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The urban ethos

Locality and youth in north Norway

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to study adolescents' attitudes to rural living in relation to a dominant urban ethos. The question is raised whether processes of urbanization and individualization have left 'place' with a less important frame of reference than before. Are young people from the provinces now drawn towards the same values as city youth? If this is true, it is consistent with sociological theories about central developmental traits of our time, but in opposition to common assumptions among Norwegian researchers concerning special characteristics of growing up in local communities, especially in north Norway. The empirical analyses demonstrate that groups of pupils relate to these questions along different dimensions. District pupils have a more negative outlook on where they live and on settling there than do city pupils. Irrespective of geographical background, youth express similar preferences in relation to their home place. This leads to a discussion about the diminishing significance of place for the orientations of the modern individual. Even though local attachment and local identity may still be valid concepts, many young people today express values and preferences that are attached to urban settings, which indicates the existence of what I call an *urban ethos*.

Keywords

identity, individualization, locality, relocation, rural, urban, urbanization, youth

INTRODUCTION

In an article in one of Norway's biggest newspapers some time ago, Swedish researcher Hans Westlund claimed that rural youth choose to move to urban areas because they wish to live like the characters in the television shows 'Seinfeld' and 'Friends'.¹ The hinterlands, through movies such as Lukas Moodysson's 'Fucking Åmål' are portrayed as correspondingly less attractive. Westlund is neither the first nor the only one to claim that big cities represent the ultimate arenas for the realization of the good life for many individuals. Norwegian writer and self-acclaimed urbanist Erling Fossen praises the pluralism and diversity of the modern metropolis in his book *EcstaCity*, and portrays the metropolis as a place where multi-ethnic communities and heterophilia – the love of differences – flourish (Fossen, 1997). Although classic sociology has promulgated the excellence of the *Gemeinschaft*, some attempts at the defence of urban excellence can be found, with the works of Simmel exceptionally noteworthy in that respect. He claimed that modern individuals experienced respiratory problems when they were confronted with the constraints and narrowness of rural life (Simmel, 1971).

The topic for this article is adolescents' attitudes towards living in rural areas. This is discussed in relation to images of 'youth' and 'youthfulness' that are related to a profoundly urban view of life. In the first part of the article theories about place and locally based identity formation are presented. In the second part, adolescents' attitudes towards living in rural areas are investigated empirically through use of data from a survey conducted among upper secondary school pupils in north Norway. The pupils were asked to rank the importance of different issues relating to their choice of future place of residence. They were also asked to evaluate their own home places along several evaluation scales. The theoretical outlines and the empirical analyses are discussed further in the final section of the article.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

Local belonging

In analyses of north Norway, place has been an especially important concept that has constituted a central frame of reference for the formation of identity. Based on geographical characteristics, the industrial structure and the dependence on fisheries, it has been assumed that children in rural north Norway have orientations and attitudes – culture – that distinguish them from children in more urban areas. Consequently, it has been assumed that geographical belonging is significant for the formation of identity, for norms and values. Hoem (1976) and Edvardsen (1990, 1992) claim, for example, that socialization into the institutions of the childhood environment and participation in local communities contribute to a sense of local belonging. This local belonging shapes value schemes and orientations towards the future.

Locality is regarded as a constituting element in Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*, which is defined as a system of dispositions or evaluation schemes that monitor the actions of the actor (Bourdieu, 1977). The evaluation schemes are the products of the social environments under which individuals grow up, and are as such established through the individual's positions in a society, specific historical conditions and

locality. Individuals' evaluations and categorizations are therefore characterized by their place of residence (Bourdieu, 1993).

Therefore one could expect differences in attitudes concerning 'the good life' between urban and rural youth because they have different evaluation schemes for what is worth aiming for and what is not. Attitude differences between urban and rural youth indicate the existence of a sense of local belonging, i.e. that the home place has some form of foothold in the consciousness of the young (Heggen, 1994). According to Heggen (1994), the existence of a sense of local belonging presupposes the fulfilment of a number of conditions. Firstly, local belonging requires social integration through social participation. There have to be arenas with places and spaces for the young, and social integration presupposes an active presence. Secondly, these arenas must provide accessibility to 'local' perspectives, i.e. perspectives that differ from those prevailing in society and that promote action, values and knowledge specific for a local culture. This access is dependent on the presence and accessibility of representatives of local perspectives, and arenas where the participants consist solely of peers will probably lack this representation. Thirdly, young people will not simply adjust to available local perspectives and modes of action. Each individual will independently make up his or her mind about established modes of conduct and sometimes choose alternative perspectives. This requires access to alternative perspectives, and several theorists have pointed out that such access has increased in late modernity (Beck, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Ziehe, 1989). Media and the educational system are often seen as important elements in this regard (Baethge et al., 1988; Ziehe, 1989). Because of these systems young people to a greater extent than before both relate to and are actors in arenas that offer supra-local perspectives.

THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN CITY AND PROVINCE VANISH

Within sociology one has always been conscious of the differences between city and province – between the urban and the rural (Bell, 1992). Even though it is not self-evident, the urban and the rural are often tied to ideas about the modern and the traditional, respectively. The most well known sociological conceptualization of the difference between city and province is probably Tönnies' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1963). While along the positive scale the province represents safety and closeness, openness and neighbourliness, the city offers speed and excitement, challenges and individuality. On the negative scale the province is characterized as stationary, transparent and limiting, while city life is lonely, impersonal and unsafe. However, several researchers claim that the divisions between city and province are vanishing (Coleman, 1990; Friedland, 1989; Hompland, 1984). The diffusion of means of communication and the role of the media are elements that lead to spreading life styles and modes of living across geographical boundaries. Characteristics connected to modern society therefore challenge the sociological truth that city and province are two substantially different entities. Hompland claims that modes of living and consumer patterns in the province are urbanized; he calls it 'rurbanization'. The differences between city and province are becoming less significant – province is more and more similar to city. Fossåskaret (1992) alleges that the regional component is rather marginal in a person's identity. Regional variations regarding traditions manifest themselves less and less, and choice of music,

conversational topics, reading material and house decorating therefore give little information about an individual's regional background. The way Fossåskaret sees it, the normative centres exist in other places than in local communities, and geographic belonging therefore does not determine one's cultural expressions. People who come from the same geographic area can establish connections to very different cultural segments, he says. According to Fauske (2001), the social environments that have sustained the connections between place and identity and between place and culture have disintegrated. Instead, local identity and local culture become something that individuals must promote and cultivate themselves.

The concept of 'disembedding' points to such processes (Giddens, 1990). Disembedding is a central characteristic of the late modern world, and refers to the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time/space (Giddens, 1990: 21). This process undermines the significance of place as a social entity. Giddens even claims that place becomes increasingly phantasmagorical and merely an illusion (1990, 1991), because the structures that constitute 'place' are no longer locally anchored. Even though all individuals are contextually situated in time and space because of our bodily limitations, and in this sense live local lives, the meaning of local life has nevertheless changed radically in late modernity, and the individual's understanding of what 'the world' is has changed.

Several processes are central to this transformation. Firstly, the late modern world has challenged the position of place as an arena for experience. The activities we take part in are not local other than in the sense that they are performed locally. The same activities are performed in many different places and are in that sense connected to some form of universalism. Giddens (1991) therefore claims that place no longer forms the experiential parameters of individuals. Our knowledge of social events, other people or other places does not primarily depend on local milieus. Mediated experience is every bit as central as direct experience, and even though all of us in a sense live local lives our phenomenal world is by and large global.

One thing we can say with some certainty is that in very few instances does the phenomenal world any longer correspond with the habitual settings through which an individual physically moves. Localities are thoroughly penetrated by distanced influences, whether this be regarded as a cause for concern or simply accepted as a routine part of social life. All individuals actively, although by no means always in a conscious way, selectively incorporate many elements of mediated experience into their day-to-day conduct. (Giddens, 1991: 187-8)

According to Giddens, the local community is no longer characterized by a milieu saturated by familiar and self-evident meanings, but is thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them (1990: 19). The sense of security that individuals experience because they are familiar with a place comes as much from stable forms of disembedded relations as it does from specific local characteristics.

THE URBAN ETHOS

Young people are to an increasing degree part of supranational youth cultures that generally originate in urban, western youth communities (Fossåskaret, 1992; Heggen

et al., 2001). According to Bourdieu (1993), the formation of identity (*habitus*) takes place in a power struggle on a social field where there are standards for what is worth striving for and what is not. The prize at stake is the power to define valid values and classifications. To Bourdieu this is especially relevant to the extent that one's home place is in a superior or inferior position in relation to other places, for example in a centre-periphery situation. The struggle takes place between the city on the one side and the province on the other, and 'place' is therefore something more than simply a physical entity, but has to be understood as a dimension of cultural and social processes (Heggen et al., 2001). If we regard 'the good home place' as a social field, city life constitutes the prevailing standard. Heggen et al. (2001) note that the city's advantage compared to small places is a diversity of milieus and great plurality, and this coincides with the idea of the free, modern life. Larger cities therefore have an enormous cultural hegemony. I call this *the urban ethos*. Youth as a social group is particularly associated with the urban ethos. The urban and the modern are often understood as two pieces of the same pie, and those who seek the modern consequently seek the urban. The way Ziehe (1993) sees it, young people carry modernity on their shoulders and in their bodies; they represent the spirit of the times. They have a propensity towards modernity, they seek it, and their existence is a hunt for modernity because the modern is the only thing that can ensure them the good life. Consequently, the mode of living offered by rural communities is not suitable for modern individuals. Simmel (1971) expresses it in these terms:

Small town life in antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages imposed such limits upon the movements of the individual in his relationships with the outside world and on his inner independence and differentiation that the modern person would not even breathe under such conditions. Even today the city dweller who is placed in a small town feels a type of narrowness which is very similar. (Simmel, 1971: 333)

In contemporary Norway the city seems to have the most powerful advocates for defining 'the good life', and a number of powerful premise providers take part in the propagation of the urban ethos. The media are probably the most important of these. Fornäs' (1995) term 'mediatization' expresses the media's increasing presence in identity constructions:

Both reflexivity and aestheticization are further related to the growing media presence in identity constructions which has been termed *mediatization*. Not only are the media becoming increasingly culturalized: culture is also more and more dependent on communication media. One can mirror or relate to one's identity through other means than the media as well, for instance by talking, dancing or dressing, but the expanding media system is a crucial tool and factor in the growth of reflexivity. (Fornäs, 1995: 210)

According to Fornäs, the media not only refer to and relate to young people's experiences, needs and wishes, but they also form them, by formulating and disseminating certain styles and genres across geographical and social borders (Fornäs, 1995: 216). Mediatization implies that the forming of individuals' identities, norms and evaluations do not solely depend upon the activities that take place within a certain locality. Place of residence is only one of several social contexts for the formation of identity, and perhaps not even the most important one (Fossåskaret, 1992; Marcus, 1992). Independent of social and geographic background young people have a more unified orientation towards the future and they belong to more uniform youth cultures, Heggen (1994) claims. Orientations towards the local, for example adjusting for a

local labour market, have been replaced by among other things a more prominent educational orientation.

I will now move on to present the results of an analysis of data from a survey of Norwegian upper secondary school pupils in which attitudes towards their future place of residence were documented. The following research questions will be pursued.

- What do young people consider important for choice of future place of residence?
- How do young people evaluate their own home places?
- Do these preferences and evaluations depend on background variables such as gender, geographical background or parental education?
- To what extent are young people oriented towards moving?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study

The study was conducted in 19 schools in 11 municipalities in the county of Troms, the second most northern county in Norway. The remaining 14 municipalities in the county do not have upper secondary schools, and there pupils usually attend one in a neighbouring county. Ninety-six percent of Norwegian adolescents continue from lower to upper secondary school (Statistics Norway, 2002). Upper secondary schools are both academically and practically oriented. They give three-year courses, and the age range of the pupils is usually 15–19 years. The survey took place among final-year pupils in 1998, and was a self-report survey administered at the schools by the teachers. The pupils completed the questionnaires anonymously. Out of a total of approximately 1245 pupils, 902 were selected through a random sampling procedure, and 746 of these actually completed the questionnaire. The sampling procedure was designed to generate a representative sample of final-year upper secondary school pupils in Troms. With a response rate of approximately 83 percent, representative results could be expected.

The measures

Table 1 provides an overview of the variables used in the subsequent analyses. The last four variables in the table are generated through factor analyses (see Tables 3 and 4), and they show underlying patterns describing different preferences connected to place of residence and evaluations of one's own home place among the pupils. The variables 'emphasis on social relations' and 'emphasis on leisure activities' express preferences for choice of future place of residence. Respondents who report that family circumstances and local belonging are very important elements score high on 'social relations'. The variable 'leisure activities' explicates to what extent leisure activities are regarded as important or less important for the choice of future place of residence. This factor includes a bundle of preferences connected to place of residence, which consists of emphasis on leisure activities, cultural facilities and climate.

Table 1 Overview of the variables used, $n = 746$

	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Gender	female = 0, male = 1	0.38	0.49	0	1
Region	urban = 0, rural = 1	0.62	0.49	0	1
Father's education	primary/lower secondary = 1, upper secondary = 2, university/college = 3	2.05	0.81	1	3
Geographical distance to relatives	in same place = 1, in same county = 2, in north Norway = 3, outside north Norway = 4	2.11	1.16	1	4
Inclination to relocate	Do you think that you will move away from your home place? no = 1, not sure = 2, yes = 3	1.94	0.82	1	3
Relocation within north Norway	If you consider moving away from your home place, will you relocate within north Norway? yes = 1, no = 0	0.27	0.45	0	1
Move to a city	If you consider moving away from your home place, will you move to a city? yes = 1, no = 0	0.48 0.64	0	1	
Emphasis on social relations	Variable generated through factor analysis (see Table 2)	0.00	1.00	-3.45	2.41
Emphasis on leisure activities	Variable generated through factor analysis (see Table 2)	0.00	1.00	-4.30	2.36
Home place considered as exciting	Variable generated through factor analysis (see Table 3)	0.00	1.00	-2.72	2.98
Home place considered secure	Variable generated through factor analysis (see Table 3)	0.00	1.00	-3.36	2.32

These elements all have in common that they point to 'external' local characteristics, as opposed to characteristics more connected to social elements, as in the dimension 'social relations'. Respondents who emphasise leisure activities, cultural facilities and climate achieve high scores here. The variables 'dimension of excitement' and 'dimension of security' show underlying patterns that describe 2 different evaluation scales regarding evaluation of one's own home place among the pupils. Pupils who score high on 'the dimension of excitement' express positive attitudes towards their own home places. They characterize their home place as exciting, interesting and diverse, as opposed to boring, uninteresting and undirected. Pupils who score high on 'the dimension of security' evaluate the home place as secure and tolerant.

Table 2 Summary of items and factor loadings for principal component analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization for the question 'How important are the following for your choice of future place of residence?' ($n = 746$).

Item	Factors		
	<i>Social relations</i>	<i>Leisure activities</i>	<i>Communality</i>
<i>Leisure activities</i>	-0.06	0.70	0.50
<i>Cultural facilities</i>	-0.14	0.69	0.50
<i>Nature</i>	0.49	0.41	0.40
<i>Climate</i>	0.19	0.58	0.37
<i>Family</i>	0.83	-0.00	0.70
<i>Local belonging</i>	0.76	-0.24	0.63
<i>Job prospects</i>	0.35	0.30	0.21

Boldface indicates highest factor loadings.

Table 3 Summary of items and factor loadings for principal component analysis using Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization for the question 'In your opinion, which words can best describe your home place?' ($n = 746$).

Item	Factors		Communality
	<i>Dimension of excitement</i>	<i>Dimension of security</i>	
<i>Boring versus exciting</i>	0.72	0.25	0.58
<i>Uninteresting versus interesting</i>	0.78	0.18	0.63
<i>Unsafe versus safe</i>	-0.22	0.69	0.52
<i>Coercion versus freedom</i>	0.29	0.51	0.34
<i>Intolerance versus tolerance</i>	0.22	0.62	0.43
<i>Unidirected versus diverse</i>	0.77	0.17	0.62
<i>Complexity versus simplicity</i>	-0.58	0.31	0.44
<i>Conflict versus peace</i>	0.01	0.65	0.42
<i>Loneliness versus social contact</i>	0.20	0.49	0.28

Boldface indicates highest factor loadings.

RESULTS

In the factor analysis of residence preferences 'job prospects' were not included in any of the factors. The reason for this is that job prospects is the incomparably most

important single factor for choosing place of residence, singled out by 64 percent of the pupils asked. The two preference dimensions generated through factor analysis emphasize *social relations* and *leisure activities*.

Table 4 shows ANOVA analyses of mean factor scores of *social relations* and *leisure activities* on gender, region and father's educational level. The analyses demonstrate that girls' mean scores on *social relations* are significantly higher than those of boys. Thus, the choices made by girls concerning future place of residence are more influenced by considerations of family circumstances and local belonging than those of boys. The table also shows that the mean scores on *social relations* are slightly higher among pupils from rural areas than pupils from urban areas, and that the higher the educational level of the father, the lower are the respondent's mean scores on *social relations*. However, the relationship between region and emphasis on *social relations* disappears when we control for father's level of education. The relationship between region and *social relations* is a result of the fact that the educational level is higher in urban versus rural areas. Concerning emphasis on *leisure activities*, the father's educational level is the only variable that gives a significant result. A higher educational background of the father yields a higher mean score on emphasis on leisure activities.

Table 4 also shows ANOVA analyses of mean factor scores of evaluations of one's home place along the factors *excitement* and *security* on gender, region and father's education. Concerning the dimension of *excitement*, the analyses show that pupils in urban areas on average tend to evaluate their home places as much more exciting and interesting than pupils from rural areas. The table also shows that a higher educational background of the father yields a higher mean score on the dimension of *excitement*. Considering the evaluation of one's home place along the dimension of *security*, neither of the independent variables tested yield significant variations in mean factor scores.

By use of linear regression analysis I have also investigated pupils' inclination to relocate, that is, to move away from their home place after completing their education, as shown in Table 5. Model I in Table 5 shows that region is an important variable for predicting inclination to move in the sense that pupils from rural areas are more inclined to move away than are pupils from urban areas. Gender and father's educational level do not affect this relationship. This model accounts for only 2 percent of the explained variance. The lack of gender differences may be somewhat surprising, considering the fact that statistics demonstrate that there is actually a predominance of girls leaving the districts.

In Model II the variables 'distance to relatives' and 'number of times moved' are included. Region remains a significant predictor after controlling for these variables, and in addition, distance to relatives has a significant net effect on inclination to relocate when controlling for gender, region, father's educational level and number of times moved. Distance to relatives affects the relationship in the sense that the further away the relatives live, the more inclined are the pupils to relocate. The inclusion of this variable increases the variance explained by 4 percent.

Differences in preferences concerning place of residence and evaluation of one's own home place may affect whether the pupils are oriented towards moving away from or staying put at their home place, and this is accounted for in Models III and IV. In Model III we have added the preference variables *social relations* and *leisure activities*. Both of these variables affect inclination to relocate. Social relations affects

Table 4 Distribution of residence preferences and evaluation of home place according to gender, region and father's education. ANOVA analyses of mean factor score, $n = 746$

	<i>Residence preferences</i>		<i>Evaluation of one's home place</i>	
	<i>Social relations</i>	<i>Leisure activities</i>	<i>Excitement</i>	<i>Security</i>
Gender				
Girl	0.13	-0.03	0.01	0.03
Boy	-0.22 (***)	0.04	-0.01	-0.04
Region				
Urban	-0.11	0.02	0.28	-0.10
Rural	0.07 (*)	-0.01	-0.18 (***)	0.06
Father's education				
Primary/lower secondary	0.16	-0.08	-0.13	-0.05
Upper secondary	0.08	-0.02	-0.05	0.09
University/college	-0.12 (**)	0.13 (*)	0.11 (*)	0.01

Significance levels: *** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$
Significance tested by ANOVA.

the relationship in the sense that the more emphasis the pupils put on social relations the less they are inclined to move. Thus, high emphasis on family and local belonging leads to a willingness to settle in one's home place. Leisure activities affect the relationship in the sense that the more emphasis pupils put on leisure activities, the more they are inclined to move.

The relationship between these two preference variables and inclination to move is not affected by region, so that the potential emigrants among both the city pupils and the rural pupils on average emphasize the same residence preferences. The inclusion of these variables increases the variance explained by 10 percent. With the inclusion of the two preference variables the gender variable becomes significant for the prediction of inclination to relocate. This indicates an interaction between gender and the preference variables for prediction of inclination to move. Further inspection reveals interaction effects between gender and emphasis on leisure activities when predicting inclination to move. Girls who put high emphasis on leisure activities are more inclined to move than girls who put less emphasis on leisure activities. This relationship is not present among boys. In Model IV we have added the evaluation variables *excitement* and *security*, and both of them are significant for the prediction of inclination to move. The less the pupils evaluate their home places in positive terms, the more they are inclined to move. With the inclusion of these variables, the effect of region decreases, which indicates an interaction between region and

Table 5 Inclination to relocate regressed on relevant independent variables ($n = 746$)^a

	<i>Model</i>			
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>
(Constant)	1.47***	1.55***	1.69***	1.65***
Gender (male = 1, female = 0)	-0.09	-0.08	-0.16**	-0.15**
Region (rural = 1, urban = 0)	0.24***	0.23***	0.28***	0.19**
Father's education	0.05	0.01	-0.02	0.03
Distance to relatives		0.11***	0.09**	0.09**
Social relations			-0.24***	-0.17***
Leisure activities			0.12***	0.11***
Excitement				-0.26***
Security				-0.14***
R ²	0.023	0.047	0.152	0.284
F	5.54**	8.58***	20.43***	30.80***

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

^a All coefficients are unstandardized.

excitement for predicting inclination to move. Analysis of the interaction effects reveals that the effect of excitement for predicting inclination to move is stronger in rural than in urban areas. This means that with the same score on the evaluation variable *excitement*, pupils from rural areas are more inclined to move than pupils from urban areas. Model IV accounts for 28 percent of the explained variance.

Pupils who do not wish to settle down in their home place or express doubt in this respect can be regarded as potential movers. Table 6 shows logistic regression analyses of the relationships between these pupils' wish to settle inside north Norway and their wish to settle in a city. The first analysis (north Norway) shows that pupils from rural areas who put high emphasis on social relations and have fathers with a low educational level are most likely to stay in north Norway. However, there is an interaction effect between region and educational level of the father for predicting the inclination to stay in north Norway. A closer inspection of this effect reveals that the relationship between father's education and settlement in north Norway is present only in rural areas.

When it comes to predicting whether or not the pupils wish to settle in a city, the region and emphasis on social relations are significant predictors. Pupils from urban areas who put low emphasis on social relations are most likely to move to a city.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this article was to study adolescents' attitudes to rural living in relation to a dominating urban ethos. In the empirical section we saw that many pupils in the survey consider job prospects to be the paramount factor in their choice of future

Table 6 Logistic regression of relocation within north Norway and moving to a city (analysis of potential movers, $n = 471$)

	North Norway ^a	City ^b
(Constant)	-2.13***	1.55***
Gender (male = 1, female = 0)	0.43	-0.02
Region (rural = 1, urban = 0)	1.51***	-1.48***
Father's education	-0.48**	0.09
Distance to relatives	0.04	0.03
Social relations	0.76***	-0.31*
Leisure activities	-0.14	-0.05
Excitement	-0.09	-0.19
Security	-0.25	0.19

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

^a If you consider moving away from your home place, will you relocate within north Norway?
Yes = 1, no = 0

^b If you consider moving away from your home place, will you move to a city?
Yes = 1, no = 0

place of residence. For most pupils this is far more important than, for example, local belonging. Hence, for the majority of the pupils job considerations seem to be more important than localization. This is consistent with findings from several research projects that show a widespread orientation connected to education and career among youth (among others Almås, 1997; Baethge et al., 1988), and that education constitutes a very central component for young peoples' orientations towards the future (Heggen et al., 2001). Lack of work in the districts has been propounded as the main explanation as to why young people move from province to city (Berg, 1998). Rural youth supposedly have no choice in the matter of staying or moving, because they are forced out of the province due to lack of job opportunities. The empirical analyses presented here may serve to substantiate this interpretation. Seeing that job prospects are so important, it is reasonable to assume that areas with poor job opportunities, in the sense of few and/or undesirable jobs, are especially vulnerable for youth emigration. Areas with good job opportunities will, on the other hand, have far better possibilities to hold on to their young, despite any other putative disadvantages they might have, geographically or in other ways.

However, an isolated interpretation of these findings is problematic, because the findings do not say anything about the specific meaning each individual reads into a specific job and the kind of values that are to be realized through concentrating on job prospects. For pupils who emphasize high income when choosing a profession, an emphasis on job prospects for choice of place of residence may indicate a materialistic value base. On the other hand, if pupils emphasize self-development and personal interests in their choice of profession, the response that job prospects are important for place of residence may have totally different implications. Traditionally, a focus on job prospects has been understood as an expression for a materialistic

value base. This is a consequence of the fact that work, first and foremost, has represented grounds for material survival. However, recent analyses of the meaning of work in the lives of individuals indicate that other elements are as important (Baethge et al., 1988; Bourdieu, 1990; Karlsen, 2001; Lasch, 1991; Ziehe, 1989). To the late modern individual, work is perceived more as an essential source of self-development and self-realization than a means for securing material welfare. Thus, the fact that peripheral areas can offer jobs for young people is not sufficient to keep them in the province. The jobs that are offered must hold qualities over and above purely material ones, and the most creative and modern jobs are often impossible to realize in the province.

Job prospects are not the only factor considered important for the choice of future place of residence by the pupils, and the variables *social relations* and *leisure activities* were also analysed. Girls' choices regarding future place of residence seem to be more influenced by considerations for family and belonging than those of boys. These are values connected to social relations and social networks, and they can therefore be considered 'relational' values. The same tendencies have been detected by several researchers and in many different areas (for example, Dahlgren, 1979; Helve, 1993; Holstein-Beck, 1995; Roalsø, 1994; Sørensen, 1982). It has also been pointed out that locally based integration and participation differ between girls and boys (Bourdieu, 2001; Frønes, 1987; Heggen, 1994; Heggen et al., 1993; Waara, 1996). While boys are more oriented towards activities, girls are more focused around social intercourse. Heggen claims that in sparsely populated areas boys more often than girls participate in activities within the immediate local environment, while girls participate more in activities outside of or extending beyond the local environment. He employs the concepts 'activities oriented towards local community' (such as paid work, athletics and participation in organizations or the like) and 'private activities' (such as homework, TV/video) in order to express this distinction, and he claims that boys are more active in the first area, while girls are more active in the second. The way he sees it, this gender difference arises as a result of the range of available activities in the local community and from differences in maturity as well as interests between the genders. Heggen et al. (1993) propose that public life in rural societies traditionally has had a masculine character, where men have been the most visible sex, especially in the economic arena.

In his study of a small community in north Sweden, Waara (1996) found that boys' activities serve to tie them closer to the local community. They take part in locally based activities such as hunting, fishing and outdoor life. Girls' activities are mainly indoor activities and less attached to the local community and the local culture. This has to do with the fact that boys and girls have different resources at their disposal, and the local conditions seem to reflect the needs of the boys. According to Waara, integration implies learning specific rules of conduct in a variety of different areas. The splitting up of the leisure sector implies that the youngsters are forced to relate to the range of available activities in different ways. This asymmetrical condition leads to a learning process that further reinforces social conventions attached to gender and contributes to a feeling of being inside or outside the local.

Social background also seems to be significant for the type of preferences discussed here. Pupils from lower social backgrounds put more emphasis on social relations in their choice of future place of residence than pupils from higher social backgrounds. Leisure activities are, on the other hand, more important for pupils from

higher social backgrounds.

Geographical background does not have any significance for preferences regarding choice of future place of residence. Young people, irrespective of whether they come from city or province, seem to have quite similar evaluation schemes for what 'the good home place' is. The leisure arena is generally important for young people today, and pupils from city and province put an equal amount of emphasis on elements such as leisure activities and cultural facilities when choosing a future place of residence. We may assume that this fact disfavors the district areas, because the possibilities to meet such preferences are usually slimmer there than in the cities. Pupils from urban areas evaluate their home places as much more exciting and interesting than pupils from rural areas. The assumption is further substantiated by the analyses of inclination to relocate (Table 5). Similar evaluation schemes of 'the good home place' reveal shortcomings for the districts. High emphasis on leisure activities combined with a negative evaluation of one's home place is especially decisive regarding the inclination to move for youth from rural areas, because they then stress elements characteristic of an urban life-style. These phenomena may indicate the existence of what I called an urban ethos in the introduction. While social anthropologists have pointed out the province as an important element in the identity of the Norwegian (Kramer, 1986), the results from my analyses indicate that the opposite is in fact the case. The majority of the pupils wish to identify with city life and urban values.

The empirical section also addressed issues concerning relocation. Most city pupils who are oriented towards moving wish to leave north Norway, while district pupils in the same category are much more willing to consider relocation within north Norway. As Øia (1994) also points out in his research, the great majority of those who want to relocate wish to live in a city. But my analyses have shown that this varies with geographical background. Among those positive towards relocation are many city pupils who wish to move to an urban setting outside of north Norway. Many of the district pupils from the same category, on the other hand, want to move to the most urban settings within north Norway, which may indicate a stepwise relocation towards the urban. Even though this may lead to the inference that city pupils are more oriented towards urbanity than district pupils, such a conclusion is not inevitable. Moving from a rural fishing community in north Norway to the pulsating neon lights of the university town of Tromsø may be an equally big - if not bigger - leap culturally speaking than moving from Tromsø to the capital, Oslo.

City and province in Norway are in many ways closer to each other now than they have ever been before, both geographically and culturally. Modern means of communication make it possible to cover quickly and easily distances that used to seem enormous. Culturally speaking, city and province are brought closer, among other things through the spread of mass products and mass media. The educational system, the media, leisure arenas and the urban as premise providers for an individual's values, identities and culture may therefore be connected to culturally homogenizing processes. Local cultural distinctions are getting weaker and the foundations for local cultural influence are being undermined. Viewed against this background it is reasonable to ask whether the cultural differences between city and province are in fact real today. However, the analyses in this article suggest that in the consciousness of young people substantial differences between city and province do exist - and that city life is conceived as the more attractive way of life. As others

have also pointed out (Bell, 1992; Heggen et al., 2001) city and province are meaningful categories in understanding what people think about their home place and where they wish to live, and the conceptions about city versus province and the urban versus the rural do exist among people. People evaluate themselves and others by means of these concepts, and the rural–urban continuum is still an important source for legitimization, motivation, understanding and identity. In the empirical analyses presented here, this expresses itself among other things through the fact that a lot of young people from the districts devalue their own rural home places and wish to live a city life. In spite of the fact that the districts gradually have acquired extensive facilities within the leisure and culture sector, the underlying perception is that urban life is able to offer something that is essentially different from – and more worthy to strive for than – the life of the province. The city holds a hegemonic cultural status – the urban ethos.

Note

1 Norwegian newspaper *Verdens Gang*, 19 August 1999.

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