

Pedagogy in Times of Uncertainty: Refugees in the Nordic Regions, Navigating New Landscapes

**New Frontiers: Inter-disciplinary
Research on Refugee Children and
Youth. An International Conference**

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1939
It is a difficult time, everything is turned upside down

after the war in Finland.

We are also a little afraid, wondering if we will get to live in peace.

So many soldiers have been sent to the border, and every day we hear that soldiers are being sent eastward and refugees westward.

Kari is nervous about the war; I can't listen to the news when she's around, she gets so scared that it might come here.

Sometimes plains pass over us,

and immediately she asks if they are bombers.

It is terrible for the people who have to flee to foreign places and countries to save their lives.

- Malene Pedersen, December 1939

noske fly grasserer her over oss,
og straks spør him om det er
bombefly. Det er grusomt for
de mennesker som må flykte
og berge
live.

et godt nyår.

En kjærlig hilsen fra alle

din mor

Three main topics

Why might the concept of pedagogy be important?

Why might the notion of place hold importance?

Why are experiences, knowledge, and memories of today's border crossers important?

The Arctic Migration Route



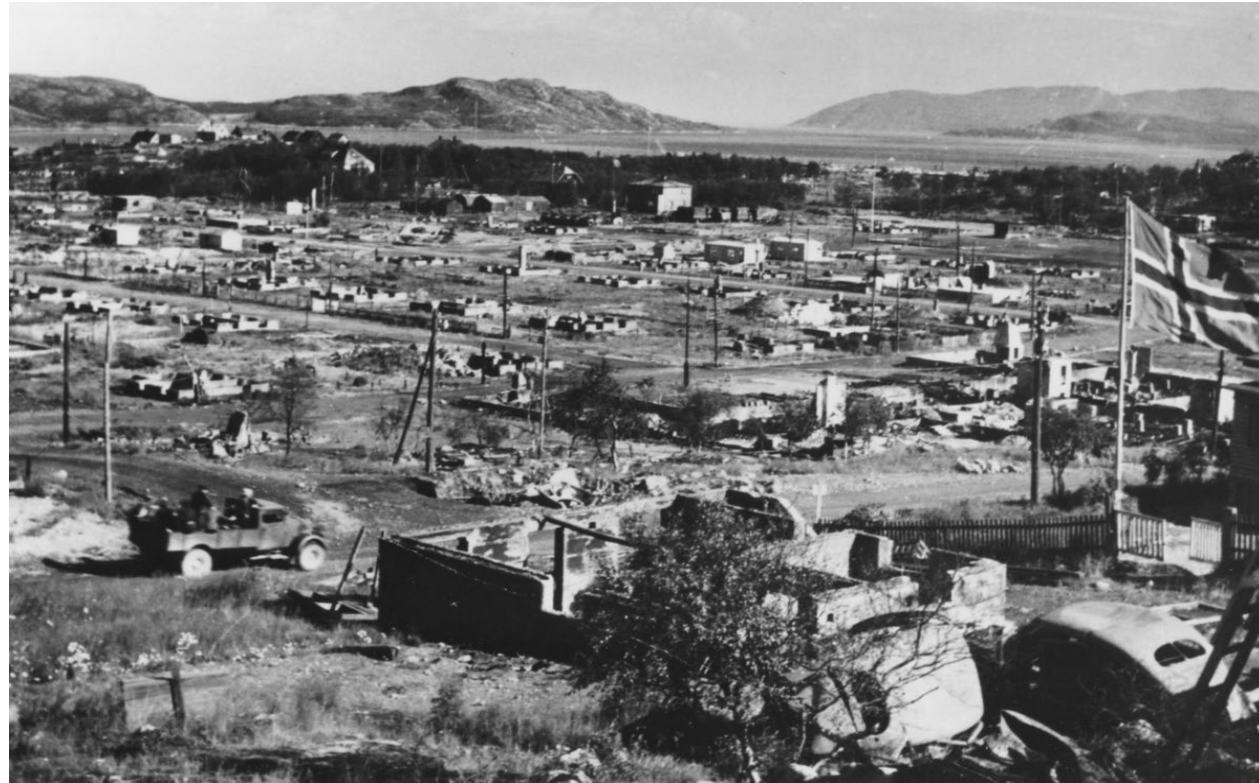
«People up here know what it is like to be displaced from their homes because of war» Sør Varanger 2016



Kirkenes on fire during World War II, October 1944.
Photo: Fort Leavenworth Media Support Center

Collective Memories
Memories that are 'inherited' –
learning across generations ...

Kirkenes (the nearest town to the Russian border in the North of Europe), is reportedly second only to Malta on a list of European cities that experienced the most air raid alarms (more than 1,000) and bomb attacks (328) during World War II.



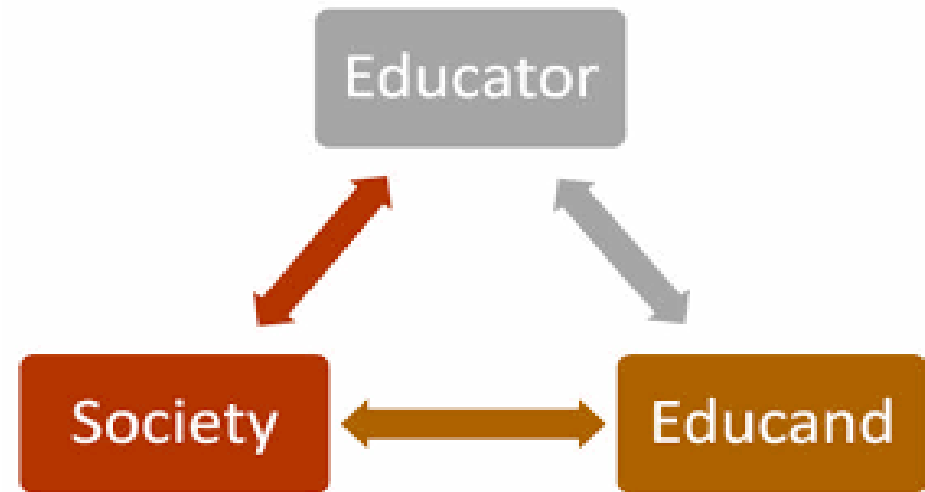
Kirkenes 1944, Digital Museum, Finnmark County

Fossheim school in Neiden – 5 pupils
in August 2015,
almost 40 pupils in January 2016.

In October 2015, Norway's
largest newspaper wrote:
'Inhabitants in the small east
Sami village, Neiden, opened
their doors and their hearts,
when the stream of refugees at
Storskog exploded' (VG
19.10.15).



Pedagogical relationships not merely a means for learning, but a goal in itself!



Security, reliability and continuity are fundamental values

(Langeveld, M.J. 1973)

Educator influences the relation between the educand & world



The school and education system represents a primary place of developing social relations, experiencing social inclusion and exclusion, and identification; both due to the time spent there, important relationships and activities.

Investigating children and youth, as actors in their own right, capable of developing different ties and places of belonging, that reflect their understanding and interpretation of everyday lives, where they live- This is crucial for the development of inclusive, culturally responsive frameworks that addresses the needs of children and youth with refugee background.

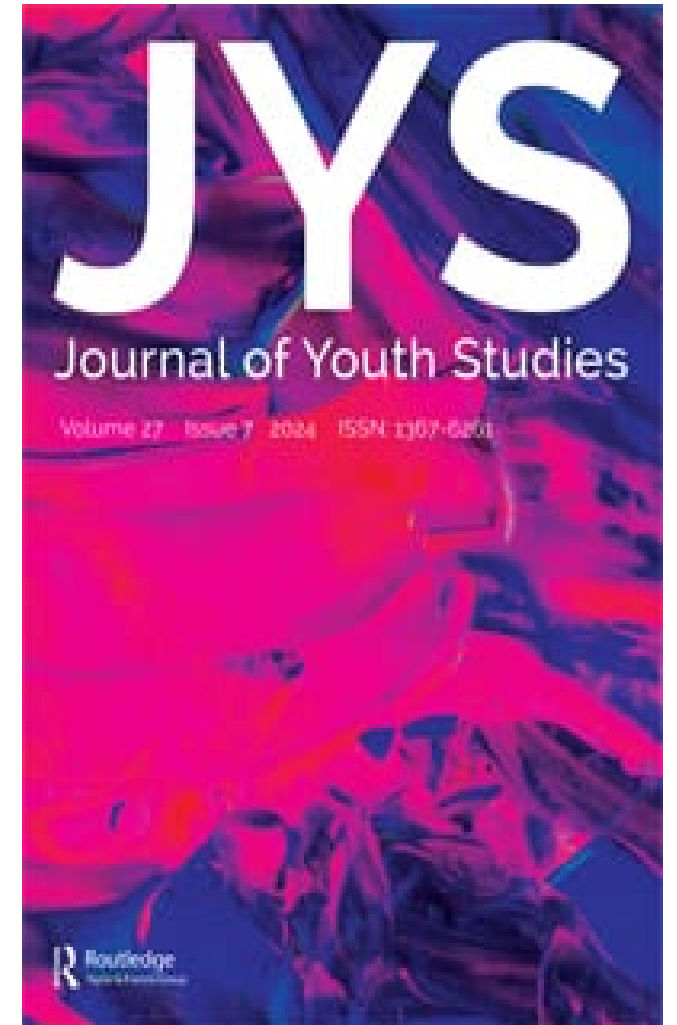
Two independent studies in Denmark and Norway motivated by the large number of refugees arriving in Europe in 2015.

Lise Herlund at the University of Copenhagen have led and done the Danish study.

Both studies are longitudinal, focusing on the experiences of refugees settled in rural areas in the south of Denmark and the north of Norway.

After listening to each other's presentations at a conference, Lise and I were struck by some significant similarities, despite notable differences according to our own understandings...

This inspired us to join forces to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of young refugees settled in rural areas of the Nordic region.



Lise Herlund & Gry Paulgaard (07 May 2024): Young refugees' feelings of belonging? Encounters with rural Denmark and northern Norway, Journal of Youth Studies. DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2024.2347980

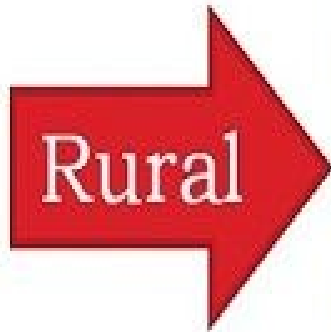
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Metrocentricity



Urban settings are seen as ubiquitous, globalised and undifferentiated, and so place often disappears from the analysis of young people's lives in general

(Cuervo & Wyn 2012, p. 1).



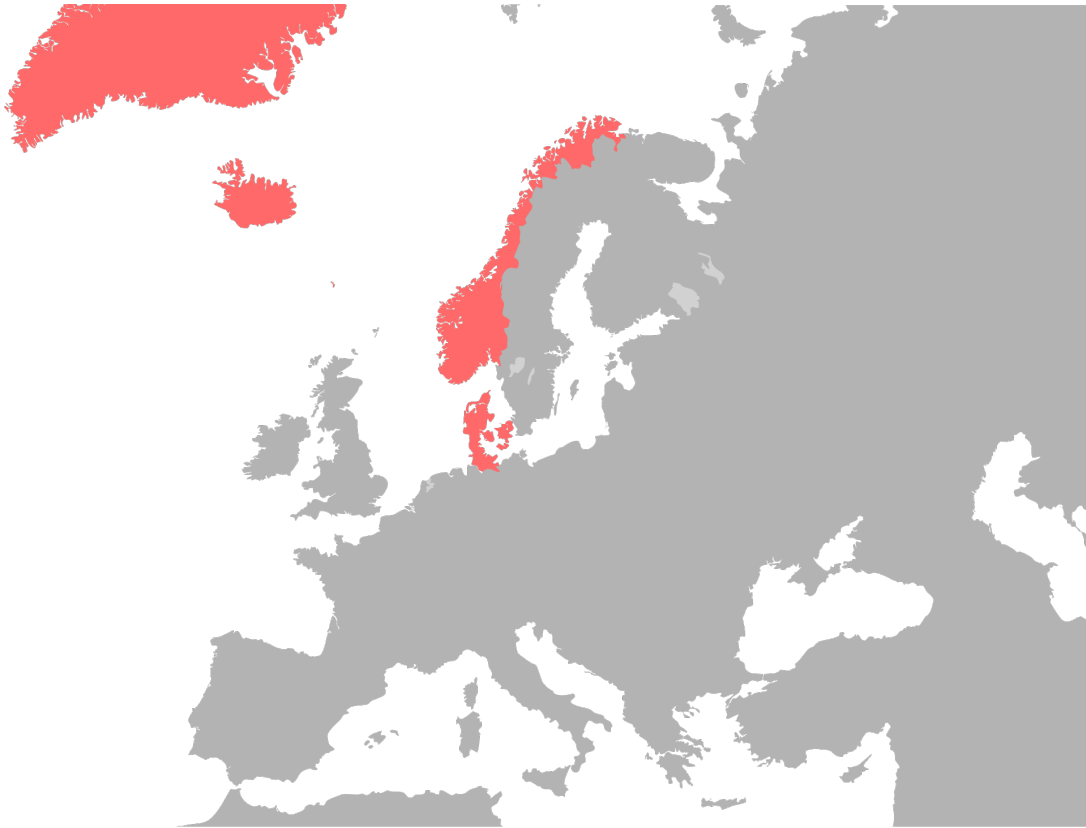
This originates from the metrocentric nature of both classic and contemporary theories of social change (Farrugia, 2014)



Forced migrants settled in particular rural places

- Both Denmark and Norway, have dispersal strategies to settle refugees across the country and in rural areas.
- The number of international newcomers has increased in rural areas. In the Nordic countries, the rural populations are even more diverse than the EU average (Nørregaard, 2018).
- However, many refugees who first settled in rural areas have moved to city areas after the first years of settlement to a larger degree than other migrant groups (Andersen, 2015; Ordemann, 2017).
- There is a debate both in literature and also among politicians in European countries on whether refugees should be settled in rural areas at all.
- Arguments for settling refugees are that they can increase sustainability of population in dwindling communities.
- Others disagree with refugees being used to promote rural development, when peripheral areas are scarce in jobs as well as in services which can provide for refugees' needs (McAreavey and Argent, 2018; Aure et al, 2018; Woods, 2018).

Geography, demography & diversity



- **Denmark** (56,26392 N)
- **North of Norway**
(from 68 N to 71,6 degrees N)
- **Denmark areal 42 952 km²,**
5 965 990 inhabitants (2004,)
- **Norway areal 323 787 km²,**
5 562 363 inhabitants (2024)
- **Nord-Norge areal 112 951 km²,**
487 744 inhabitants (2024)
- **Finnmark municipality**
46 618 km² ,
73 000 inhabitants (2024)

Phenomenology of practice

Simonsen (2005; 2013)

We analysed young persons' experiences and encounters in new and often **unfamiliar contexts**, aiming to explore how encounters in the young persons surroundings and their **relations to human and non-human factors** in these surroundings constitute experiences, including **sensuous experiences**.

We investigated how our young informants **navigated in and experienced rural life**; from housing, education, work, social life to the more 'physical' aspects of rural life and the material surroundings, including the natural environment, - to answer the research question:

What role do the new rural place of residence play in the young refugees' life and feeling of community and belonging, and what are the driving forces for them staying or leaving the rural areas?



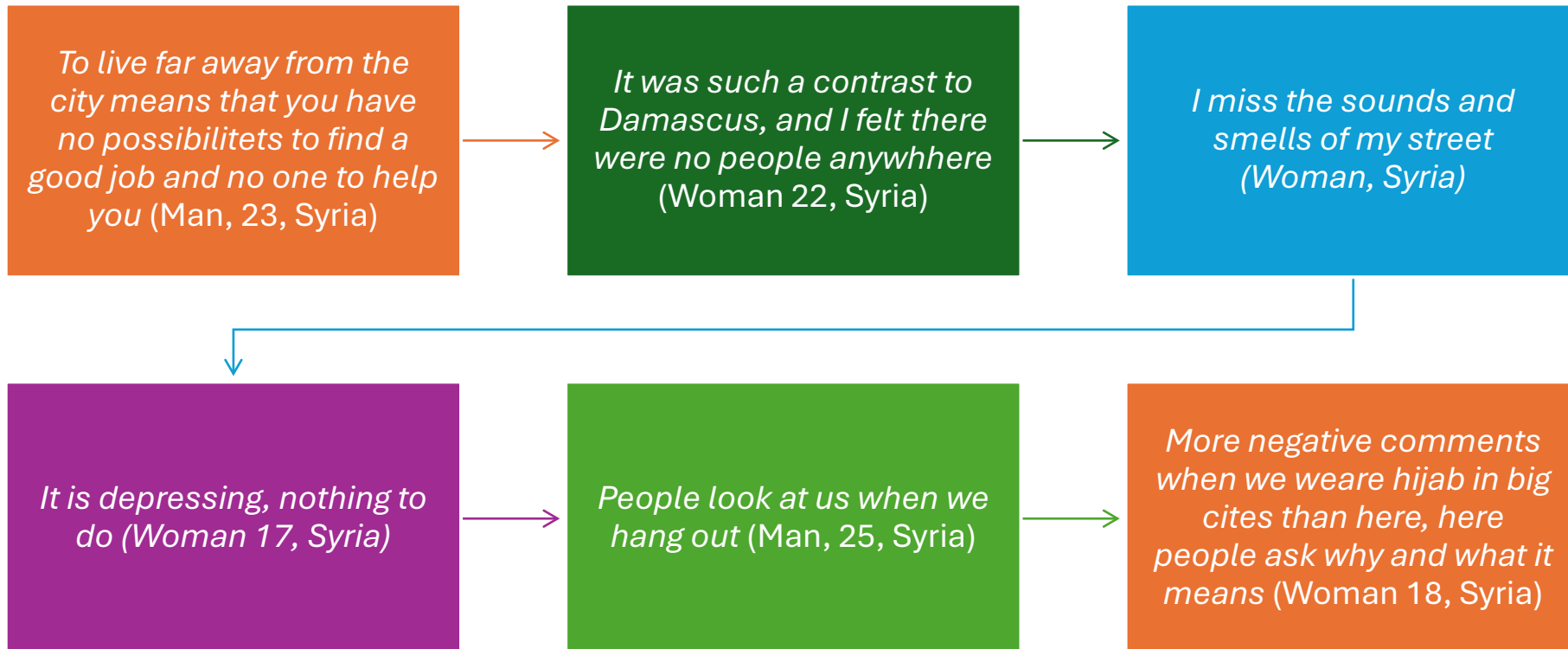
Contradictions of space



In our quest to understand the role rural places of residence play for young refugees' we find inspiration in Kinkaid's term 'contradictions of space', referring to moments occurring within the experience of a subject, when the person struggles to practice space and feel disorientation.

Kinkaid, E. (2020). Re-encountering Lefebvre: Toward a critical phenomenology of social space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38(1), 167-186.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775819854765>

How to practice local space?



Climate and weather

- The young refugees, both the older and younger groups, described the weather quite vividly:
- The young adults in Denmark described the weather in their home country as bright and soft and their streets as welcoming and lively, whereas here there was *'a grey coat of clouds hanging over you'* and the wind could *'cut your skin'* (DFG1/2).
- The younger informants in Norway also talked about the cold, windy and unfamiliar weather.
- Parents told us that, when children had to walk from home to school, in the early mornings in wind and darkness, it was very frightening for both the children and the parents.
- A mother said that she doubted whether they had done the right thing in going to Norway. She often thought that maybe they should have stayed despite the war and troubles because the weather could frighten her (NI3+).



Experience of difference

- formed through **lived practice and everyday encounters**, can result in both **spatial and social disorientation**, as well as familiarity and safety in rural Norway and Denmark.

The new countries and places of residence offer **safety** but also **challenges of how to practice local spaces**.

Despite great differences in geography and climate across the Danish and the Norwegian case, the informants in our studies encounter many of the same challenges to do with the rural environment. They describe long distances, limited public transport, few meeting places, unfamiliar cultural norms and harsh weather.

This shows that **'difference is not located to space itself, but experienced and formed through lived practice; sedimentation of experience'** (Kinkaid, 2020).



Contradictions of space II

- Longitudinal studies can provide new insight.
- Experience of difference between towns in the south and small rural places in the north
- The education obtained by the parents in their home country is not transferable or approved by NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education).
- The necessity of relocating when one or both parents must pursue higher education
- Some of the children and young people experience multiple disruptions and relocations,
- and also how it is to live and be met in different places in Norway.



Migration, integration and belonging

Learning relates to the various contexts that children & youth encounter in their everyday lives.

Families and young people in the north of Norway:

- I feel at home here!
- More racism in bigger cities in the south, there they call us foreigners ...
- People like me should be settled in the north when coming to Norway
- A challenge to learn how to handle uncertainty

Why might the notion of place hold importance?

- *Inhabiting space is both about ‘finding our way’ and how we come to ‘feel at home’. It therefore involves continuous negotiation between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar, making space habitable but also receiving new impressions depending on which way we turn and what is in reach. (Simonsen, 2012:16)*
- Simonsen stresses that “bodies” are different and describes how immigrants can be blocked and stopped in their everyday life because of how they look: their “visibility”.
- It seems that the experience of visibility and experience of being stopped varies between different places and influences strongly on the way young people come to feel at home.

Why might experiences, knowledge, and memories of today's border crossers be important?

Rethinking who learns from whom in navigating uncertainty and unrest: In times when living with uncertainty is essential, today's border crossers offer valuable insights from their experiences with the unexpected and unfamiliar. They are vital resources for today's world.



**Thank you
for listening!**

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