

Sari Tuuva-Hongisto, PhD, researcher, RDI advisor

South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk),

Juvenia - youth research and development center

sari.tuuva-hongisto@xamk.fi

Hopes and dreams: against the mobility imperative of rural youth

The presentation explores young people in rural and remote places, who wish to stay at their home places, against the prevailing mobility imperative. The framework of mobility imperative understands mobilities across three dimensions: the structural, the symbolic and the non-representational. (Farrugia 2015.) Rural young people are structurally disadvantaged: the education and work opportunities are increasingly concentrated in urban centers.

This presentation is based on research project: “Forgotten minority? Young people in remote villages and municipal welfare services”. The research conducted in autumn 2015 and it explored rural young people’s lives shaped by sparse opportunities. The study concentrated on rural youth’s experiences living in a remote village, their education possibilities, experiences of welfare services, social relations, leisure opportunities and future dreams. Research sites were in eastern Finland, which is sparsely populated rural and remote area with long distances to centers (20–50 kilometers to schools, commercial and municipal services). Methodologically the study follows ethnographic approach. The research material consist on 32 ethnographic interviews with rural youth, aged 14–17.

Living in rural and remote places offers special kinds of richness and scarcities. The position is structurally unequal: the absence of opportunities to education and work; the global mobility is reshaping rural youth and regions. Living close to the nature, do-it-yourself –life, sensory freedom, individualism and self-employment are on the other hand the benefits of rural life and dimensions of the hopes and dreams of staying.

Introduction

In Finland, the dichotomies of rural and urban have been emphasized in late year’s discussions and the life in remote villages and rural areas are represented increasingly negative discourses. (cf. Stenbacka 2011; Peiponen 2015; Akkanen 2017.) The latest report on the state of Nordic regions shows, that Eastern Finland is a “black area”: it suffers of ageing, depopulation, young people’s out-migration, and the speeding up of rural change. The challenges are deep and structural. (Grunfelder et al. 2018)

Urbanization and centralization are contemporary imperatives. Centralization produces margins and fringes, where population and employment declines. The phenomenon is global (Sassen 2018; Farrugia & Wood 2017.) The depopulation and the decline of the welfare structures illustrates the speeding change of rural areas. Furthermore, in Eastern Finland, the public services as well as education possibilities are concentrated on municipal and regional centers. For example in Eastern Finland, many municipalities are under the average rate of the accessibility. In addition, the

accessibility to vocational education is low. At the same time, the public transportation decrease and the access to public services declines. The challenges of remoteness and rurality deepens. (Peruspalvelujen tila 2013; Peruspalvelujen tila 2016.)

Staying at rural areas have been marginal questions for researchers. The future of rural youth is in cities and in centers. (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006; Farrugia 2016; Penttinen 2016; Käyhkö 2017.) The possibilities for education and economic opportunities are absent. Young people in remote areas and rural youth are leavers and movers (Tuhkunen 2007; Ollila 2008; Käyhkö 2017.) Statistics constructs the same interpretation (see Aro 2017; Saukkonen & Ryhänen 2017.)

Despite all the mobility towards the centers, it is still relevant to ask, is there still personal descriptions of life and future dreams that are situated to rural and remote. In this paper, I explore how rural youth still have hopes and dreams in living at rural home places, and how they see and explain their dreams of staying in the rural.

My analysis is based on a study that examined young people' everyday life in rural and remote areas in Eastern Finland. The ethnographic study and ethnographic interviews conducted in small and remote villages, which were 20-50 kilometers from the nearest (municipal) centers. The interviewed were aged 14-17 (n=32), and they were still living at their home places. They were living a "transition phase": they were planning and thinking about their futures and education. For this age group, rural home places seemed to offer good and satisfying environment to grow up.

The paper provides an angle to a moment of the transition phase and their dreams of staying. What keeps these young people in their rural small home places and why they in spite of all expectations are dreaming against the mobility imperative?

What are remote and rural villages in Finland?

Remote villages in Finland are in sparsely populated rural areas. Finnish countryside is defined in three categories: 1) rural areas close to the centers (commuting area), 2) core rural area (areas of agriculture) and 3) remote and sparsely populated areas (see Helminen 2014.) Rural areas close to the cities are commuting areas, and the city nearby is an advantage for the area. The core rural areas is a countryside of agriculture and production, where can also be some industrial units. There are also different kind of small centers municipal or industrial centers. According to the statistic, the sparsely populated remote areas suffer with negative development. Long distances and uninhabited areas characterizes remote areas. Many of the municipalities of Eastern Finland are remote and sparsely populated, and this category covers half of the total area of Finland. (Ponnikas et al. 2014, 10–11; Lehtola & Tedre 2014.)

In remote villages, there are only few young people. Only three percent of young people in Finland live in remote areas. (Ristikari 2016). For example in Southern Savo, region in eastern Finland, app. 7000 young people live in remote villages.

In this paper, the rural youth implies young people that live outside the centers. The distance of their home places to the nearest centers is approximately 20–50 kilometers. Most of the interviewed lived 30 kilometers from the nearest public services: upper secondary schools and municipal services. Most of the interviewed young lived in villages in which were not any kind of services at all. In addition, neighbors and friends were in distance.

Methods and research material

The paper is based on research project: *Forgotten minority? Young people in remote villages and welfare services*, funded by Foundation for Development of Municipalities (see Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016). The research material consists of 32 ethnographic interviews of young people in remote areas, aged 14–17 in Eastern Finland. The aim of the study was to research empirically the everyday life and the experiences in rural and remote villages outside the municipal services (see also Pöysä & Tuuva-Hongisto 2017.) The interviews were made at autumn 2015; there were 18 girls and 14 boys: 15 were at upper secondary schools, 15 at high schools (lukio in Finnish system) and 2 at vocational schools.

In the interviews, the young people described their everyday life in remote villages. The project explored rural young people's lives that are shaped by sparse opportunities: their experiences living in a remote village, their education possibilities, and experiences of welfare services, social relations, leisure opportunities and future dreams.

The ethnographic study emphasized the lived experiences and their own interpretations of the rural life. The interviews, the analysis and the reporting aims supporting young people's own voices. The aim is to respect the interviewees' worldviews and interpretations; the analysis follows the ways that the young people perceive their own everyday life in rural surroundings and explores their shared cultural understandings. The aim is to understand the everyday life and its social and cultural meanings (Löfgren & Ehn 2010; Alasuutari 2011; Hämeenaho 2014.)

The study emphasized the young people's own experiences and interpretations. The interviewees also challenged the presuppositions of rural life: it reveals that the study achieved to capture their own voices that was not following our – researchers – assumptions. Like in many previous studies, I also assumed that they would be more “ready to leave” and that they would complain the narrowness of the lifestyle and the absence of opportunities. Instead, they described very warmly, devoted and committed way their rural lives. It was sort of counter-discourse towards the declining discourse: that their home regions are places of disappearance, where everything is lacking. The declining frame came from the research: the perspective was on the welfare services, which were absent, from their lives. (Armila 2016; Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016, 20.)

The qualitative thematic analysis conducted with WeftQDA –analysis programme. Two researchers conducted the data-driven analysis. After the thematic analysis, the notions and findings were compared and discussed further with the whole research group¹. The analysis that I conducted for this paper is two-fold process: first I scope the overall picture of mobility imperative and the opposing interpretation and then I trace through two example stories of the dreams and plans that they have on staying. These two example stories (two boys) clarifies the dreams of staying and different contexts and varieties of ruralities.

Pressures of leaving and staying

The mobility imperative means that rural youth must often be mobile in order to access the resources they need (Farrugia 2015). The education possibilities are in the distance, also the

¹ Research group: Ville Pöysä ja Päivi Armila, University of Eastern Finland; Jussi Ronkainen and Sari Tuuva-Hongisto, Mikkeli university of applied Sciences -> South Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences. The paper is written in Academy of Finland research project: “The frontier of sustainability transitions. Cultural adaptations of sustainability policies in European peripheral regions”, University of Eastern Finland.

employment possibilities. The structural inequality enforces to leave, although the personal well-being and meanings of good life can be framed by the rural life (see also Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006).

"Well I have always thought that when I have lived my youth in quiet place, so then I will move to Lapland or stay here (at Kainuu). However, I will not, I do not want to live in city or in the south. I have noticed in the trips for example in the summer to Helsinki, and then when I came back I had to go the forest for couple of days, to the wilderness cabin and wander at the forests, and I needed to relax and calm down." (Boy, 16 years)

The 16-years old boy's interview quotation is a good example from the interview material on how these young people are describing their home regions and life in the remote and rural places. The home regions are experienced as good environment, easy and open space and peace of nature. Many of the interviewed saw their future in the same kind of small place like their homes were. Not necessarily at the actual home places, but somewhere near. They were aware, that for education they have to leave. Nevertheless, for them it is important that the education be near by the home. Future is close to the home region (Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016.) The future dreams are guided by the fact, that they are still living at their home places and they see their futures in the same kind of region, inside the home municipality or home region or "province". (See also Penttinen & Ronkainen 2013.)

Leaving and staying are themes that they were considering and planning at their "transitional phase", stepping from the upper primary schools to secondary education. They were thinking about the studies elsewhere and living at home places. Many of those who plan to choose the vocational education, have to leave: the vocational education is at distance in regional towns. This early leaving does not necessarily mean that they leave permanently. For those, who choose the high schools, it is still possible to stay home. Then after high schools, they have to leave for further education, which is not available anywhere near.

The mobility, moving and traveling are obligatory way of life and new normal and urban norm, especially for young people. Immobility and staying perceives as being stuck or staying behind. (Houni & Suurpää 1998, 7; Jensen 2006; Stockdale & Haartsen 2017.) It is something that does not include agency or active choice making, it is just "staying in misery" (Ollila 2008, 204.) Immobility is a failure to leave (Stockdale & Haartsen 2017). Remaining local has become synonymous with precarity and social exclusion (Farrugia 2005; Shucksmith 2004.) Symbolically and culturally staying is "out" of the youth cultures and youth life styles. Symbolically youth is something that happens in urban and urban environments (Farrugia 2015.) The symbolic dimension of mobility imperative defines youth cultures urban: city is the place where modern life and youth cultures happen.

I: Do you think it would be ok to live somewhere here like on Suometsä? Do you think you would like to be here if you could find a job here?

Y: Yes, I really would.

I: So you are not thinking about leaving?

Y. No, not at all. (Boy, 15 years.)

Many of the interviewees saw the urban life unfamiliar and especially boys preferred living in the countryside. Conventionally boys are stayers (see Käyhkö 2017.) The notion from the interviews showed, that there were equally boys and girls who had wishes to stay, although the boys had concrete plans on doing so. In addition, the mobility and leaving was located near, close to the living environment. The fear of the leaving and uncertainty made them miss the safe and familiar as well as thinking the leaving a loss of familiarity. (Lähteenmäki & Ruotsala 2007.) The notion is also similar in the statistics of young people in Eastern Finland: there is a trend of the wishes of staying in the same kind of small places. Only seven percent of the youth in Eastern Finland regarded the capital areas as their preferred place to move. (Penttinen & Ronkainen 2013; Penttinen 2016.)

Affective nature relations

“We live by the lake; it is only 50 meters to the lake from our house. And then well, there we fish a lot, with hooks or nets, or fish traps.” (Girl, 15 years)

The 15-years-old girl describes her home by the lake and surrounding nature and the possibilities that it offers. The interviewees described their home environment with very typical rural attributes: nature, peacefulness, rural idyll. The images of rural life filled with idyllic, romantic and nostalgic features: idyllic way of life, houses by the lake and peaceful life style. (See Nieminen-Sundell 2011, 17; Hämeenaho 2014, 34.) In the countryside the outdoor activities, the large yards and gardens, lakes, large farmhouses, space and freedom are at the core of rural life style. (Viken & Nyseth 2009, 226-228.) Nature and the outdoor activities are meaningful part of the rural youth.

“Well it is quite mundane, we make food and then in the summer time we grow carrots at garden and then, well, and then we talk much. I talk with my parents a lot. It is so, that they are not distant for me, I talk with them if I am doing something like in the garden, or outside and when I for walk, just that kind of normal stuff.”

I: Do you just lay at the couch inside, or is it more outdoors, in the nature?

Y: Well, not that much [inside the house], it is more outside, and well, on the other hand there are quite much wild animals [wolves and bears], so it is sometimes a bit scary to go out with dog and when the evenings are dark, then it is not easy to go outdoors, but anyway we spend lot of time outdoors and in the nature and we go to the lake, so it is very much being close to nature.” (Girl, 15 years.)

The place relation and the attachment to the home places are frequently explored through the theories of place and theories human geographies. Places are lived and experienced; people are attached and rooted to places. (Relph 1976; Karjalainen 1997; Käyhkö 2017.) The interviewed young people also described the attachment to place. They were also specifying and differentiating the relation to unfamiliar places, cf. cities and urban surroundings. Urban was unfamiliar and strange, while the home place was safe and known. Familiar place increases safety and self-confidence. Country-styled life and close nature relation anchors young people to their home places. Campbell et al (2006) and Little and Panelli (2007) emphasizes that especially nature distinguishes rural and urban, both physically and mentally. The life in rural and remote villages is an alternative way of life from the urban perspective. This alternative life is characterized by stereotypical representations of being healthy, straight and honest – and morally traditional.

Lähteenmäki and Ruotsala (2007) have described the emotional astonishment on how strong the commitment is to homes and home places. The commitment and attached goes beyond feelings of home, it is embodied and embedded. The place attachments uncovers complex forms of place attachment within rural body-space-assemblages. The rural youth's entanglement to nature and home places are central part of the dreams staying and it characterizes the immobility. The closest element in their surroundings were the nature and forests. (Tuuva-Hongisto 2018; Kiilakoski 2016; see also Tervo 2008, 214.)

"I like the place where I live, I can be free there, and I can think what I want. I have always been quite strong persona, and then, well, I can be there in the nature like I want to be, and I think it is like, it's free and releasing, to live in a place where is no others, and on the other hand I have not used to live in place where is also others." (Girl, 15 years)

According the Farrugia et al. (2016) young people experience embodied feelings of comfort and belonging to landscape as central dimensions of their relationship to their communities and local places. These embodied feelings emerged from practices through which young people established an affective relationship to place, including farm work or leisure activities such as motorbike riding and hiking. In these forms of work and leisure, young people established a kind of bodily hexis (Bourdieu 1990) which produced what they experienced as large and open spaces, or spaces which were experienced as facilitating the free movement of the body (cf. Carolan 2008 on the affective dimensions of farm work)." (Farrugia 2005) The non-representational dimensions of rural youth mobilities refer to embodied and affective "entanglements" between young people and the spaces that contribute to the formation of their subjectivities (Farrugia 2015; Thrift 2008.) It is special body-space assemblage, sensuous and embodied. The embodied feelings, the comfort and belonging are central dimensions of rural youth's relationship to their local places.

I: Do you go often to the forests and nature, do you have dogs or?

Y. Yes, yes, we have dogs and then I go hunting.

I: Do you just walk there or do you make something special things also?

Y: Yes, I just walk around, and think, and then I like a lot to climb to the trees and sometimes I just climb to the tree, then just sit there, and think. (Girl, 17 years)

The 17-year-old girl describes how she just sits in the tree and thinks. Her nature-relation is something very ordinary and common, sort of mundane site of being. The bodily comfort and the feeling of belonging to the landscape emerge from concrete practices, socially situated activities that produce affective, co-constitutive relationship between place and body (Farrugia 2015.) In the ethnographic material, the young people describe the freedom that emerges at the free spaces of nature. The sensuous dimensions are expressed in embodied feelings of comfort and convenience. The freedom and comfort distinguishes the unfamiliarity of the urban space. The encounters of urban space is often described as unfamiliar or uncomfortable: young people felt uncomfortable and unable to create a "good ordering" between the space and body. They were experiencing that something was out of place and this something was themselves. The disturbance were experienced in terms of affective spaces and times: young people articulated these affects in contradictory terms. Experiencing the city was too big for themselves to feel comfortable. They were not able to become a part of the rhythms of urban life. (Farrugia 2015.)

The non-representationality and the affectivity according to Nigel Thrift (2008) and David Farrugia (2015; 2016) emphasizes the bodily and embodied entanglement, the flow of practice in everyday life as embodied, as caught up with and committed to the creation of affect. Non-representational theory works as an interpretive “supplement to the ordinary, a sacrament for the everyday, a hymn to the superfluous (Thrift 2008, 2.) The environment is as an extension of the mind, the environment is no longer passive or just place where things happen. Behavior and environment are not separated. (Thrift & Dewsbery 2000.) The environment, experiences and meanings are interwoven and hybrid assemblages.

Dreams of staying: stories of Eetu and Vertti

In this chapter, I enlighten the dreams of staying by elaborating stories of Eetu and Vertti and their descriptions of their lives and futures in remote villages in eastern Finland. Eetu and Vertti’s stories are examples from the material, and I use their stories because they expressed clear wishes and active plans of staying. Eetu and Vertti also represents the variety of the life in remote villages, with their different backgrounds relations to rural mobility. They both are potential rural stayers and in the interviews, they expressed their hopes and concrete plans at staying to home places. In many other interviews in the material, it was more just a hope or desire, but these boys had more active agency towards staying.

Vertti is “typical country-boy”, who has lived his life in a family farm. He plans to study agriculture and then continue the farm. The family farm and its surroundings define his life sphere. Eetu instead does not have family background in the village he lives in, although his family has background in the region. Eetu’s parents are highly educated, and they have a firm located at their home place. They can be defined “rural newcomers” who value and appreciate the typical rural idyll-like characteristics such as peace and quiet, natural qualities, relaxed life style and friendly and inclusive community. The same characteristics are present also in Eetu’s views. (See also Hämeenaho 2014, 119; Haartsen & Stockdale 2017.)

Y: Yes, this is very important, good and special place for me.

I: What makes this as good place?

Y: well, here is so much space, for example for walks, here is still so much forests, we have a lake nearby, and this is just so good place to live in.

(Eetu, 14 years)

Both boys describe their home places similar way: very warmly and with positive attributes, and they both describe their close relationship to the nature (see also Tuuva-Hongisto 2018). They described that they live in the middle of the forests, which meant for them mostly positive things, but also its negative connotations. Forests was mainly what they “needed” in their lives in their life spheres: it offered meaningful space for them. It was a quality of life to live close to the nature and be able to have all the natural qualities available. In leisure time, nature and freedom were underlined. Like Eetu stated: “In free time I just like to do what I want.” For both the ideal is the freedom and individuality that the own environment emphasizes and requires.

At time of the interview, Eetu was just 14 and Vertti was 15 years old. Their life were very family-centered and they spend most of their time home and in home environment (see also Tuuva-Hongisto et al. 2016; Kiilakoski 2016.) They did not have that kind of regular hobby or leisure time activity outside the home environment. Their friends they met mainly in virtual environment. They played a lot and used internet for playing together and hanging together digitally.

Vertti: Well, when I go home from school, I eat and then there is some free time, sometimes I do my homework, but usually I play games for a while. The I go to cow house, it takes half an hour or sometimes two hours, and when I don't have homework, or there is no test at school, then I usually do something extra at the cow house, then I come inside, and if there is no homework, then I play games

I: Is it something online multi-player games in the internet or?

Vertti: Yes, always playing multi-player games with friends.” (Vertti, 15 years)

Eetu and Vertti both have plans to secondary education, but the school or education does not interest them that much. Vertti has plans to go to institute of agriculture and then live in a dormitory during the education. Living at home during the education is impossible for Vertti, the nearest schools for vocational education or secondary education is over 100 kilometers away. In addition, distance to the institute which he has plans to apply is over hundred kilometers away. In that institute, they offer 4-day school week and free dormitory. Therefore, for him it is good, he can spend almost half of the week at home.

The possibility of staying at home is in Vertti's mind. The “leaving for education” is not leaving for Vertti, he thinks it is temporal; he just spends some time of the week away from home. The temporality, that Vertti describes, is kind of rural “multi-sitedness”, life style is multi-sited, and home is at the countryside, and work somewhere else, there can be several “homes” and residences for different purposes (Nieminen-Sundell 2011). The multi-sitedness, temporality and living along season is also part of the rural mobilities. Despite of the long distances to commute, many decides live in the countryside. According to Uusitalo (2010), many rural habitants especially in Northern Finland stays at rural home and think that work is just temporary or they are working along seasons. Following the same idea, many of the interviewees of this study thinks that studying, education is just temporary, and the idea of home remains at countryside.

Vertti: No, I do not like school at all, studying is not my thing, but I want my grades to be good enough, at least seven or little more, so I could get to Kukkola, where I have planned to go, the vocational school.

I: Ok, so what is the Kukkola

Vertti: Well, it is an agricultural institute, surprise (amused). So, it is so, that they have, at least when we were there for excursion, and they said that they have a 4-day school week, so then I come for three day back home.

I: And it is something like 100 kilometers to Kukkola from here?

Vertti: Yes, something like that. (Vertti, 15 years)

Eetu's home place is not so far away from the education possibilities, so he could go for example to vocational education and still live at home. However, he does not think, that studying is his priority. Eetu's mind is in gaming, coding and game design. He wants to start a company on game design

straight after upper primary school. He has learned to code by himself and he thinks that he can learn more coding by doing and learning with his friends – and start working as game designer for living.

I: Okay, it sound interesting, so you think that something like that you would like to study? So do you have plans to go to high school or vocational school?

Eetu: Well, not necessarily, I do not have plans to go to vocational school. What have been thinking is, that we just start to code, my plan is to practice coding so well during the upper primary school, that I will start doing that, but I am not certain yet...

I: So what about high school, it is at the municipal center and there is also other kind of education possibilities available at [nearest town], so have you been thinking about these..?

Eetu: Well, my brothers and my sisters went to high school to town, well I am not sure, but what I have been thinking is, that I want to start coding after primary school and start developing games and start a company.

I: Ok, so you just want to start doing.

Eetu: Well of course, it can still change, but right now, that is my plan.

(Eetu, 14 years.)

Besides their different backgrounds, the plans of these boys have common features. Their plans does not connect to the traditional working life model. They know, that in remote areas there are no jobs, the structural inequality of employment possibilities prevails. They see the future in self-employment. Vertti has plans to start a company on agricultural machinery supplementing the farm. Eetu is thinking self- entrepreneurship and self-employment on game design and coding. They both see themselves as self-employed. For that reason, they do not value educational career or studying.

The employment possibilities are scarce in remote areas, and the possibilities are mainly on self-entrepreneurship and self-employment (see Aure & Munkejord 2016.) The do-it-yourself-environment in countryside supports and requires the idea self-employment model. The path goes from the self-made-hobbies to self-employment. The freedom and individuality intervenes to life-style. Both boys are familiar with self-employment through their families and they both frame their futures through self-employment and making their lives according to countryside living and life-style.

I: So, what interests you in the agriculture?

Vertti: Well, it is the machines, not the animals or dairy farming.. Right now, my plan is that I want to start a company on machinery, some agricultural machines...

I: Ok, so can you tell a bit more, I do not know that much about that kind of machines...

Vertti: Well there is in the wintertime for example road maintenance, snow removal, and all that kind of things... I don't know, all that kind of things, and of course in the summer time all the work in the fields and then also work with excavator, there is always work for excavators

I: So do you have hopes and plans where you would start the company and do the work?

Vertti: It is so, that I would like to do that work at home farm, there is enough space. However, of course I am not sure if there is enough need or demand for that kind of services.

(Vertti, 15 years)

For Vertti it is clear that he wants to “leave” to study agriculture, but then there is the farm and the land that keeps him at the home place. The land is something that you cannot take with you; it tides you to the home farm. Home, the farm and the land is in him tightly. (See Silvasti 2004). For Vertti it is not an option to leave, his home is there in the remote village and home farm. Nevertheless, for Eetu the situation is different. Eetu does not have that kind of necessity to live in remote area; his family has chosen the lifestyle. Therefore, that same selectivity is in Eetu’s story. He does not have “the must” to stay, but Eetu prefers and selects the rural area. (See also Haartsen & Stockdale 2017.)

For Eetu and Vertti the home places are meaningful, they care the nature and fancy the freedom. For these boys the lifestyle in remote areas is appreciating the freedom and individuality, the path goes from self-made-hobbies towards self-employment. The ideal of individuality is at the core of the life-style (see also Abrahams 1991; Pikka 2004.) The country life-style “freedom” includes also the idea of certain type of “gray area”, where all the restrictions and norms do not exist and are outside of the common standards (Uusitalo 2012.) Freedom is a space for self-realization and self-made-life, which covers the hobbies, lifestyle as well the future and employment.

Dreams of freedom

It is problematic that young people living in remote and rural area do not enter to education or employment and those they do not have equal possibilities. Nevertheless, it is also problematic, that young people out-migrate rural areas. In Finland, there has been intense discussions about the future of rural areas: the centralization and the divide of urban and rural have intensified in recent years. The decline is deep and structural, services are centralized and the rural areas suffer depopulation, ageing, out-migration, unemployment (Grunfelder et al. 2018). The development seems to be inevitable. On the other hand, there are also discourses that endorse the rural life and its qualities. Even though it seems to be contrary to the “urban norm”. The decline of the infrastructures means even longer distances, lack and absence of the services, even more dependence on own resources and increasing mobility. (Hämeenaho 2014; Wollin Elhouar 2014.)

Previously in research on rural youth in Finland, it emphasized leaving and learning to leave. Staying was sort of failure, it was passive: those stayed who were not able to leave. The possibilities and success in life happened somewhere else. (See for example Tuhkunen 2007; Ollila 2008.) Young people leave rural, unless like in this “transition phase” when they still live at their home places, they still think they can see their futures nearby and in rural areas. Eetu and Vertti’s stories demonstrates a viewpoint to this phase, when they still have dreams of staying. Alongside, Eetu and Vertti have

also active plans and they are actively making staying as an option. (See also Lanas et al. 2013; Haartsen & Stockdale 2017.)

Anne Ollila (2008, 204) has studied young people living in remote places in Northern Finland and according to her the questions of staying and leaving are questions of good life and success. Northern Finland could offer good life and qualities, but the success happens elsewhere: if you wanted to have success in life, then you should leave. The good, qualitative life in rural areas shaped mundane doings in familiar settings, and there were no “discursive space” for success (Ollila 2008, 198.) In reflection to this interpretation, “the discursive space” seems to be somewhat wider to Eetu, who thinks he could have “successful game design business” while living at remote area. For Eetu the idea of remoteness seems to be wider, and he does not think that the success should necessarily be outside the home region.

The interviewed rural young people also presented counter-discourse to urban norm: they were defaulting the presuppositions and the mobility imperative. They wanted to represent different kind of view; they wanted to speak “for the rural”. The rural lifestyle that they represented was in vulnerable position and they wanted to preserve and justify their life. (See also Pikka 2004.) The marginal position that was created in the interviews and the research setting produced justifying descriptions. In addition, the discursive setting in Finland is at the moment marginalizing and othering the rural (Nyseth & Viken 2009; Stenbacka 2011; Armila et al. 2016.) The divide is often over-emphasized and dichotomized. The othering represents the rural against prevailing urban norm. These discussions constitutes the rural as burden and problematic. The dystopic narratives of emptying rural areas are stigmatizing and resisting these imperatives requires awareness and agency. Staying against these mobility imperatives can then be opposing the urban norm and choosing freedom and own choices.

References

- Abrahams, Ray (1991) *A place of their own. Family farming in Eastern Finland*. Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press.
- Alasuutari, Pertti (2011) *Laadullinen tutkimus 2.0*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Armila, Päivi (2016) *Hylkysyrjäläisnuorten arjen rytmit ja piirit*. Teoksessa Päivi Armila & Terhi Halonen & Mari Käyhkö (ed.) *Reunamerkit ja Hylkysyrjästä. Nuorten elämänraameja ja tulevaisuudenkuvia harvaanasutulla maaseudulla*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 178, 60–73.
- Armila, Päivi & Halonen, Terhi & Käyhkö, Mari (2016) *Reunamerkit ja Hylkysyrjästä. Nuorten elämänraameja ja tulevaisuudenkuvia harvaanasutulla maaseudulla*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 178.
- Armila, Päivi & Käyhkö, Mari & Pöytä, Ville (forthcoming) *Syrjäkyläpojat: Kaveruutta ja kilometrejä*. Teoksessa Huuki, Tuija & Lunabba, Harry & Kivijärvi, Antti (toim.) *Paljon puhetta pojista*.
- Aro, Timo (2017) *Alue- ja väestörakenteen muutos kaupungistumisen näkökulmasta 28.9.2017*. Esitelmä. <https://www.slideshare.net/TimoAro/alue-ja-vestrakenteen-muutos-kaupungistumisen-nakkulmasta-2892017/1> [viitattu 7.12.2017.]

- Aure, Marit & Munkejord, Mai Camilla (2016) Creating a man for the future: A narrative analysis of male in-migrants and their constructions of masculinities in a rural context. *Sociologia Ruralis* 56(4) 531–551.
- Bjarnason Thoroddur & Thorlindsson, Thorolfur (2006) Should I stay or should I go? Migration expectations among youth in Icelandic fishing and farming communities. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 22 (3), 290–300.
- Campbell, Hugh & Bell, Michael Mayerfeld & Finney, Margaret (2006) *Country boys. Masculinity and rural life*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University.
- Farrugia, David (2015) The mobility imperative for rural youth: the structural, symbolic and non-representational dimensions of rural youth mobilities. *Journal of youth studies* 19 (6), 1–16.
- Farrugia, David & Smyth, John & Harrison, Tim (2016) Affective topologies of rural youth embodiment. *Sociologia ruralis*, 56 (1), 116–132.
- Farrugia, David & Wood, Bronwyn E. (2017) Youth and spatiality: Towards interdisciplinarity in youth studies. *Young* 25 (3), 209–218.
- Grunfelder, Julien & Rispling, Linus and Norlén, Gustaf (ed.) (2018) *State of the Nordic Region. Nordregio*.
- Haartsen, Tialda & Stockdale, Aileen (2017) *S/elective belonging: how rural newcomer families with children become stayers*. *Population, Space and Place* 2017. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/psp.2137/epdf> [viitattu 31.1.2018.]
- Hannerz, Ulf (1996) *Transnational connections. Culture, people, places*. London: Routledge.
- Helminen, Ville & Nurmio, Kimmo & Rehunen, Antti & Ristimäki & Oinonen, Mika & Tiitu, Kari & Kotavaara, Maija & Antikainen, Harri & Rusanen, Jarmo (2014) *Kaupunki-maaseutu-alueuokitus. Paikkatietoihin perustuvan alueuokituksen muodostamisperiaatteet*. Helsinki: Suomen ympäristökeskuksen raportteja 25.
- Houni, Pia & Leena Suurpää (1998) *Johdanto: Kamppailua nuoruudesta*. Pia Houni & Leena Suurpää (ed.) *Kuvassa nuoret*. Tampere: Tampere University Press. 9–24.
- Hämeenaho, Pilvi (2014) *Hyvinvoinnin verkostot maaseudulla asuvien äitien arjessa*. Etnologinen tutkimus palvelujen käytöstä ja hyvän arjen rakentumisesta. Jyväskylä: Terveystieteiden tutkimuslaitos, tutkimus 129.
- Jensen, Mette (2006) Mobility among young urban dwellers. *Young* 2006 (14), 343–361.
- Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani (1995) *Maailman paikoista paikan maailmoin – kokemuksen geografiaa*. *Tiedepolitiikka* 4/1997, 41–46.
- Kiilakoski, Tomi (2016) *I am fire but my environment is the lighter. Study on localities, mobilities and youth engagements in the Barents Region*. Helsinki: The Finnish Youth Research Society Publications 179.
- Käyhkö, Mari (2017) “Vähän niinku metän keskellä ja silleen.” *Syrjäseutu, yläkouluikäiset tytöt ja tutuksi eletty paikka*. *Sukupuolentutkimus-Genusforskning* 30 (3), 7–23.
- Lehtola, Ilkka & Tedre, Silva (2014) *Kulkeminen maaseutututkimuksessa*. *Janus* 22 (3), 279–287.

Lanas, Maija & Rautio, Pauliina & Syrjälä, Leena (2013) Beyond Educating the Marginals: Recognizing Life in Northern Rural Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 57 (4), 385–399.

Little, Jo & Panelli, Ruth (2007) 'Outback' romance? A Reading of Nature and heterosexuality in rural Australia. *Sociologia Ruralis* 47 (3), 173–188.

Lähteenmäki, Maria & Ruotsala, Helena (2007) Matkalla Pohjoiseen: lappilaisuuden ja karjalaisuuden konstruktioita. Outi Fingerroos & Jaana Loipponen (ed.) *Nykytulkintojen Karjala*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto. *Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja*. 229–250.

Löfgren, Orvar & Ehn, Billy (2010) *The secret world of doing nothing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nieminen-Sundell, Riitta (2011) *Maisema on, työ puuttuu*. Helsinki: Sitra.

Ollila, Anne (2008) *Kerrottu tulevaisuus. Alueet ja nuoret, menestys ja marginaalit*. Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopistokustannus. *Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis* 141.

Pikka, Jouni (2004) Maausko ja markkinavoimat. Pohjoiskarjalainen aines Maan sydämeltä – kilpakirjoituksessa. Juha Nirkko & Kari Mikko Vesala (ed.) *Kirjoituksia maan sydämeltä*. Tutkimusnäkökulmia maanviljelijöiden kilpakeruuaineistoon. Helsinki: SKS, 221–245.

Penttinen, Pekka & Ronkainen, Jussi (2013) *Itä-Suomen nuorisopuntari. Katsaus nuorten hyvinvointiin Itä-Suomen maakunnissa 2010–2012*. Mikkeli: Mikkelin ammattikorkeakoulu. *A Tutkimuksia ja raportteja* 81.

Penttinen, Pekka (2016) Viettäisinkö elämäni periferiassa? Nuorten muuttoalttius Itä-Suomessa. Antti Kivijärvi & Marja Peltola (ed.) *Lapset ja nuoret muuttoliikkeessä. Nuorten elinolot vuosikirja 2016*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, Terveiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, Valtion nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta, 149–165.

Peruspalvelujen tila (2013) *Itä-Suomen aluehallintoviraston toimialueen peruspalvelujen arviointi*. Joensuu: Itä-Suomen aluehallintoviraston julkaisuja 20/2014.
<https://www.avi.fi/documents/10191/1588283/Peruspalvelujen+tila+2013+ItaSuomi.pdf/cd41d37e-b53e-4a55-9cae-5803b2f4b8aa> [viitattu 24.1.2018]

Peruspalvelujen tila (2016) osa I. Kuntatalouden ja –hallinnon neuvottelukunta. Valtiovarainministeriön julkaisu 9/2016.

Ponnikas, Jouni & Vuotilainen Olli & Korhonen, Sirpa & Kuhmonen Hanna-Mari (2014) *Maaseutukatsaus 2014*. Helsinki: Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja. Alueiden kehittäminen. Maaseutupolitiikan yhteistyöryhmä 2/2014.

Pöysä, Ville & Tuuva-Hongisto, Sari (2017) 'Onks käyntii ja onks kyytii?' Nuorille merkitykselliset palvelut syrjäseudulla. Sanna Aaltonen & Antti Kivijärvi (ed.) *Nuoret aikuiset hyvinvointipalvelujen käyttäjinä ja kohteina*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura. s. 221–236.

Relph, Edward (1976) *Place and placelessness*. London: Pion Limited.

Ristikari, Tiina & Törmäkangas, Liisa & Lappi, Aino & Haapakorva, Pasi & Kiilakoski, Tomi & Merikukka, Marko & Hautakoski, Ari & Pekkarinen, Elina & Gissler, Mika (2016) *Suomi nuorten kasvuympäristönä 25 vuoden seuranta vuonna 1987 Suomessa syntyneistä nuorista aikuisista*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura & Terveiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos.

Sassen, Saskia (2018) Karkottamisen logiikka. Brutaali ja monimutkainen maailmantalous. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Saukkonen, Pasi & Ryhänen, Hannu (2017) Pohjois-Karjalan maaseudun kehityksen ja tulevaisuuden luotain. Joensuu: Itä-Suomen yliopisto. Spatia. Raportteja 4/2017.

Silvasti, Tiina (2004) Sukutila – kahle vai paluujuuri? Juha Nirkko & Kari Mikko Vesala (ed.) Kirjoituksia maan sydämeltä. Tutkimusnäkökulmia maanviljelijöiden kilpakeruuaineistoon. Helsinki: SKS, 79–107.

Stenbacka, Susanne (2011) Othering the rural: about the construction of rural masculinities and the unspoken urban hegemonic ideal in swedish media. *Journal of Rural Studies* 27 (3) 235–244.

Stockdale, Aileen & Haartsen, Tialda (2017) Editorial introduction: Putting rural stayers in the spotlight. *Population, Space & Place*. 2018, 24:e2124. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2124>. [viitattu 28.5.2018.]

Suopajärvi, Leena & Valkonen, Jarno (2003) Pohjoinen luontosuhde. Elämäntapa ja luonnon politisoituminen. Lapin yliopiston yhteiskuntatieteellisiä julkaisuja. B. Tutkimusraportteja ja selvityksiä 43. Rovaniemi.

Tervo, Katja (2008) Metsän hiljaiset. Metsätyön rakennemurrosten kolme sukupolvea. Helsinki: SKS.

Thrift, Nigel (2008) *Non-Representational Theory. Space, politics, affect*. London & New York: Routledge.

Thrift, Nigel & Dewsbury, John-David (2000) Dead geographies – and how to make them live. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, 411–432.

Tuhkunen, Anne (2007) *Between Location and a Sense of Place - Observations Regarding Young People's Migration Alacrity in Northern Europe*. Tampere: Acta Universitatis Tamperensis; 1207, Tampereen yliopisto.

Tuuva-Hongisto, Sari & Pöysä, Ville & Armila, Päivi (2016) *Syrjäkylien nuoret - unohdetut kuntalaiset?* Helsinki: KAKS - Kunnallisalan kehittämissäätiö.

Tuuva-Hongisto, Sari (2018) *Luontoa lähellä –syrjäkylien nuoret ja metsäsuhde. Vuosilusto 2018 (tulossa)*

Uusitalo, Eeva (2012) *Beyond the village and across borders. Experiences of mobility in rural northern Finland*. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, 42, 101-120.

Viken, Arvid & Nyseth, Torill (2009) *The narrative constitution of materiality*. Nyseth, Torill & Viken, Arvid (ed.) *Place reinvention*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate publishing group, 221–236.

Vallström, Mikael (2014) *När verkligheten inte stämmer med kartan. Lokala förutsättningar för hållbar utveckling*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press.

Wollin Elhouar, Elisabeth (2014) *Tillhör vi Sveriges framtid? En etnologisk studie av vardag och hållbarhet i norrländsk glesbygd*. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet.

Internet

Akkanen, Juha (2017) Merkintöjä: Suomen jako kahtia syvenee. HS 30.8.2017.
<https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000005345085.html> [Viitattu 30.11.2017]

Peiponen, Pasi (2015) Näkökulma: Syrjässä sinä purskahtaisit itkuun. <http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8437895>.
[Viitattu 30.11.2017.]

