture relations between friends and family who live far away

- Some pupils also express worries and fear side effects such a social and psychological distress as a result of exaggerated use of digital devices

- They enjoy the Internet and their smartphones but are at the same time concerned about serious lack of communication between children and parents (it sometimes appear easier to ask google than your parent).
Democracy and political involvement

- The more young people experience to included in the community development – the happier they are to live there.

- Being included is a matter of attention by ensuring space for youth activities.

- A scepticism towards the democratic system are widely articulated. It appears for many to be populistic and unefficient.

- Some young people even experience it is useless to use their votes.
Can young people join the political work in the municipality?

In Árborg municipality a youth council with remunerated representatives are part of the decision making body. In this way youth perspectives become an integrated part of the political work for local development.

Policy recommendations for youth involvement:

- Establish a youth council at the community level and ensure a facilitator and contact person from the municipality who can be responsible for the contact and development of the youth group.
- Organise youth meetings at a regional level (e.g. age group between 12–17 years).
- Identify resource persons in the community who can lead joint activities for the youth and make a budget allocation for these activities.
- Invite the oldest school classes to a yearly trip to the municipality on a day where they can ‘play’ as regional planners and experience the dilemmas which can occur in local and regional development.
Findings and discussions

- Conventional/traditional primary occupations as a future lifestyle/job is not a priority

- While educational offers locally have increased, vocational training is in the back seat – drop-out rates should be concern of decision-makers and the NEEDS

- Living in the countryside will have to be a choice and some of the youth is conscious that what it involves will have to include entrepreneurship

- Local political involvement makes the youth happier to stay in the area and thus it is more likely they will return later
Thank you!

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