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Places to belong? Narrating childhood(s) and the coast as a home across three generations in a community of islands

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ABSTRACT

Coastal societies are characterized by being in transition with regard to economies, work, demography, and social–cultural life. Based on life biographies across three generations, we explore childhood and the coast as a home, tracing experienced changes as these are narrated from today back to 1945. The site of investigation is a coastal community in Norway, transformed from being a traditional homogenous fishing community until early 1970s, to an ethnically diverse society today with booming fish farming industry. Findings reveal a continuum of belonging between different families, illuminating significant social differentiation and inequalities. Home making and belonging are diverse and complex relational processes, embedded in the dynamics between global–local discourses. Contemporary youth is positioned, constrained and enabled by their various relational histories in choices related to homemaking and belonging.

Introduction

> I have learnt to fish from my granddad. He has told me about the secret places at the sea. Where to find cod, pollock, – the varieties of different fish species in the sea. My children have also learnt to enjoy this life from me. We have a fishing boat, and we have a fish farming firm on top of our job. So, our children have got all this. This is home, the place we all belong. I am so happy about it. (Guri, 41)

Guri lives in a community of islands located far out in the Norwegian sea. Here she was born and raised, as her parents, grandparents and generations longer back in history. After completing education in the nearby town, she moved back to the island, to 'come home'. The excerpt from her life biography reveals her strong rootedness and sense of belonging to the island. Her life story is a narrative of close social relations between different generations in the family, and continuity related to belonging anchored in socially valued identities as fishing people across three generations.

This article explores coastal childhoods[1] in transition, with a particular focus on placemaking and belonging, as experienced across three generations. Contemporary lives of children and young people are connected to growing up in societies characterized by rapid transition related to economies and working life, education and livelihood. Everyday life, identity formation and placemaking in different local contexts are affected by global restructuring of economy and neo-liberal market-oriented policies (Katz 2004; Morrow 2013; Aitken 2018; Cuervo 2016), intersecting with local discourses.

The interplay between global discourses on children and young people as human capital and objects of investment on the one hand, and as individual subjects and right claimers on the other, are significant frames of reference for identity formation and sense of belonging. In different ways, both these discourses as part of market-driven neo-liberal politics highlight individual (freedom of) choice as a basis for young people's education, employment, lifestyle and where to settle and make a home (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014). The emphasis on individual freedom of choice implies a danger of hiding social–cultural and economic differences as well as spatial distribution of power between different groups in a locality.

Generational positions, identities and belonging intersect in complex ways, and intergenerational relations are socially constructed and part of a particular social generational order (Alanen 2011; Vanderbeck and Worth 2015; Punch 2020). The intersection between contemporary institutionalization of childhood and education on the one hand, and children and young people's positioning within an age-segregated social order on the other, has increasingly compartmentalised children and young people into separate and exclusive spheres set apart from the adult world (Brannen 2008). The risk of losing awareness of these conditions and the *specificity* of contemporary childhood, calls for a *relational* approach, in time and space, to get a deeper understanding of how contemporary childhoods are embedded in historical processes.

The aim of this article is to explore how a coastal community is narrated as a home and place to belong across three generations, with a particular focus on memories of childhood(s), everyday life and relations between different generations. The site of investigation is a community of islands, transformed from being a traditional homogenous small-scale fishing community until early 1970s, to booming fish farming industry today in an ethnically diverse locality. Narratives of childhood are seen as a lens to how people in the past and present live and interact with the ocean and the coast. Theoretically, our research draws on and contributes to recent critical debates within childhood studies of agency as a possession connected to individual autonomy, seen as limited and reflecting an ideological and politized discourse, with a danger of overlooking the social and cultural situatedness of children's lives (Lee 1998, Kjørholt 2004; Canosa and Graham 2020). The need to 'decenter' the child and apply a relational perspective embracing interdependences between generations has been underlined (Leonard 2015; Bessell 2017; Spyrou 2018; Abebe 2019; Punch 2020). The relational perspective we apply supports previous feminist critique (Diduck 1999) of the individual rational autonomous man as an ideal, on the cost of interdependencies between human beings, and between 'nature' and humans.

Our methodological approach implies situating children and young people's experiences in relation to the lives of other generations, to get deeper insight in how childhood, placemaking and belonging are related to wider social change over historical times (Nilsen 2021). Empirically, our study contributes to knowledge of the dynamics between global–local discourses, and how contemporary youth in the coastal community is positioned, constrained and enabled by their various relational histories in choices related to homemaking and belonging. Cultural heritage (perceived as lived experiences) mobilized as collective social memories as part of the relational histories, are included as sensitizing analytical concepts, to expand theoretical approaches to relationality. By shedding light on narrated childhood, homemaking and belonging by former generations, positioned within an intergenerational social order, we enable critical perspectives on contemporary childhood within an age-segregated social order. The main research question we explore is: How is childhood, placemaking and belonging narrated over time in the coastal community? More specifically we ask: How is placemaking and sense of belonging among contemporary youth enabled and constrained by their relational histories?

Seagull islands; from traditional fishing to booming fish farming industry

Historically, adaption to marine resources, especially small-scale fishing, has been key for settlement patterns and economic development along the coast in Norway. Changes in national policies

since mid 1970s has affected livelihood and everyday life in different ways. Modern technology has led to a remarkable increase in productivity with a decrease in the number of employees in the fishing industry (Vik, Johnsen, and Sønvisen 2011), causing dramatic demographic changes in coastal communities. The chronic loss of young people in some coastal communities represents a large problem (Gerrard 2008).

The quotas and licenses introduced a new way of organizing fishing, contributing to a substantial change of Norwegian small-scale fishery, today controlled by marked mechanisms allowing only large companies to buy quotas (Trondsen and Ørebech 2012). These political decisions resulted in removing 3400 workplaces in fishing in Northern Norway since 2000, causing depopulation (Trondsen and Ørebech 2012). Formalization of training and education in the coastal employment represents a major change, devaluing practical knowledge (Sønvisen, Johnsen, and Vik 2011).

Our case study is conducted in a community of islands consisting of 5000 people and thousands of islands. Traditionally, the livelihood was fish farming – *fiskarbonden* – a gender-divided society where the women were mainly responsible for farming while the fishing was a male responsibility. Fish farming industry at *Seagull islands* started in the 1970s. Investment in the global fish farming industry has led to a strong economic growth and generated an increasing demand for labour. Today, a quarter of the island's inhabitants are migrants (SSB[2]), representing 43 different nationalities, entailing challenges for the community. Several fish farming owners are leading actors in the global market connecting the community to the global economy (Rye 2018). Economic inequality among the inhabitants is increasing. *Seagull islands* was recently ranked as number four on the top ten list of the municipalities in Norway based on income difference between the families. A few households with an exceptional huge income due to fish farming industry explain these differences (SSB 2019[3]). Compared with the regional and national statistics, the local community has a higher percentage of early school leavers from upper secondary school.

Methodology

Everyday life has been described as experienced in a narrative form (Bruner 1987). Life biographies and narratives are socially situated and interactive, contextualized in time and space. They are unique – the teller draws on rich and creative sources of cultural knowledge, seen as reservoir or funds of meaning (Gullestad 1996; Wengraf 2001). Individual narratives are constituted by 'being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making' (Somers 1994, 5). The study of childhoods as these are narrated and reconstructed enable a special focus on placemaking, identities and belonging across generations and ethnic groups, seen as 'small pockets of history' (Nielsen 2003, 18). The focus of the analysis is thus on the significance of individual stories to understand the wider social processes of change in the community (Nilsen and Brannen 2014; Nilsen 2021).

A three-generational and biographical approach, based on a methodological design developed by Julia Brannen and colleagues was followed (Brannen 2008), encompassing the period 1945 to present. The research participants were first invited to share their life stories 'freely' in the individual interview with no specific instructions, continued by a dialogue about specific themes and stories they had shared with us, following a time sequencing structure of their life. They were invited to share memories of childhood, work and play, relations between different generations, transfer of knowledge and skills as part of everyday life. An interview guide was used, although with a main approach of inviting the participants to frame their stories 'freely'.

The selected sample based on purposive sampling methods and the use of local gatekeepers, consists of 16 families, youth aged 16–19 years, parents (aged 40–55 years) and grandparents (aged 60–92 years), including migrants and families living on different islands in the community (Table 1):

As shown in the table previously, we did not completely manage to include an equal number of males and females in each generation. In two families, four generations were included.

Table 1. Participants in the study divided into families and generations.

Families $N = 16$	Grandparents $N = 10$	Parents $N = 13$	Youth $N = 16$
Ethnic Norwegian $N = 8$	$N = 10$ (5 male, 5 female)[5]	$N = 8$ (4 male, 4 female)	$N = 8$ (5 male, 3 female)
Migrant $N = 8$	$N = 0$	$N = 5$ (3 female, 2 male)	$N = 8$ (4 male, 4female)

Grandparents of the migrant youth were not possible to include since they did not live in Norway. Migrant youth and their parents were invited to share stories and information about the grandparents' lives, including their childhoods. Three of the migrant youth's parents were not willing to participate in the study.

The case study was conducted in the period 2017–2019.[4] In addition to individual interviews, we applied an ethnographic approach, including many visits to the community – 'hanging around', talking, listening, watching – in different settings, such as at quays, in ferries between islands, in café's, library, local museum, community building and more. We spent time together with research participants in their homes, and in the boats, fishing. We felt very welcomed, and it was easy to connect with people. Our fieldnotes represent rich contextual information as well as knowledge about specific themes emerging from the life biographies. In addition, we conducted five second round interviews with former participants; 2 grandparents, 1 parent and 2 youth (one migrant and one local born), focusing on themes emerging from analyses of first round interviews with a particular focus on placemaking and neighborhoods (*grender*) as a key site for identity formation and belonging. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. We applied thematic analysis of the narratives, identifying emerging and cross cutting themes (Riessman 2005). Families were kept separate in the process of analysis to have a particular focus on relations between generations within each family, combined with analysis across families, focusing on cross cutting themes in each generation. Gender was not kept separate in the process of analysis. The research has been ethically approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data, NSD.

Creating places to belong: theoretical perspectives

The relational and complex character of social identity processes implies definitions of self, related to being and belonging, similarities and difference (Kustatscher et al. 2018). Belonging imply individual choices related to values, based on available positions within global–local discourses. The concept *home* is a key location and a metaphor for emotional attachment, sense of belonging and rootedness:

> All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. Here memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. (McDowell 1999, 72)

Theoretical perspectives informing the analysis conceptualize the sea and the coastal environment as ascribed with a particular identity, underlining the interdependence between human beings and 'nature' (Greve 1999; Fyhn 1999). A sense of home as part of placemaking, refers to social processes: 'emerging in the course of locally lived everyday lives, as particular sets of relations become constituted as communities of special meaning anchored in specific localities' (Olwig and Gulløv 2003, 15). Inspired by Tuan (1974), we see placemaking as the way people through interaction in everyday life form close connections with particular landscapes. Places are embodied, relational and 'thick with meaning' (Niewenhuys 2003; Berg and Dale 2015). The term *taskscape*, defined as 'an array of related activities' (Ingold 1993), is applied in our analysis, linking placemaking to *doing* (place). Placemaking implies a future orientation – places in the making – (Dovey 2010), closely intertwined with the history of the place. Transition of places is the ability of a place to make the past visible and viable in the present (Cresswell 2004), pointing to the importance of individual and collective social memories. Hence, our analysis includes a relational approach in *time* and *space*, seeing placemaking as a melting pot for participants memories and experiences of the past, present

social practices, and visions of future. Recent studies reveal that nostalgic memories of the past contribute to enrich the present, and to bridge past and present coping with an unpredictable future characterized by rapid social change (Cuervo and Cook 2019).

Childhood is a central category of belonging (Gullestad 1996), making memories of childhood significant elements in placemaking. Our case study contributes to knowledge about how different island dwellers have unequal positions for placemaking and belonging based on their relational histories. *Scale* connected to sense of place and belonging has been widely used by different researchers (Perkins and Thorn 2012). Eyle's scale (1985), listing ten dominant senses of place, will be used as a tool to reveal unequal positions for placemaking and belonging among our research participants.

Being rooted? Seagull islands as a home; diversity and continuum of belonging

A main theme emerging from the life biographies across three generations – is a strong sense of belonging to the coastal environment, connected to the identity as *a Seagull islander*. Seagull is narrated as a home, prominent in memories of childhood, and through the life course, inscribed in a powerful political national narrative (Somers 1994) of local communities as egalitarian, classless and inclusive. In Norway 'home place' is seen as the place of birth, associated with rootedness and belonging (Gullestad 1996), connected to values of egalitarian individualism, historically characterizing Norwegian democracy (Bergreen 1993; Eriksen 1993; Gullestad 1996).

Key themes emerging in narratives of childhood is *togetherness*, close social relations between generations, and responsibilities from an early age. 'We are all together' and 'here at Seagull islands we support and help each other', are prominent expressions, in particular among first and second generation. Detailed analyses of the life- biographies of different families, reveals a more nuanced and complex picture constituting different places of belonging and not belonging. Contemporary island dwellers represent a diverse group based on gender, ethnicity, age and locality, unequally positioned and affected by the interplay of global–local discourses. This complies with recent studies of coastal youth's experiences, disclosing diversity and disrupting dichotomies between urban–rural environments (Canosa, Graham and Wilson 2018).

The analysis illuminates the significance of the *relational history* of current youths, enabling and constraining choices related to homemaking and belonging in various ways. We have identified three different categories of families, representing a continuum of belonging, based on two dimensions:

1. *Time*: duration of settlement in the community of islands
2. *Location*: home place of origin for the inhabitants

The three main categories represent different narratives of relational histories connected to childhood, placemaking and belonging across generations. These groups are more to be seen as 'ideal types', serving to illustrate the diversity and main trends, rather than representing fixed and definite boundaries between them:

(A) Robust roots and deeply anchored, *ur- familier* Interconnection between belonging to a named neighborhood – *grend* – and identities as fish-farmer families across three generations or more.
(B) Belonging, but not really rooted. Families/ancestors moving in from other municipalities in Norway (since 1945).
(C) Not an 'authentic *Seagull islander*'. Social exclusion *(Utenforskap)* Still forms of belonging. Working immigrants from other countries.

Across generations in (A) and (B) families, *Seagull islands* is narrated as a home, as a beloved place to live and grow up. Among the families with a fish farming tradition, (A), a strong sense of emotional attachment to *Seagull islands* is connected to rootedness. Identity and placemaking

is characterized by using the relational history of the extended family and former generations as collective social memories constituting rootedness and belonging to a specific neighborhood – *grend* – past and present. The places to belong are constituted by close reciprocal social relations, a broad and strong social network, intergenerational interdependence, and shared responsibilities. Skills, local knowledge and social practices are transferred from older generations to younger as part of everyday life. Notions of home are strongly connected to identities of being fish-families and traditions of the past related to practices of fish farming – *fiskarbonden,* anchored in gender differentiated communities of work; the (extended) 'man-family' and the 'woman-family' (Rossvær 1998). Lived lives of previous generations are mobilized as cultural heritage and collective social memory affecting the identity of contemporary family members as fishing people, including families where traditional fishing today is not a main income generating activity.

The youth in these families express a strong and unambiguous sense of belonging to the island, imagining the community as a home also in future by making the past visible and viable in the present (Cresswell 2004). The joint sense of history appearing in the narratives is grounding a shared sense of belonging (Augé 1992), representing a significant source of cultural heritage of lived relational histories, thick with meaning, contributing to produce and reproduce *grenda* as a home. The narratives of home across generations are characterized by continuity, constituting a particular moral community, relational and embodied, by a wide range of related activities, a particular *taskscape* (Ingold 1993; Niewenhuys 2003). 'Home' is inscribed in powerful national discourses of autonomous local communities and egalitarian individualism as part of Norwegian democracy.

Inspired by Eyle's scale of belonging, listing ten different senses of place, we identified seven of these in the various narratives of families categorized as (A) and (B): (1) Social sense of place, (2) Nostalgic sense of place. (3) Family sense of place. (4) Roots sense of place. (5) 'Way of life' sense of place. (6) Environmental sense of place (aesthetic experiences) and (7) Instrumental sense of place (economic value, mean to an end). Belonging is 'deep' and robust, anchored in a multifaceted sense of place, in a diverse and complex taskscape.

Narratives of Seagull as a home for families categorized as B have many similarities with the 'really rooted' families. Families in group B are often 'next door migrants', with a parent or grandparent of current youth being born outside the community. Their family history of belonging cannot be traced back to a particular *grend* across generations, a crucial location embedded in images of the local community. Their stories therefore appear with a weaker sense of 'rootedness' and belonging, also constrained by weaker sources of cultural heritage to be mobilized as collective memories of relevance for identity and belonging.

This strong connection of the identity as a 'real *Seagull islander*' to rootedness in a *grend* across generations makes access to this identity restricted, easily excluding people such as working migrants. Their identities as not 'really belonging' and rooted represent a different, restricted and fragile position for placemaking and sense of belonging. Migrant youth's lack of a relational family history of belonging to *Seagull islands*, and their access to positions within powerful national discourses of local communities linked to egalitarian individualism is weak.

Related to Eyle's scale of belonging, all the listed seven senses of place were clearly identified in A-families, constituting a diverse and holistic sense of place and belonging, to some extent also present in B-families. The different senses of place are made and remade as part of ongoing relational processes whereby children from an early age develop 'repertoires for participation in practices' (Gutierrez 2003) through exposure to a variety of different cultural practices in a complex taskscape. Quite as a contrast, in C-families, belonging as connected to instrumental sense of place dominated, supplemented by environmental sense of place, with no relevance for their relational histories.

Definitions of self, related to being and belonging, similarities and difference are multifaceted among contemporary youth in all three categories. The dynamics of local and global neo-liberal discourses are thereby played out differently, constraining and enabling individual choice related to placemaking, identity formation and belonging. Local discourses connecting belonging to rootedness and family narratives of the *past* are particularly powerful, also for contemporary youth.

With this overview of Seagull islands as a diverse and complex community revealing unequal positions among the inhabitants, we continue by a more detailed and narrow analysis of narratives from *ur -families*, revealing the significance of relational histories and discourses on local communities linked to rootedness. Narratives of childhood from first generation are particularly emphasized to illustrate how belonging is anchored in a multifaceted sense of place constituting a complex taskscape, enabling a variety of different and related activities.

Creating places to belong; being a 'Seagull islander' and belonging to a 'grend'

Guri, the woman we quoted in the introduction, is part of a family with strong roots to the *Seagull Islands* through generations. Together with her husband, she started a fish farming firm several years ago. Her father, Einar, aged 72 years, still works as a traditional fisherman, travelling far distances along the coast in his boat to catch fish and shellfish. Guri enjoys her work, and she is a driving force in the firm. Like previous generations, her children are active participants and laborers in the firm, and they also take part in traditional fishing. For her, like her parents and children, *Seagull* is a beloved homeplace. In the excerpt below she explains her reasons for moving back to Seagull at the age of 30. The importance of places as social, relational and 'thick with meaning' (Niewenhuys 2003, Berg and Dale 2015; Cuervo and Wyn 2017) is clearly revealed:

> I wanted to live at *Seagull*, it is the sense of community, the interconnectedness in this small place. You feel you know everyone– feel so confident – it's a strong social network. As long as I can remember I was with my uncle, herding the sheep, cutting the grass, throwing into the silo and the like. We kids were always with them – everywhere. If we need help of any kind there is always one there. Uncles who are carpenters, farmers, welds, boatwelds, everything. They are a really close-knit team, dad's brothers. (Guri)

Togetherness is for Guri connected to her emotional sense of attachment to *Seagull*, being narrated as a community of close-knit relations between extended family and neighbors, across age and generations. Work and mutual responsibilities are key aspects of the place constituted as home. Linking to Eyle's scale, the home is created as a multifaceted place to belong, opening for a variety of interrelated activities. Sense of confidence – *trygghet* – is connected to belonging to reciprocal communities, as reflected in childhood memories, and in narratives of contemporary life.

Seagull islands is historically socially and geographically organized in different small local neighborhoods – *grender* – previous primary school districts. When contemporary grandparents grew up, the number of primary schools was 29. Every *grend* had their own primary school. Each *grend* had a particular name, merging geographical locality, identity and home. *Grenda* is thus a strong and fixed identity marker for the (extended)families today and back in history, shaped and reshaped by rich collective social memories of lived lives past and present. Children in generation 1 and 2 grew up with their grandparents living in the same neighborhood, sometimes in the same house, and most youth in our sample born at *Seagull* have grandparents living at the island. Every *grend* has a community house – *grendahus* – narrated as a significant, intergenerational place of belonging today and in the past, and a key site for a variety of activities and social gatherings, often including music, dance and storytelling. 'Dugnad'*, collective voluntary work is an important duty. An important seasonal event every fall is the festive table of the sea, *havets festbord*. Social gatherings also take place at Christmas, 17 May (Norwegian National Day), confirmation, weddings and more. *Grenda* represent a taskscape – a home – constituted by a wide range of differentiated activities (Ingold 1993), constituting according to Eyle's scale a significant social sense of place, a family sense of place, 'way of life' sense of place and not the least; roots sense of place.

Growing up and into intergenerational communities of work

A key theme emerging from memories of childhood among current grandparents is narratives of *growing into intergenerational communities of work*. Adults and children together constituted a 'working community':

We came along early. In the summer. In the spring. First, we were out at the peatlands to take peat. Then, to take the dung from the dung cellar at the barn, this was the job for us kids. We were three boys. We harvested the grain in the autumn, – the worst thing we knew, cause we would rather like to swim in the sea when it was nice weather. (Olav 73)

Narratives of childhood being traced back to 1945 show that children are placed in an intergenerational social order. Generation has been defined as:

Socially constructed system of relationships among social positions in which children and adults are the holders of specific social positions defined in relation to each other and constituting in turn, specific social (and in this case generational) structures. (Alanen 2001, 12)

The significant places in narratives of childhood are for current grandparents constituted by positions of shared agencies, close intergenerational relations, constituting communities characterized by mutual interdependencies. Children were first and foremost positioned as important participants and contributors to the families' subsistence. Growing up implied being enaltured to be fish-farmer families, including gaining specified environmental knowledge about the sea and coastal landscape, as well as a set of differentiated practical skills to make a living (Spyrou et al. 2021). *Naustet* – seahouses – were significant places for men and boys, for transfer of knowledge and skills related to fishing, boats, the sea and coastal environment. Girls participated and assisted in various household chores and farming activities from an early age together with mothers and grandmothers, such as looking after younger siblings, milking cows, picking berries, collecting peat and more. By deriving skills within an informal extended gendered family network, boys and girls were working on identities as fishing people and sense of belonging to places.

The boat and the sea as a home, sense of freedom and belonging

Memories of childhood and sense of belonging to *Seagull* is inextricable linked to 'nature' and the coastal environment. Bjørn's (76) narrative illustrates this:

I was born in my uncle's house, – he was out on a ship (*te sjøs*) and we stayed in his house. When he came back, we moved to *Stone island* (a small islands in the community) I was about 4 … We were the only family living there. We were in the boats – far out in the sea- my brother and I. When we started at school (7 years), we were rowing to the main island, alone.

He continues:

I was about 13 years. Olav and I were rigging the shark. Jørn (a neighbor) installed a motor to us. Vi managed on our own. Then we were out on the sea – far out. Alone, on our own. During the winter too. Actually, we grew up in the boat so to speak. That's the place we wanted to be (Bjørn)

This quote clearly illustrates what emerges from the majority of the narratives, including the youth, that the *sea* and the *boat* is a home, constituted by deep emotional attachment developed through continuous, repeated processes of interactions between the children and the sea, confirming former studies in different countries (Broch 2020, Crummy and Devine 2021, Spyrou et al 2021). The sea and the boat were also narrated as significant places for women; current mothers and youth. Else, a teen-ager born at *Seagull Islands* share her memories of childhood: 'I loved being with grandad far out in the sea. He tied me in the boat – the waves were sometimes so high – I remember he pulled up the nets and the fish traps, and fished in between' (Else 15). Home here refers to an emotional space of attachment and interconnectedness (Perkins and Thorn 2012).

While being in the boat was a necessity for Bjørn and his generation as part of being brought up to make a living as a fisherman and master the sea, Else was taken out in the boat in her holiday and leisure time as a matter of choice made by her grandfather, a choice of transferring the value of attachment to the sea to his granddaughter. For Else, memories of childhood are vital for sense of emotional belonging today. Studies of childhood memories in Australia reveal that places invoke feelings of comfort and familiarity, in contexts of rapid social change (Cuervo and Cook 2019), linking past relational memories to present placemaking and belonging in dynamic ways.

In contrast to the narratives from contemporary youth, childhood is often narrated and remembered as a 'we' – story by contemporary grandparents. Memories about individual life is thus *social* and *collective.* Childhood memories are deeply intertwined with memories of the coastal landscape; the sea, the boat, the shore, the sea-house, revealing an intimate *togetherness* between nature and people. The sense of *togetherness* is constituted by *doing* things, such as fishing at the sea, in the lakes, playing with friends, confirming former research of activities and sense of attachment to nature as intertwined (Tillmann, Button, and Gilliland 2019). Nature is also narrated as a place to *be* – and to *dream*: looking at the waves of the sea, and the horizon where sea and heaven meets. Boundaries between who I am, and the sea are blurred, confirming Relph's point that: 'People are their place, and place is its people' (Relph 1976, 34), positioning humans in a relationships of being co-dependent of 'nature' (Greve 1999; Fyhn 1999).

Individual *autonomy* and *freedom* are emerging as important themes in the narratives of home across generations and the three categories we presented. Bjørn's detailed and rich memories of childhood, emphasizing the value of 'nature', such as the *sea* and the *boat* are reflected in the majority of the narratives of childhood and belonging across generations (A and B). Play and outdoor activities with friends all year round is connected to sense of freedom and autonomy. Memories of play includes fishing trout in the lakes with friends, collecting eggs from the seagulls at the small islands (sometimes 300 a day), building stone-huts, playing football, making home-made toys such as small boats and trucks of wood. From an early age, children were allowed to play and move freely without adults, often at long distance from their house, inscribed in local discourses of childhood as connected to nature, play and outdoor activities, promoting moral values of autonomy and freedom (Gullestad 1989, Nilsen 2008, Kjørholt 2003).

Freedom is seen as freedom of movement, in the environment, at the sea, in the boat, between different islands, and freedom to play with friends without adult control. For the grandparents, childhood was remembered as a time for intertwined processes of play and work, interestingly connecting sense of freedom and autonomy in play to skills and environmental knowledge gained through work and responsibilities.

The sea as a home: remaking multifaceted spaces of belonging

The significance of the sea and the coastal landscape for identity and placemaking is also striking in many of the youth' narratives, revealing continuity across three generations, in particular among 'ur families' (A). Jon, aged 16 years, the son of Guri, has rich narratives of close social and emotional connectedness to his grandfather and other relatives. The excerpt from his story, quoted below, clearly illustrates the similarities across generations, regarding the significance of *freedom* related to the *sea* in narratives of *Seagull* as a home:

> The *sea* means a lot. Living by the sea, having such great freedom. To be free to go out in the sea whenever I want -*færra på sjøen*. Fish whenever I want! This is so important. In *grenda* I feel we have contributed to create something important: producing food from the sea! But most of all, what makes *Seagull* a home to me, is my family and relatives – *slekta*. The emotional attachment and strong sense of connectedness between us. My grandad telling all the stories. Being together in the boat. I only get it here, nowhere else in the world. This is the place I want to live forever. (Jon 16)

In A-families, continuity is striking, with regard to dynamic and mutual interdependencies between generations, and between human beings and the 'nature', anchored in a reservoir of shared and collective memories. Drawing on Eyle's scale, belonging is linked to a multifaceted sense of place, a 'whole community', opening for a variety of different activities.

To whom do you belong?

The significance of belonging to a *grend* and cultural heritage as part of family history is reflected in the key question commonly asked when new people meet, such as for instance in the classroom at

the start of a new school-year: 'kem e du te' – to whom do you belong? This identity as *Seagull islander*, anchored in local discourses of family roots in a particular *grend*, implies a marginal position for migrants, excluding their relational family histories. The question presupposes an answer of a named family and *grend,* putting migrants in a position of not belonging. In spite of increasing mobility during the last ten to fifteen years, blurring the former fixed geographical and social boundaries between different neighborhoods and families, *grenda of the past* is still a significant identity marker and framework for social categorizing of current youth. With few exceptions, migrants rarely participate in social gatherings or activities arranged at *grendahuset,* expressing that they do not feel welcomed and included, confirming former studies of social detachment and marginalisation among migrants (Rye 2018).

Narratives of young migrants show that sense of *freedom* related to life at *Seagull* is highly valued. Apart from this similarity with other groups, there are distinctive contrasts. None of them have their grandparents at *Seagull*, and their memories and relational histories are not seen as relevant. Greg, a young migrant aged 17 years, moved to Seagull with his family when he was 11, as he put it; 'leaving poverty at home'. He recently moved from one of the smaller islands where his parents and younger siblings currently live, to the centre of *Seagull islands* to attend upper secondary school. He is committed to schoolwork, but he has no friends, and is not included in an intergenerational network. None in the class talks to him, he tells. Below is an excerpt from his narrative:

> I have a good life here. But, I don't know people here. They do not know me, or, there are more people who know me than I know them. I'm not part of this place, being an outsider. It is really a closed society. (Greg 17)

In spite of being an outsider, he, as many other young migrants, tells that he has a good life at the island. In addition to being safe (economically), according to Eyle's scale*; instrumental sense of place*, he connects the good life and belonging to a sense of *freedom* and the value of the coastal environment; *environmental* or *aesthetical sense of place*. After school, he loves to take the bike to a lake at the mainland. There he is alone, often for hours, fishing, making fire, and cooking the fish. 'It is relaxing, I feel a sense of freedom', he says, 'I love being by the lake, being in 'nature'. This complies with studies in Finland showing that interaction with nature feels relaxing and delimits feelings of pressure in everyday life (Rantala and Puhakka 2020), and that close connection with nature increases quality of life (Chawla 2020).

Greg's memories of early childhood contain vivid memories of fishing in small rivers with his father, connecting placemaking at *Seagull* to his previous childhood memories. 'Nature' was, and is, a place to feel 'at home', associated with specific activities and conceptualized as a 'whole community' (Tillmann, Button, and Gilliland 2019). Greg thus mobilizes his cultural heritage, memories of lived life in early childhood in his country of origin, drawing on his relational history to make a place to belong, connecting to nature. However, his cultural heritage is individual, unable to be mobilized as collective social memories in placemaking and belonging.

The global citizen: beyond locality – individual self and flexible sense of belonging

The narratives of contemporary youth reveal diverse stories of placemaking and belonging, documenting the heterogeneity of the small population at *Seagull Islands. Freedom* is a key value in Linda's narrative, a local girl aged 17 years but not connected to childhood memories of work and responsibilities as part of an intergenerational community like her grandparents. 'Growing up at Seagull has given me freedom. Here I can be the one I want to be. Be myself'. The way Linda connects freedom to the identity of '*being oneself*', is not visible in any narratives of the two older generations, but in several of the youth's narratives. It reflects increasing individualisation processes in modern societies, connecting modern selves to individuality, self-realisation and ideals of being unique (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001, Giddens 1991, Gullestad 1996; Taylor 1989).

Childhood and everyday life as narrated by contemporary youth is inscribed in a strict and specified *time* structure, for some fragmenting processes of placemaking and belonging

compared to previous generations, to some extent confirming recent studies of neighborhoods becoming less important as sites of everyday interaction for young people (Vogt 2019). Social media, and the same age group represents an increasingly influential frame of reference for identity and placemaking among young islanders. Paulina, a teen-ager and daughter of a working migrant, moved to the island a few years ago. She has one friend in her class, a migrant, but no close local born friends. Like many young migrants, she keeps in touch with friends in her country of origin on social media and through annual travels. Her construction of home and belonging is detached from geographical place. 'I have friends in many different countries', she says, 'it does not matter where I live because I can keep in touch on insta'. Paulina is doing well in school, and she wants to study at university to be a psychologist. She inscribes herself as a global citizen in discourses of individual choice and a 'world of possibilities'. 'I can see myself living many different places', she argues. 'Maybe moving to US to study. I have some friends there'. Her sense of belonging is connected to interlinked dimensions of social location, emotional attachment to friends and identification as a future student (Cuervo and Wyn 2017), though still maintaining a sense of belonging to her country of origin, confirming former studies of migrants (Valentine and Olwig 2015).

Fixed identities and neighborhoods in flux: shrinking spaces of belonging?

The social landscape of childhood at *Seagull islands* today has changed from the time current grandparents grew up. As we have seen, children grew up in extended families in geographically distinct localities, with definite borders to other neighborhoods. Present local discourses of belonging are anchored in these discourses of the past, and the significance of roots. For contemporary youth, creating places to belong is a diverse and complex task, being unequally positioned within powerful local discourses, constrained and enabled by their various relational histories.

Furthermore, change in placemaking and belonging is related to geographic mobility. During the last decades some families have left the *grend* they have lived for generations, and moved to the center of the island. Placemaking and social meaning making processes of *grender* are thus in transition, being relocated by migrants and others with no rootedness and shared memories of place through generations. Powerful local discourses of belonging and placemaking based on historical roots and collective local memories are disrupted.

However, as we have seen, narratives across three generations document that still placemaking in many of the 'rooted families' are characterized by continuity. While identities as fishing people and sense of belonging in the past were based on economic and social necessity embedded in growing up and into intergenerational and interdependent communities of work, identities and belonging among contemporary youth is to a higher extent based on individual choice. Moreover, freedom of choice is constrained first and foremost by children and youth being positioned within an age-segregated social order, as students and school children, spending a lot of their time with children at the same age, at school and in organized leisure-time activities.

In spite of this, youth belonging to 'ur-familier' (A) still situate themselves within intergenerational communities of belonging, with strong social and emotional bonds to their relational family history. Their choice to continue and maintain cultural practices and values of former generations is made possible by the centrality of their positions within powerful local discourses of belonging and roots.

Concluding discussion

Seagull today is a home for a diverse group of people, with various ethnic origins, located at different islands. They represent varied family trajectories with dissimilar degrees of rootedness and belonging. Historically, *grenda* as a home, is a space merging family and locality across generations, constituting a community of memory and image with particular values (McDowell

1999). Narratives of childhood from current grandparents reveal that children were positioned as important economic and social actors within an intergenerational community of mutual interdependence. The extended families and *grenda* was as a home, a melting pot for an array of multiple activities– a *taskscape* – containing work, play, learning, amusement, story-telling, social gatherings and more, contributing to 'deep' and robust belonging. The strong sense of attachment and identity to a particular *grend* in 'ur familier' are strengthened by shared stories across generations, and remaking of collective memories. However, as we have seen, local discourses, anchoring homemaking to rootedness, shared agencies and shared collective memories of local place across generations, implies processes of exclusion and marginal positions of belonging.

The transition from being a traditional fish-farmer community to booming fish-farmer industry and increased tourism, represents a major shift, also related to homemaking, 'culture' and moral values. Previous identities as a fishing community folk belonging to a particular *grend* is less ambiguous, being a bit blurry and in transition. From being brought up to *be of use* in extended families, encultured within locally organized intergenerational communities of mutual interdependence, children and youth today are brought up to be self-reliant and responsible for their own selves, consumers inscribed in an ethos of individual freedom of choice regarding education, livelihood, lifestyle and where to make a home in future (Gullestad 1996).

Still, the majority of our young research participants want to make a future home at *Seagull islands,* valued as a nice place to be and grow up. In addition to work places ensuring a 'good life', *Seagull* is socially valued for sense of freedom connected to emotional attachment to the sea and the island landscape, significant across three generations, ethnicity and gender. For youth belonging to the 'rooted' families, a strong wish to stay and continue their family's traditions of making a living from the sea is prominent. Relationships to parents and grandparents are key drivers for the wish to stay, confirming rural research of the importance of local identity, relations to place and people among youth (Cuervo 2016).

Furthermore, an awareness and pride of collective memories and strong social bonds to grandparents is evident (Climo and CatTell 2002). Their memories are colored by deep emotional attachment to place and people, revealing dynamic and relational character of individual identities and history of their own lives. However, identities and belonging for contemporary young *Seagull islanders* have to a great extent become diverse negotiated projects within a wider social landscape of intersecting socio-economic structures, family trajectories and collective social memories. Processes of placemaking and belonging are thus constrained and enabled by their various relational histories, intersecting with hegemonic local discourses on belonging presupposing roots, creating position of inequality among contemporary youth.

Notes

1. The term childhood refers to children and young people aged 0–18, in line with definition in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by UN Assembly in 1989.
2. https://www.ssb.no/kommunefakta/kostra/froya/befolkningsprofil
3. https://www.ssb.no/kommunefakta/kostra/froya/befolkningsprofil and https://www.ssb.no/inntekt-og-forbruk/artikler-og-publikasjoner/disse-kommunene-har-storst-og-minst-inntektsulikhet
4. The interviews were conducted by the authors of this article. Field work and data collection in the second phase was conducted by first author.
5. In one family two grandparents were interviewed, one was a local 'adoptive' grandparent

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