EXPLORING TRANSNATIONAL REALITIES IN THE LIVES OF FAROESE YOUNGSTERS

Abstract
Faced with the reality of youth out-migration in many Northern peripheral areas, there is a need to consider out-migration from a cultural practice viewpoint. I argue that the emergence of a transnational perspective in young people is a key feature of the Faroe Islands' culture of migration, and that the young people come to have a transnational perspective, even before they become transnationals. Therefore, migration can be viewed as a defining characteristic of growing up in the Faroe Islands. Based on interviews with youngsters in two age groups, 14-15 years old and 18-24 years old, this study explores how young people construct their futures in a culture of migration. More specifically, the study focuses on the building of transnational life paths as a deeply embedded phenomenon for young people in constructing the trajectory to adulthood.

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Introduction

This article seeks to further the understanding of complexities and dilemmas faced by youth in the periphery by exploring the Faroe Islands' culture of migration (Ali 2007). Faced with a strongly embedded culture of migration, this study will capture how young Faroese people construct their life paths in the light of their peripheral realities. In doing so, their exposure to and their participation in transnational social spaces, and the significance of social capital in transnational ties, provides insights into the nature of transnationalization amongst young people of the Faroe Islands. Consequently, the contribution of this study is to further understanding of the life projects of young people in the context of transnationalization in the periphery.

Many of the peripheral[1] areas of the North are faced with the challenge of depopulation. Young people are drawn to urbanized areas (Hendry & Kloep 2004), often not to return, leaving a disparity in the age structure of the sending region. For some of these peripheries, out-migration becomes so deeply embedded in culture that one can talk of a culture of migration; here defined as "...those ideas, practices and cultural artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants. This includes beliefs, desire, symbols, myths, education, celebrations of migration in various media, and material goods" (Ali 2007: 39).

Out-migration of young people from peripheral areas is a phenomenon that has been the focus of research for some years (Walsh 2014). Much of this research has emphasised people's experience of their homes and their reasons for staying or leaving

peripheral areas. These include exploring the rational economic motivations for leaving, such as lack of work and employment opportunities (e.g., Kocziszky et al. 2012; Stockdale 2002), young people's choice structures in peripheral environments (e.g., Jones 1999; Paulgaard 2012) and their future stay or leave expectations (Hendry & Kloep 2004; Tukahunen 2007; Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006). Others have turned their focus to the gendered nature of out-migration, with females in particular leaving peripheral areas (e.g., Corbett 2007b; Kocziszky et al. 2012; Hamilton & Otterstad 1998; Dahlstrøm 1996).

Research to date has provided important insight into what young people experience while growing up in peripheral areas. However, there is a need for more research exploring the dynamics of growing up and being young in a society where migration is embedded in culture. Consequently, the lived reality of islanders in a culture of migration is of significant concern from this perspective and less so the actual decision or act of migration.

To understand the dynamics of growing up in the Faroe Islands' culture of migration, I used the concept of the transnational migrant. For transnational migrants, their everyday life depends on numerous and continual interconnections across borders. In this sense, they are deeply integrated in more than one place, if not physically, at least socially and culturally (Schiller et al. 1992). Thus, the identity and sense of belonging for transnationals – as I will argue is the case for many Faroe Islanders − is intimately bound with more than one place (Faist 2000).

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For the purpose of this paper, the concepts of transnational migrant[2] and culture of migration are related and intersect, but have separate meanings. In a culture of migration, young people are confronted with the values attributed to outmigration, which may ultimately be implicated in their moving away. However, this does not necessarily entail they will live transnational lives or maintain the strong links with other places. In this sense, the concepts are distinct.

Much of the literature on transnationalized migrants focuses on the close and integrated ties between migrants (both first and second generation) and their country of origin, thus providing important insight into the complex nature of migration and identity construction from the point of view of those migrants who have already migrated. Few studies specifically address the culture of migration in (sending) communities, where migration can become an expected life path, although notable exceptions do exist (e.g., Coe 2012; Kandel & Massey 2002), and even more seldom are children provided with a voice in transnational studies (Gardner 2012; Orellana et al. 2001). The reason is perhaps due to the focus on migration as a stay-or-leave decision rather than significant in cultural (re)production. Therefore, the question being explored in the present study is how young people in the Faroe Islands construct their futures in a culture of migration and come to have a transnational perspective, even before leaving the islands. That way, in the face of peripheral structural realities, the agency of youth in forming their futures, whilst forming themselves, can be brought to the centre of research on youth and transnationalization (Jones 1999).

Migration in the Faroe Islands

Situated in the middle of the North Atlantic with only ocean surrounding the 18 islands for hundreds of kilometres, the Faroe Islands is a tiny country with only 49,000 inhabitants. The Faroe Islands, which is a wealthy and modern periphery (Hovgaard 2015), is self-governing with its own language, flag, government and economy. The Faroe Islands are situated 1,100 kilometres from Denmark, yet whilst the Faroe Islands has multiple ties to Denmark, the Faroese have a strong national island identity (Gaini 2013).

Faroese people have a long history of international migration (Paturson 1942) with almost 40% of the entire current population and two-thirds of 30-44 year olds having lived abroad at some point – the vast majority of these being native Faroese (Statistics Faroe Islands 2014). Furthermore, it is estimated that there are 22,500 Faroese migrants (first, second and third generation) living in Denmark (Norðuratlantsbólkurin á Fólkatingi 2008).

The Faroe Islands offers secondary schooling, apprenticeship and manual training opportunities as well as tertiary educational opportunities. Still many choose to study abroad – also in subjects available in the Faroe Islands. Therefore, almost two-thirds of the approximately 2,500 Faroese students in tertiary education study outside the Faroe Islands (these figures do not take account of migration for other reasons than education). Moreover, statistics for students having completed tertiary education over the past ten years indicate that currently around 50% have returned to the Faroe Islands (Studni 2016).

For Faroe Islanders, migration to Denmark is considered as less foreign than moving to other places (Gaini 2013). Political ties between the two countries are historical and until 1948, the Faroe Islands was a Danish county. Furthermore, much movement to and from Denmark has led to strong social ties, with a constant flow of Faroese to Denmark (and back), both temporary and permanently.

The intensity of movement to and from the Faroe Islands is supported by political, economic and cultural structures that serve as manifestations of a culture of migration, in this sense migration as cyclical, that is leaving and returning. To name but a few examples, Faroese students abroad are entitled to vote in Faroese parliament elections, they receive grants when studying abroad (including tuition fees) and are provided with a yearly travel grant to enable regular visits to the Faroe Islands. Other examples include Faroese cultural societies in Denmark being subsidized through the Faroese fiscal budget and an advisory service for Faroese migrants in Copenhagen. Furthermore, an international educational advisory service based in the Faroe Islands helps Faroese obtain information concerning educational opportunities abroad.

In private industry, the Faroese banks market their services to youth going abroad, hoping to maintain their custom whilst abroad and upon return to the Faroe Islands. The presence of those who are away, known as the outsettlers in the Faroe Islands, is evident in many different ways. They are spoken of, they visit regularly, are portrayed frequently in the media and there was even a radio programme entitled Ghetto Faroe Islands, based in Copenhagen. Therefore, from these few examples it is evident that there are structural and cultural manifestations, which serve to enable, facilitate and reinforce migration both to and from the Faroe Islands, but especially out-migration.

Growing up with a transnational perspective

From an early age, young people in the peripheral North learn that moving away is a realistic option in their spectrum of life opportunities (Corbett 2007a). Growing up in a culture of migration entails seeing others leave, and return, and the construction of future life expectations makes out-migration a natural part of life for many (Kandel & Massey 2002). Historically, the Faroese have always been highly mobile and being away was typically synonymous with long-distance fishery. For youth in villages and towns, the fishing industry offered opportunities at sea and in fish factories. However, as local youths now find themselves faced with complex choices in reflexive modernity, their orientation has turned towards education and other career opportunities (than fishing), typically involving out-migration (Hovgaard & Kristiansen 2008).

In the context of the relatively wealthy Northern peripheries, youth out-migration therefore, may be more about a transitional process of growing up (Donaldson 1986), a rite of passage (Drozdzewski 2008) and the pursuit of education and career opportunities (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006) due to restricted opportunities in home communities (Paulgaard 2012). Yet, exploring the most obvious reasons for leaving, such as education and job opportunities may fail to capture the dynamics of growing up in small communities, as research frequently conceptualizes migration as a stay-or-leave decision.

As peripheral youths come of age in cultures of migration, they may find themselves in a dilemmatic position; being attached to their local communities and at the same time yearning for other places (Blocksgaard et al. 2015; Bal 2014). Constantly faced with the reality of being geographically isolated, some such areas are defined by cultures of mobility (Walsh 2013) with migration (long or short term) being part of peripheral identity construction (Hovgaard & Kristiansen 2008).

Rather than treating migration as either outbound or homeward bound; it is enlightening to view a culture of migration in terms of a complex networking to and from places of settlement. Therefore,

social spaces become continuous rather than disconnected by borders (Gardner 2012). In this respect, for some peripheries, as with the Faroe Islands, migrant behaviour can be seen as a process of transnationalization, a term referring to "...processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (Schiller et al. 1992: 1). More specifically, these linkages refer to "...sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations..." (Faist 2000: 189) across borders; such ties being dense, frequent and dynamic. In the case of the Faroe Islands, one study amongst first generation Faroese in Denmark highlighted that two-thirds of respondents felt either a strong or very strong connection to the Faroe Islands. Furthermore, almost 90% were in touch with family and friends in the Faroe Islands either every day or every week, 69% followed Faroese media everyday or every week and more than three-quarters of respondents had been in the Faroe Islands within the preceding year (Norðuratlantsbólkurin á Fólkatingi 2008).

Social capital as a resource, which can emerge from social and symbolic ties, is central to the close ties between groups in transnational social spaces (Faist 2000). Social capital can be understood as community ties (as group social capital) whilst emphasising the benefits it produces for individuals, for example in the processes of migration (Coleman 1988). From this perspective, young people who move away can draw on such ties to seek assistance, gain knowledge and advise and become part of social networks among Faroese abroad. They come to have a bounded solidarity as they find themselves in a common situation, being far away from home (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993).

Whilst most research has focused on those that have left, transnationalism can say as much about those who stay (IMO 2010), who are either return migrants themselves and/or key stakeholders in transnational social relations. Yet, as Olwig (2003) has pointed out, to theorize migration in terms of transnationalization may run the risk of simplifying ties and linkages across places, which need not necessarily be across country borders, as the term transnational suggests. Rather she suggests that to understand the full complexity and meaning that migrants attribute to socio-cultural relations one needs to look beyond the nation container. In the case of Faroese migration though, there is a clear focus on Denmark as a destination, which is reflected in the findings of this paper.

From a transnational perspective, migration entails the development and maintenance of linkages and multiple relations between the host country (e.g., kinship, social networks, organizations, religious relations) and out-migrants (Schiller 1992). Thus, the perpetuation of migration is not about going away and returning, but migration is cyclical, multilocal and transnational, and returning is not a closing of the cycle of migration. Rather 'return migration is part and parcel of a circular system of social and economic relationships and exchanges facilitating the reintegration of migrants while conveying knowledge information and membership' (Cassarino 2004: 262). Therefore, for many of these young people, the process of transnationalization starts from a young age as they are exposed to and participate in transnational practices, even prior to a potential move from the islands.

To explore the process of transnationalization in the context of a peripheral culture of migration, three overarching research questions will be addressed in this study. Firstly, how do young people in the periphery construct their futures and to what extent is out-migration part of these future imaginings? Secondly, how do young people construct the youth trajectory to adulthood in the context of a culture of migration? Lastly, to what extent do Faroese youngsters feel a sense of belonging to more than one place and how do they construct and utilize transnational ties in the migration process?

A qualitative enquiry of young people

This paper is based on qualitative data collected from May to July 2014 in different areas of the Faroe Islands. The participants came from two age groups − 8th grade pupils (14-15 year olds) and pupils in their final year of secondary education (18-24 year olds).

Prior research in rural regions has indicated that youngsters already in 8th grade express clear future out-migration intensions (ESPON, 2011). Therefore, the younger age group in this study comprised 8th graders. In order to ensure a diversity of experiences, half of the youngsters came from urban areas and the other half from villages and smaller areas.

When young people complete their secondary education, they are at a turning point and faced with the imperative of making important life choices. They make decisions concerning their future, be it to find employment or to pursue further education. Therefore, the second group of youngsters were those who were just completing their final secondary exams.

For each age group, 20 interviews were conducted, that is 40 interviews in total, ranging from 35-70 mins. For the 8th graders, drawn from all 8th grade classes at the schools, 10 interviews were conducted in an urban school and 10 in a village school. This resulted in a sample representing central/urban and small town/village schools. As the 8th graders were under 18, a letter was sent to their respective parents explaining the nature of the research and asking for their consent. Subsequently, every effort was made to ensure that the consent obtained from the 8th graders themselves was informed and ongoing.

In working with the unequal power imbalance, which was particularly prevalent for the younger age group, the researcher conducted a drawing exercise (with the 8th graders) providing data and creating an opportunity to initiate conversation prior to conducting the actual interviews. They had limited briefing on the content of life maps in order to minimize framing and influencing the data.

The 8th graders were given two sheets of A3 paper. On the first one, they were asked to draw a map (e.g., in the form of a road/path) highlighting some of the significant events in their life from the time they were born till that day – anything that they considered important or meaningful in their lives. On the second piece of paper they were asked to draw a map imagining their future. Subsequently, interviews were conducted. The interviews, which were conducted in quiet rooms provided by the schools, were semi-structured and the life paths the pupils had drawn also provided a base for the interviews.

The 20 interviews with the pupils completing secondary schooling comprised a sample from six secondary schools throughout the Faroe Islands. In the older age group, the interviews were conducted at various settings, based on the wishes of the secondary school pupils. For these interviews, the nature of questions was adjusted to take into account that having just completed secondary education, these pupils were faced with relatively major life decisions.

Young Faroese and transnationalization: Findings

The data has been structured into three overarching themes: 1) the young people's imagined futures, 2) their concerns with gaining

freedom and personal transformation through out-migration, and 3) social capital in transnationalization.

Imagined futures

This section explored the first research question addressing how young people in the Faroe Islands construct their futures and how out-migration is a part of these future imaginings. In doing so, we turn firstly to the life maps drawn by the 8th graders. In their first map (from birth to present), they included short statements about a variety of past events in their life, such as sporting events, hobbies, births of siblings, sickness, deaths in the family, friendships, holidays, starting school, moving house and so on.

When looking into the future, the 8th graders imagined events such as their education, career, moving abroad and starting a family. Already at this age, the youngsters were envisaging a future away from the Faroe Islands. Sixteen (of twenty) 8th graders interviewed specifically noted moving abroad in their life maps and the remaining four (boys) imagined a life working at sea. They imagined being exchange students, attending language school abroad or backpacking and commencing tertiary education, mostly in Denmark. Some also envisaged careers elsewhere. In these future imaginings, the young Faroese were constructing their life paths abroad. This was similar to the argument of Gaini (2013: 25) who has pointed out that young people have a 'longing for contact to the world beyond the village community', a feature of Faroese culture he argued is rooted in a long history of being geographically isolated.

Therefore, the 8th graders associated the future, maturing and being educated with out-migration, temporary or permanent, a feature which is consistent with previous research with children in transnational environments (e.g., Coe 2012). The Faroese 8th graders too were demonstrating a sense of high mobility at an early age (Walsh 2013). Consequently, out-migration and mobility becomes almost normative, although these young people are not passive recipients of culture. Rather, as I argue throughout the analysis, the transnational reality of their lives served as a significant cultural context through which young people constructed the trajectory to adulthood (Massey et al. 1994).

The participants had a clear focus towards Denmark with most imagining a move to Denmark. This was not surprising considering that over a 30-year period (1985 – 2014), on an average 93% of those moving to the Faroe Islands were Danish citizens (legally, Faroese are Danish citizens) (Statistics Faroe Islands 2016). Therefore, the Faroe Islands has for a long time been a relatively homogenic country, although in the very recent past this has started to change with an increase in immigrants from outside the Nordic countries.

The 18-24 age group pupils were also clear that they would out-migrate. Nineteen of the twenty young people would either definitely leave now or most probably within the foreseeable future. Therefore, whilst out-migration for almost all of these young people was to obtain an education, the construction of growing up, maturing and developing was an integral and essential part of the anticipated experience of moving away. When contemplating their educational future, many Faroese youngsters did not consider studying in the Faroe Islands, despite some educational opportunities on the islands. One young woman described how young people talk about education:[3]

> Sólva: Now, one almost does not think about studying in the Faroes, everybody just asks, where are you going to study? Like saying, where are you moving to? ...I love the Faroes, but I have

always wanted to live abroad... all my brothers have and it is just really natural for me, like logical.
> EAH: When you say logical, what do you mean?
> Sólvá: Well...in a way obvious, seems like the right thing to do.
>
> (Female, 19 years)

Young people have strong feelings about leaving and for most it was an accepted and necessary step in growing up. Growing up in a culture of migration, where leaving comes to be seen as necessary, can lead to a self-questioning amongst those who wish to stay. Bjørg, from a small village was the only 18-24 year old participant who was clear about wanting to stay, constructing herself as 'strange' as seen in the following passage.

> EAH: Have you ever thought about leaving the country?
> Bjørg: Never. Really strange, because I know so many that have been, and many of my best friends...but it has never attracted me in any way...No, God knows, I don't have those needs.
>
> (Female, 23 years)

For the young people of the Faroe Islands leaving has much to do with education, yet the whole experience of living abroad is significant and necessary for some of these young Faroese in growing up. Most of those intending to study abroad stated that they would leave regardless of their subject of study being available in the Faroe Islands. Whilst some young people do go abroad to work, the majority go for educational purposes or see work as part and parcel of gaining experience abroad. Indeed, youth unemployment is a relatively minor problem in the Faroe Islands (Arbeiðsloysisskipanin 2016), entailing that youth generally are not forced to leave due to lack of job prospects. Thus, the culture of migration has a significant symbolic function in society, namely the transition to adulthood (Horváth, 2008), through which leaving is an integral process of becoming (Massey et al. 1994). In this sense, moving away and becoming educated is an investment in cultural capital (Kelly & Lusis 2006). However, the young people are also investing in cultural capital of other sorts, namely gaining experience, independence and learning in other settings and other cultures as the passage below demonstrates.

> MH: There, maybe down there [in Denmark] you can like...get to know new people and a new environment and everything, like you know, it is as if everything is reset in a way...
> EAH: What is it that is reset?
> MH: To try something completely different...because you are like being set to the test...so you are not the whole time plodding along between the same friends here...I don't know if you can say trapped...instead of going down there [Denmark], getting new friends, new experiences... Like you can strengthen as a person...positioning yourself in a way.
>
> (Female, 21 years)

Therefore, moving away entails going through a process of moving from dependence/childhood/inexperienced to independence/adulthood/experienced. In forming new identities through the exposure to new people, new places and new cultures, these young people imagine being less constrained than in the Faroe Islands. The high level of personal recognition (knowing who people are, despite not knowing them) and complex networking in the small society of the Faroe Islands is constitutive of strong social control and becomes a form of surveillance (Johannesen 2012). Johannesen (2012)

argues that this becomes a homogenising dynamic, essentially a collective conscience and self-control, which promotes collective common behavioural patterns. In other words, it becomes a dynamic in opposition to individualisation. Therefore, these youngsters associate personal development, maturing and getting a new outlook with migration.

The transition to adulthood, the construction of adult identities and moving away to larger places to explore the world is a part of the life path of youths in many places (e.g., Donaldson 1986; Jones 1999; Valentine 2003). Yet it is clear that for many young people of the Faroe Islands, it is not enough to move from the family home and undertake tertiary education on the islands. Rather most of them, in the process of constructing adulthood, move beyond the boundaries of the country, exposing themselves to new social relationships and experience the (urban) world. Nevertheless, being removed from kin can be challenging, therefore, the family-based individualism of the Faroe Islands (Gaini 2013) results in strong family connections whilst abroad, which forms a part of their transnational lives.

In the context of transnational fields, some authors have distinguished between transnational practices and transnational perspectives (Gardner 2012). Transnational *practices* are those activities which are utilized to maintain and construct ties that link people and places, for example visiting abroad, migrants returning home to live or visit, social remittances, interaction by means of email, Facebook, etc. In contrast, a transnational *perspective* is the way in which transnational practices are thought of (Gardner 2012). The young people in this study have grown up and become accustomed to engaging in transnational practices. Whilst these young people are not yet fully living transmigrant lives, they are actively developing a transnational perspective from an early age.

Freedom as reality and necessity

In this second section of the findings, the main question addressed is how the young Faroe Islanders construct the youth trajectory to adulthood in the context of a culture of migration. From the data it was clear that the participants had immensely positive feelings of the Faroe Islands in the context of their childhood. Overwhelmingly and regardless of age, they referred to their life and upbringing as 'free'. They described a free and unstructured childhood, being able to explore the outdoors with few constraints.

> Hjørdis: ...we were always up in the mountains...and playing... it was so free, kind of... Not as forced, like in for example large cities and the likes, where you quite simply must be, in a nursery, a school or a club and the like... But it is freer here I think.
>
> (Female, 20 years old)

For both age groups, going abroad is a risky business and exposes them to risks, creating uncertainty. In the following quote Annie, who wants to study music, medicine or nursing, is explaining her future intentions.

> Annie: [I would rather be in the Faroes because] My family is here. It is not so overwhelming here. People walk around with guns [elsewhere].
> EAH: Even if you prefer living in the Faroes, would you choose to be in the USA [if you were to study music] ...?
> Annie: Well, I much prefer living in the Faroes, but you learn so much more in the USA.

> EAH: If you could train to be a doctor or nurse in the Faroes, would you like to do your training here...?
> Annie: I don't know. I expect I would go to Denmark to train. I really like Denmark – I also really like the Faroes. But you can always come to the Faroes when you have time off.
>
> (Female, 14 years old)

Annie is aware of risks elsewhere, yet leaving is a future prospective she will pursue. However, her links with the Faroes would remain strong and she would return to the islands during holidays. For both age groups, risk-taking was constructed as essential in instilling the youth trajectory with its transitionary meaning. Whilst the participants were conscious of the risks abroad, there are also personal risks in leaving; being alone, not adjusting and failing at their studies. The older group in particular, being close to leaving, were highly aware of these risks and found security in migrating with peers. One young man explained that he had postponed leaving and would work for a couple of years, as he was waiting for his friends to complete secondary schooling. Therefore, the timing of migration may be based on access to transnational networks and part of risk management.

Yet leaving was also a way of gaining personal freedom and being able to make mistakes. This is consistent with other studies that have found close-knit societies to feel claustrophobic (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson 2006). For these young Faroe Islanders, migration was associated with freedom, a precondition for personal transformation.

> Atli: [The positive thing about inter-railing is] to experience new things that you can't in the Faroe Islands. To meet new people and you really need to get to know them yourself, not just through gossip, which is in most of my village.
>
> (Male, 22 years)

> Ragnar: It is not always good to know everyone. When you go out then you say hi. And then you go down to [shopping centre] on a weekday and there is always someone there that you know... it's like you can't just go and not have to think, because there are always people everywhere that you know.
>
> (Male, 18 years)

> Julia: It is quite positive [that everybody knows everyone], but it can also be negative. Because if you do something stupid, then you have to a large extent got that identity. Whilst in larger countries you have a much better chance at, starting afresh...But if you have already got a bad image in the Faroe Islands, then it is quite difficult to change, in which case you have to really show so much that...you are not who you are, or what you have done... Even if you to some extent *are* [that identity]?
>
> (Female, 18 years)

The extracts indicate how acutely aware these young people are of the small communities in which they live. The positive social capital in bounded and enforceable solidarity can simultaneously restrict individual freedom. For these Faroese youngsters, the strength of social capital can include negative effects (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993; Svendsen 2001). Therefore, going abroad is associated with a different type of freedom, the freedom to be autonomous, be anonymous, to make mistakes, to step outside the boundaries and social control of the Faroe Islands. In the third extract, Julia illustrates the struggle of identity construction in a climate of strong social control. The public nature of mistakes and consequences thereof, results in a self-policing of behaviour to avoid labelling, creating boundaries for

personal growth that feel restrictive and restraining. Therefore, in the process of learning to be in the world and navigating through youth, the construction of self in an individualised world becomes complex. For these young people, migration is thus about constructing choice biographies (Frändberg 2014) in a context that enables them to enact agency and freedom (Haverig & Roberts 2011).

Social capital and transnationalism

In this final section of the findings, the question to be addressed is to what extent Faroese youngsters feel a sense of belonging to more than one place and how they construct and utilize transnational ties, especially with respect to social capital.

In a culture of migration, the links to experienced migrants, present and returned migrants, represent a significant source of social capital (Coleman 1988). This was evident throughout the data, with ongoing references to family, relatives, friends and acquaintances overseas. These presented important sources of knowledge and survival for migrants, faced with the uncertainty of being in a new place. The close networks in the Faroe Islands and high level of personal recognition (Johannesen 2012) provides for social capital and the building of trust; knowing who you are dealing with. Therefore, the networks of Faroese people abroad come to represent bonding social capital, similar to findings from other research conducted with immigrant groups (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993). The identity of 'Faroeseness' thus becomes a common reference point. In this sense, it is conceivable that those acquaintances that previously represented bridging social capital, networks between heterogeneous groups, for example outside the family and relatives, may come to represent bonding social capital in the new foreign setting (Patulny & Svendsen 2007).

Given the vast number of Faroese that have lived overseas, it is hardly surprising that almost all the participants spoke of their social networks as including current or return migrants. These linkages are circular in the sense that migrants provide valuable insight into life abroad; whilst current migrants present an important resource these youngsters can draw on.

> EAH: You have written [on the life map] that you are going to Denmark to study. Why Denmark?
> Naina: Because I don't want to go anywhere else, because I can speak Danish and ... everyone goes to Denmark and I kind of know what it is like to be in Denmark. I have often visited my aunt in *Øresundskollegium* [student accommodation in Copenhagen of many Faroese]. And me and a friend...are both going to live at *Øresundskollegium*.
> (Female, 14 years)

> EAH: Why are you first and foremost thinking Denmark?
> Fríði: It is closest to where my brother is, he's moving to Denmark now, so I will have him there and my friends are going as well...I think I could also go somewhere else, but I don't know...it is closer to everything...and then they are there if something happens.
> (Male, 20 years)

For most of these young people Denmark provides a safer alternative than going elsewhere. Many acknowledge that going farther afield than Denmark is riskier and more challenging as they are less likely to benefit from Faroese social networks. Knowledge of life abroad (especially Denmark) is fed to them through social remittances, of

which one primary type is social capital (Levitt 1998). The social capital, transmitted through social linkages between the Faroe Islands and Denmark primarily, becomes an enabling migration resource for many young Faroese. This is to such an extent that Denmark is considered as a lesser move than going to any other country, describing it as an 'in-between place, between that which is farther away and the Faroe Islands' (Annika, 20 years). In the following extract, Kristian is highly aware of the strong Faroese community in Denmark, which for him is a less risky choice, yet he emphasizes the importance of entering new social networks.

> Kristian: Don't get me wrong, I'm not worried about meeting new people. I could go and study elsewhere and get new friends there. I don't intend to go to Denmark just to be with my old friends. I think you need to be open-minded...It's really important...it sounds a bit pitiful, but in a way it's the easiest somehow [to go do Denmark]...I think that Faroese have a large tendency to do that [stick together abroad]. Just look at the ghetto in Copenhagen... *Øresund*.
> (Male, 18 years old)

Kristian is aware of the restrictions that can result from bonding social capital within the Faroese community in Copenhagen. In this sense, the enforceable trust (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993) can create closed structures, which actually limit the freedom of members. Therefore, Kristian is not merely following a normative path, he is utilising social capital whilst at the same time constructing his own individualized path.

The cyclical nature of Faroese migration, namely a constant flow of leavers and returnees, means that for many of the young people, the prospect of moving back to the Faroe Islands at some point, is part of their future migration imaginings. In some respects, this can arguably render the migration less risky. Yet, whilst away migrants are exposed to multiple cultures and may find themselves located in hybrid cultures where they lead transnational lives.

The vast majority of participants saw their future (near or distant) in the Faroe Islands. Most viewed return migration as desirable; however, employment and career opportunities would dictate their future residence. Yet upon exploring the life maps, it is clear that for many of these youngsters their ultimate future is in the Faroe Islands. However, at this point in their lives, they are more definite about leaving than coming back and anticipate going through a personal journey during their stay abroad, which may ultimately change their priorities.

Previous research has linked return migration to the Faroe Islands to the onset of having children, many returning in time for the children to start school (Gaini 2013; Norðuratlantsbólkurin á Fólkatingi 2008). The dilemma for the youngsters in this study was not apparent in their discourse on leaving, but rather in their discourse concerning their opportunities for returning. The young people are acutely aware they may be faced with a dilemma of feeling that they belong to more than one place.

> Maria: Well, I don't know if I want to live in Denmark for, you know, always. I also have family here. It is annoying. My family here, my family in Denmark. Both the same, half and half.
> (Female, 14 years)

> George: I had intended coming back to the Faroe Islands, but I don't know what will happen in Denmark. But all my thoughts are in the Faroe Islands...You know, my second cousin thinks I will be

stuck in Denmark with a partner and kids and all that, but I don't know. I don't think it'll happen. I think I will be alright. If I have a girlfriend before I go to Denmark, then it should all be okay.

(Male, 14 years)

For the youngsters, certain life events whilst abroad were perceived as obstacles for returning, for example finding a foreign partner or being unable to find suitable work in the Faroe Islands. Although unemployment is low in the Faroe Islands, being able to apply educational qualifications and enter a challenging job environment, was an issue that several participants highlighted as being important upon a potential return to the islands. In this sense, there are practical obstacles to returning. However, the strong social connections in the Faroe Islands, with the centrality of family and family life (Gaini 2013) means that for many, returning is part of moving away. In this sense, embedded in the culture of migration is a culture of returning.

Transnational migrants typically enact their symbolic ties to the place of origin through practices that signal belonging to a particular group (Cassarino 2004). These practices encompass being Faroese together whilst abroad, celebrating a common habitus through the marking of Faroese symbolic events, both of formal and informal nature (e.g., football matches, eating Faroese food together, celebrating various cultural traditions like Faroese music, the tradition of knitting clubs, etc.). Such transnational practices serve to maintain and build ties with the homeland as significant social capital that can be utilized in the process of return and reintegration (Cassarino 2004). Therefore, whilst being with a foreign partner may be a practical obstacle for returning to the Faroe Islands, for example due to language differences, implicated in such situations is the potential of being distanced from the Faroe Islands. It can lead to a lessening of engagement in transnational Faroese practices, becoming more integrated in the foreign context, and consequently the weakening of transnational ties.

In anticipation of returning, some young Faroese displayed a conscious investment in social capital prior to leaving to be drawn on upon later. In taking the first part of his education in the Faroe Islands, one young man was building social capital to then subsequently leave and build cultural capital, both of which can be applied as powerful assets at a later date.

Kristian: One of the reasons why I want to stay in the Faroe Islands for now, is actually to get contacts and get to know businesses in the Faroe Islands...if I went to study directly [to Denmark] then I would be sitting studying in my room at the student's residence... then to find a job...no one would have any idea who Kristian is... this way...you get experience, you get contacts, you earn money.

(Male, 18 years)

A central concern for transnational migrants is keeping their options open in the Faroe Islands, should they want to remigrate. Nevertheless, for these young people, the future prospect of returning depends on more than wanting to move back. Being prepared to return also entails having a readiness to return, readiness being a function of resources, social capital and circumstances in host and home countries (Cassarino 2004). Therefore, acutely aware that yearning for home may not be enough, Faroese migrants find themselves working at remigration, sometimes before they even leave the islands.

It is evident from the data that migration is far from being a singular event; rather it is a complex process through which many Faroese youngsters actively construct themselves as transmigrants,

which may also include reintegration and return. Thus, in a culture of migration, young Faroe Islanders from an early age have a transnational perspective on their futures, develop transnational ties and engage in transmigrant practices even before ever having lived abroad.

Conclusion

This study has focused on transnationality from the perspective of sending communities. The findings clearly indicate that transnationality is not necessarily a way of life that commences once you become a migrant. For these young people, growing up in a culture of migration provided them with a transnational perspective prior to migrating. Belonging to more than one place is a process that can start well before ever having moved away. They engage in transnational practices, albeit not necessarily in the same way as those who had already left. This means that migration should not be viewed as leaving and then (possibly) returning, but rather as a complex and circular process, where social remittances are travelling in a network of social relationships that are not confined to country boundaries.

The young people in this study grow up being part of a culture of migration, actively constructing and reconstructing their futures. In imagining and planning out-migration though, they are creating their own paths, which for many, involves participating in Faroese communities abroad. The Faroe Islands with its intense social networks constitutes a society with high levels of trust and bounded solidarity. For the participants in this study, the social capital provides a positive form of bonding to the children and youngsters with freedom of movement owing to a collective surveillance and tight social control. Yet the negative aspect of strong collective norms at the same time restricts individuals in Faroese society. Therefore, moving away is for these youngsters not just about going to a more urbanised area. It is central to their life trajectory in becoming informed, experienced and older.

Whilst developing a transnational perspective, Faroese youngsters have a clear idea of what it means to be Faroese abroad. Strong social ties are vital in utilizing social capital, which is significant whilst abroad but also to facilitate preparation of reintegration to the homelands. Therefore, the youngsters in this study imagine drawing on social networks abroad as a capital in facilitating and navigating the journey of constructing their individualized futures.

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Notes

1. Whilst the term periphery may be contested I here use the term to refer to geographically remote areas with small populations.
2. Throughout the literature the terms transnational, transnationalization and transnationalism are frequently used interchangeably (Faist, 1999). The term transnational refers to members of dispersed groups who lead transnational lives. In this article I argue for the culture of migration to be linked to a

process of growing up and becoming transnational, that process I term transnationalization. Transnationalism on the other hand is a term I use to represent theorization and discourse of transnationalization (Labelle, 1999).

3. Names of people and places have been replaced by pseudonyms.

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