

YOUTH WELL-BEING IN NORTHERN FINNISH AND RUSSIAN URBAN COMMUNITIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

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Basic Information

Live, Work or Leave? Youth – well-being and the viability of (post) extractive Arctic industrial cities in Finland and Russia, 01.01.2018-31.12.2020. Project funded jointly by the Finnish Academy (AKA) and the Russian Fund for basic research (RFFI), carried out by Arctic Centre University of Lapland, University of Helsinki, Aleksanteri Institute, North Eastern Federal University Yakutsk and Petrozavodsk State University, Russia, jointly with the cities of Kemijärvi, Kolari, Pyhäjoki (FIN), Neryungryi, Nizhnyi Kurannakh (Aldan), (Yakutia), Kirovsk, Monchegorsk, Kovdor, Revda (Murmansk Oblast) and Novyi Urengoy (Yamal). This poster introduces first insights from anthropological fieldwork in 2018.

Aims

In this project we want to find out what the perspectives for young people's life are in Arctic Industrial Cities, and what we can do for helping to build sustainable communities for young people in such cities.

By analysing the attractiveness of Arctic industrial cities as places to live and work, this project contributes interdisciplinarily to understanding the determinants of youth well-being in Arctic industrial cities. In this respect our project aims to contribute to a broader theory of viable Arctic communities combining approaches from different disciplines integrating anthropology, legal studies, geography, political sciences, and economics. In a combined effort, we aim to find out how authorities, civil society and industrial companies provide conditions for youth well-being in Arctic industrial cities, and if their ideas overlap with the hopes and ambitions of the young people themselves. This shall be a contribution from young people in the Arctic to a general theory of well-being as "an optimal state for an individual community, society, and the world as a whole" (Matthew & Izquierdo 2008: 5).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Despite the significant differences between the cases compared, evidence from both countries suggest that for young people in Arctic northern settlements well-being means more than having an income. Specifically, the following:

- Age matters: northern cities may be attractive for children and over 20 years old, and least of all for teenagers
- The same factors can boost or threat well-being, being a 'push' or 'pull' factor: for example Arctic nature and climate
- The same factors can work differently depending on the social context: for example motorised transport in the Finnish research increases senses of belonging to the northern town – whereas in Russia it is a status symbol of material well-being and 'showing off'
- A higher value of individualism in Finnish than in Russian society is also reflected in ideas of well-being among youth
- Industry, extreme climate and remoteness more significantly impact notions of youth well-being in the Russian than in the Finnish Arctic towns

Materials and Methods

- Anthropological fieldwork in the cities of Pyhäjoki, Kemijärvi, Neryungryi, Nizhnyi Kurannakh (Aldan), Kirovsk. The cities as cases offer insights into youth issues in settlements in pre-industry phase (Pyhäjoki), single-industry towns (Neryungryi, Nizhnyi Kurannakh, Kirovsk) and post-industrial phase (Kemijärvi).
- Participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and informal conversations
- 'Soft comparison', incorporating 'all the nuances of sociocultural context ethnographically portrayed' (Matthew & Izquierdo 2008:6)
- Partners in the field: young people on the streets, young employees of industrial companies, social workers in municipalities, religious organisations and youth activists

Opportunities to Increase Well-being of Youth: First Results

Russia	Finland
Affordable housing	Affordable housing
Closeness to nature	Closeness to nature and activities (hunting, gathering, fishing, water sports, hiking, skiing and cottage (mökki) activities)
If you get educated in a field the industry needs → no problem to find a job	Education – Finland is known for a high standard education system, which provides a wide range of educational options to choose from, including distant learning, which able students to stay at Northern places.
Stable, permanent, well-paid jobs if ready to work hard in industry	Jobs in tourism, forest industry, mining, elderly care, innovative start ups,...
Good place to raise children, low criminality in general	Good place to raise children in terms of small schools and low criminality
Close social networks make life easier: everybody knows everybody	Close social networks: family and friends
Short distances to all places and services in a small city	Connectivity through social media and internet
Salary enables mobility – so remoteness of northern city is mediated	Mobility through motorised vehicles
Comfortable high living standard	
Longer holidays	

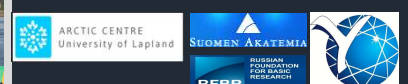
Threats Affecting Youth Well-being: First results

Russia	Finland
Insufficient possibilities for free time activities, lack of cultural event offers	Insufficient possibilities for free time activities
Rough climate	
Education worse quality and not enough variety on offer	Education - Despite of the endeavours to provide a variety of education possibilities in the far North, the options are limited and therefore young people are drawn to move to the bigger cities in the South to study the personal subjects of interest. Individual, solitary, distant learning is not appealing to everyone.
Limited jobs in specific areas. Not very diverse employment options	Limited jobs in specific areas, not very diverse employment options
Not much to do in town - alcohol, drugs, smoking, isolation and mental health issues are threatening the overall wellbeing of young people	Not much to do in town - alcohol, drugs, smoking, isolation and mental health issues are threatening the overall wellbeing of young people. Gaming, especially among young boys / Problems related to extensive use of social media and being constantly "online"
Harder to have alternative opinions / orientation (political, taste, sexual)	The absence of social networks: Results in loneliness and being on the fringes of society
Lack of shopping opportunities "everybody looks the same", unless you buy clothes on your holidays.	Lack of shopping opportunities in the own municipality/city → online shopping, travelling to distant cities for shopping



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Photographs from the field-sites by:
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