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Nielsen, Helene Pristed

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No Place for their Children: Negotiating Gender, Place and Generation in a Flexible Work Context

Helene Pristed Nielsen*

Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

Helene Pristed Nielsen, Kroghstraede 3, room 5.253, Department of Culture and Global Studies

Aalborg University

9220 Aalborg East

+45 9940 9140

pristed@cgs.aau.dk

ORCID: 0000-0002-6625-0331

Ackn: Y

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Abstract

Drawing on a combination of theories on gender and place (Forsberg 1998, 2001) and work after globalisation (Beck 1992; Standing 2009, 2011), this article addresses how gender, place, employment-related mobility and flexible work conditions affect generational ties to place. Interviews with persons whose working life histories (by choice or circumstance) include flexible hours and high levels of mobility reveal explicit hopes that their children will have more stable working lives – and expectations that this will mean that they shall have to leave the local area. The article documents how the local place is an important component in the construction of employment-related mobilities, expectations for the future, valorisation of education, inter-generational relations and ties to places.

Keywords: flexible work; gender; generation; mobility; place

Contextualisation

Hirtshals is literally placed on the margins of Denmark, facing the North Sea on the country's Northwestern coastline. According to popular imagination and national media coverage, the town is part of 'peripheral Denmark' (Svendsen 2013). Demographic developments indicate a town in steady decline, as the number of inhabitants continue to dwindle (Statistics Denmark 2017). Like in other coastal towns in the Nordic region, traditional sources of income and employment based on fishing and fish processing have slumped (Haagensen 2014). Hence, local structures and practices have had to be adjusted accordingly, as the cultural and symbolic value of 'hard manual labour' has decreased (Hansen 2014). This, however, does not mean that local people are prepared to give up their work ethos. Despite facing labour market vulnerability, they manage to develop resilient practices, even if this means accepting precarious types of

employment.

This situation resonates with theories by Beck (1992) and Standing (2009, 2011), who have pointed out how adjustments to a global(ised) labour market mean that ability to display flexibility and mobility by the individual worker is acquiring increasing importance for securing oneself a job. Such processes may especially be affecting peripheral areas, as demands and expectations relating to jobs and educational attainment in local communities are undergoing profound changes (Faber, Pristed Nielsen, and Bennike 2015). For example, more traditional skills and competences are replaced or accompanied by needs for new types of skills (Hansen 2011; Gerrard 2013) and new types (and higher levels) of education (Hansen 2014; Corbett 2013), and/or increased employment-related mobility (Walsh et al. 2013).

The theoretical and analytic arguments presented in this article take their empirical starting point in these processes. Based on a sampling procedure aimed at obtaining narrative interviews with presumably highly flexible workers, the article discusses how gender, place and generation are being negotiated in the context of flexible work. For some of the interviewees, changing conditions and increasing demands and expectations for education, mobility and flexibility entail that they simply cannot envision a future for their own children in the local place. This empirical observation gives rise to a theoretical discussion of how employment-related mobilities among the local population may alter the basis for negotiating the intersections of gender, generation and place. Such negotiations will likely also be affected by potential in-coming migrants, but this is not the focus of the present article.

Theoretical framework: place as negotiated and work as flexibilised

The overall argument in this article is based on two distinct theoretical entry points, which have their roots in respectively geography and sociology. The two entry points

are the ideas of places as negotiated and gendered entities and work as a flexibilised practice. Below, I present these and discuss their interrelations.

Place as negotiated and gendered

Feminist geography argues that gender relations both reflect and affect the spatial organisation of society. Thus, ‘spaces and places are experienced differently by different people, and come to be associated with presence or absence of different groups of people’ (Nelson and Seager 2005, 15). People may feel attached to places, and place attachment in its simplest definition can be understood as ‘emotional bonds which people develop with various places’ (Lewicka 2011, 219). Such emotional bonds may contribute to as well as reflect spatialized constructions of femininity and masculinity, which further relates to Massey’s (2005) general argument about how social relations of power and identity are being negotiated in space. Turning to gender relations as one such type of negotiation of power and identity, Forsberg goes as far as arguing that ‘The place becomes an actor that creates social order specific gender relations’ (2001, 161). Hence, she sees places as ‘social constructions that influence the notion of what it means to be masculine and feminine’ (2001, 161). This argument leads Forsberg to pose the idea of ‘local gender contracts’ which in specific localities ‘guide[...] the perception of what proper gender behavior ought to be’ (2001, 163). Forsberg further suggests:

When people describe the “way things are round here”, they often refer to ways of daily life which are followed without being formalized or concretized in rules and regulations. What they are describing is a local social contract, where the gender contract plays an integrated, crucial role. This is what makes up a lot of “local tradition” and “local culture” (1998, 201).

Concretely, regarding life in Hirtshals, Hansen argues that male fishers dominate social space and objectified history to such an extent that it provides them with a legitimacy

which they are able to turn into an aspect of the contemporary social relations in town (2011, 215). He also describes the local community as ‘a town where access to manual labour and economic capital previously to a great extent eliminated the need for education’ (Hansen 2011, 79, own transl). Hard manual labour and sensible use of money were key ingredients in securing oneself a good position in the local social hierarchy, leading to what Hansen terms ‘a defensive approach’ to educational attainment (2011, 84, own transl). Hansen’s description resonates with Forsberg’s writing about two Swedish regions; ‘[Bergslagen and Småland...] in both there appears to be high respect for heavy, manual (male) work and less for study or education’ (Forsberg 1998, 201). These regions, Forsberg argues, ‘can be seen as examples of local social systems where tradition and long-term relations play a large role, where interaction in the locality is part of identity, and where the gender contract can be termed traditional’ (1998, 201).

Forsberg, however, also underscores that the idea of a contract implies that there may be possibilities to renegotiate, even if (gender) relations are far from equal. The most important points taken from above and into the further argumentation are 1) gender matters in understanding how the place is constructed and 2) these social constructions of place are negotiable and hence mutable over time.

Work as flexibilised

The second theoretical entry point goes via literature on work after globalisation (Beck 1992; Blossfeldt, Mills, and Bernardi 2008; Standing 2009); particularly Beck’s identification of an overall tendency for ‘temporal and spatial flexibilization of wage labor’ (1992, 143), and Blossfeld, Mills, and Bernardi’s argument that flexibilisation and globalisation are causing profound changes to social structures:

There is a widespread perception that these rapid changes will result in reduced job security, increasing rates and changing patterns of movements among jobs [...].

This in turn affects both the formation of identities and the recognition of interests and, consequently, determines where, and with what degree of sharpness, lines of social and economic division in modern societies are drawn (2008, 3).

I operationalise Beck's notion of *temporal flexibilisation* as related to overtime work, working irregular hours, on short term contracts or otherwise flexible approaches to time spent on work. This understanding is closely related to Standing's conception of 'precarious work', which refers to flexibility along a number of dimensions, including wage levels, lengths of contracts, and types of jobs. However, in Standing's conceptualisation, precariousness relates to more than simply work conditions, it is about an entire mode of existence: 'The precariousness also implies a lack of a secure work-based identity' (2011, 9).

Furthermore, increasing temporal flexibilisation of labour entails that workplaces may become 'greedy institutions' 'based on voluntary commitment from their members and demand[ing] total loyalty' (Brandth and Kvande 2001, 253), leading to a situation in which work and home compete for time and attention. Turning to empirical studies of temporal flexibilisation of work, Rutherford's analysis (aptly titled 'Are You Going Home Already?') leads her to argue that 'the long hours culture, prevalent in British organizations, acts as a means of patriarchal closure to exclude women managers from positions of power in those organizations' (2001, 259). She bases this argument upon an understanding of time as 'a resource to be drawn on in order to progress in an organization' (2001, 260).

Beck's complementary notion of *spatial flexibilisation* of work is here conceptualised as 'geographical employment-related mobilities' (Walsh et al. 2013). Somewhat similar to arguments about how places are fraught with negotiations of

power, Walsh et al. argue that ‘mobility ought to be regarded as a resource that is differentially accessed’ (2013, 261). One such axis of differentiation in access to mobility may be gender, which means that we must include gender perspectives when analysing mobilities (Uteng and Cresswell 2008; Walsh et al. 2013). Mobility is closely interrelated with place, as geographic mobilities are undertaken in relation to specific places – places which also lend meaning to the experiences of practicing these movements. As Walsh argues, ‘for some societies and communities, mobility is a cultural dimension central to the society itself’ (2013, 309).

Turning to empirical research on spatial flexibilisation of work, Gustafson’s (2006) analysis of work-related travel, gender and family obligations brings him to conclude that ‘it is conceivable that work-related travel not only reflects but also serves to reproduce and reinforce traditional gender roles’ (2006, 527). Spatial as well as temporal work flexibilisation seems to have gendered contours. Hence, Gustafson’s point that ‘Being willing and able to travel may [...] be an advantage when applying for a job or for promotion’ (2006, 515) resonates with Rutherford’s point about time as a patriarchal resource. Perhaps, it is conceivable to envision not only temporal, but also spatial flexibility, as patriarchal resources? This is an issue I shall return to in the analysis below.

Finally, a few words about the potential interrelations between the ideas of place as negotiated and work as flexibilised. Taking my inspiration from Corbett’s work, I wish to introduce his notion of ‘the heaviness of place’, which refers to

its social commitments, the cultural knowledge it contains, the networks it represents, and perhaps most importantly, the restrictions and limits it imposes [which makes] the kind of free-floating, choice-obsessed postmodern identity that Bauman describes difficult or even impossible to enact (2013, 279).

Adding this idea to discussions above, first of all entails that the word ‘choice’ becomes

suspect. Secondly, it suggests that negotiations about gender contracts, place attachment, and labour flexibility may be characterised by a certain inertia caused by the gravitational pull of the heaviness of place.

Data and methods

The analysis builds on nine biographical interviews with seven men and two women, all living in the local area at the time of the interview, and all having been directly or indirectly involved in upgrading the oilrigs ‘Guardian’ and ‘Giant’. The reason for utilising these oilrig yard stays as nodal points for sampling interviews was that this work was characterised by being short but intense. Guardian was at dock between April 29th and July 24th 2011 and Giant between June 28th and September 21st 2012, workers on the rigs generally working 12-hour shifts with few, if any, days off during the yard stays – and, as the interviews revealed, even people not working directly on the rigs were affected by these working patterns. Some interviewees worked directly on the rigs, others in auxiliary functions such as providing food and lodging. Interviewees were found through news media clips, official reports on which companies contributed to the work, searches on Facebook, visiting local bars and by word of mouth. The interviews were in the first instance intended for a study of precariousness and employee flexibility in North Denmark, which means that the main focus was on patterns of temporal and spatial job mobility. However, we also discussed questions of work-life balance and place attachment, and it is these aspects which the present article focuses on.

The interview format was inspired by the life history approach (Bertaux 1981), which is characterized by questions related primarily to interviewees’ experiences and perceptions – in this case, specifically related to their working life trajectories. Each interviewee was asked to ‘please tell me about your working life, right from your choice

of education and until now', thus encouraging the interviewee to take control of the interview situation. This was based on Bertaux's reasoning that 'If given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on; a lot more, sometimes, than sociologists' (1981, 38).

Follow up questions were also utilized, for example questions about work-life balance, perceptions of regional developments, place attachment, attitudes to working flexible hours, commuting, and moving for a new job. Although questions about children were not originally envisaged as a topic in the interviews, answers relating to many of these follow up questions involved statements about children and their futures in the region. When the analysis discusses these views about the children's future, it is important to underline that it is based on statements by the parents, and not on any evidence collected among the children themselves. All interviewees have signed a written consent form, and all have been given the opportunity to review and comment upon their interview transcript. All interviewees have been assigned a pseudonym in the analysis, and the greatest possible care has been taken to render them anonymous. All quotes from interviews have been translated to English from the Danish original.

The interviewees had very different working life experiences. Some of them were (or had previously been) entrepreneurs (Otto, Kevin, Brian, Carl, Tom) while others had always been employees (Shirley, Robert, Jacob, Mary). These experiences as respectively self-employed, employees and employers were cross-cut with many different stories relating both conflictual and more harmonious experiences of flexible work and family lives. However, it is important to point out that the harmonious stories may be perceived as such in hindsight – the interviews were retrospective, focusing on past experiences now rationalized in light of ensuing developments. This means that any previous conflicts may be down-played in the interview situation both due to

interviewer-interviewee interactions and the retrospective nature of the interview format.

Analysis: Negotiating gender, place and generation

Given the qualitative and rich narrative nature of the interview material, focus in the analysis is on the diversity of experiences and thoughts on interrelations between place, gender and work flexibility, implying no attempts at empirical generalisation. I have opted for an inductively inspired coding, looking for emerging themes and patterns irrespective of the gender or formal work position of the individual interviewee.

Accordingly, I have identified two main themes as relevant to the above discussion:

- (1) Mobility and family commitments
- (2) Following in daddy's footsteps?

Below, I discuss each theme in turn, drawing on a combination of empirical evidence and issues raised in the theoretical discussion above.

Mobility and family commitments

The most outstanding empirical finding is that everybody, with the exception of Robert, had at least once in their careers moved abroad to pursue work, some to seek adventure others because this at the time appeared the only available option. This fact is obviously connected with the sampling procedure, which deliberately targeted workers who were presumably flexible. Nevertheless, given the otherwise diversity of their current positions (everything from the hotel and catering business to offshore drilling), it does seem surprising that experiences with transnational work mobility would be so prevalent, and that 'the heaviness of place' (Corbett 2013) would seemingly have so little effect. Looking at the stories, many decisions about mobility were interwoven with

concerns for family commitment. Hence, in this part of the analysis, focus is on the interplay between gender and geographic employment-related mobility, based on the question arising from the theoretical debate above, namely whether both temporal and spatial flexibility may be ‘partriarcial resources’ (Rutherford 2001).

Several interviewees reflected upon how they had made working life decisions involving geographic mobility depend on their family situation. Tom, for example, had left a well-paid job in Norway which he held for about two years on account of becoming a father. He and his then girlfriend decided that they wanted to ‘go home’ to Denmark. Mary, on the other hand, decided early on in her career to follow her then boyfriend to Greenland for work.

Me: What made you chose to go to Greenland at the time?

Mary: It was because I had found a boyfriend who was trained as an engineer, and there were 400 applicants for each job. As I said then, well, then we must find something else. Then he said, how would you like to go to Greenland?

Despite reaching a point where she was invited for a job interview regarding a high level position in the Greenlandic public administration, Mary, too, eventually decided to return to Denmark. However, in her case not on account of her children (whom were born in Greenland) but on account of her parents in Denmark. Mary: ‘My mother was actually very ill while I lived there, and she also died while I was up there. And [...] then I agreed with myself that I should not commit myself further’. Paradoxically, Mary regarded working life in Greenland as less hectic than in Denmark, which meant that upon return, she decided to opt for a less demanding job. For both Tom and Mary, family commitments were thus part of the gravitational pull of place.

Similar to Mary, Shirley had followed her boyfriend abroad. At the age of 19, she had left her country of origin to move with him to Northern Denmark. She regarded

this move as a one-off, and did not envisage herself as ever moving again – although she was quite sure that both her children would leave the region in the longer run.

Kevin's work experiences abroad predated his marriage and children, but when asked about future prospective employment-related mobility, he answered that he would only consider leaving Denmark if it would be possible to combine with the interests of his wife and children:

Kevin: It had to be either Norway or Sweden.

Me: Why would that be attractive?

Kevin: It's a dream...I love to ski, and so does my entire family. If you could you combine it in a way...

Me: Like you combined London and football? [his previous period working abroad]

Kevin: Yes exactly, exactly. Then I might do it. [...But] just moving to Norway or Sweden to do the same as you do today, I see no reason for this. It should be for the extra.

Considerations for the interests of children and spouses figured as important in choices about employment-related mobility when moving across national borders. But also decisions about geographic mobility *within* national borders were tied up with family and emotional commitments. For example, Otto referred to his decision during youth about which town to move to when choosing education, as related to his parents' divorce and his wish to be where his father was. Contrarily, Brian had left the region in which he grew up, and without directly linking the two issues, told me that the violence he experienced from his father was part of the reason why he wanted to spend as little time as possible at home when a child.

Looking for gendered patterns, it is obvious that both women at one point in their lives decided to follow their husbands abroad, which is consistent with findings from other research (Dupuis, Haines and Saba 2008). But also Tom decided to follow

his former girlfriend, and Kevin could *only* envisage moving abroad if his family would find it attractive. Thus, Shirley, Mary, Tom, Kevin and Otto spoke directly about examples of mobility decisions as conditional upon family life, and/or kinship ties to places. It is notable how generational links play a role in relation to mobility patterns, as the interviewees consider both family ties to spouses and children, but also to their parents when making such choices. A fact which points to notions of place as relating to more than simply working life opportunities, and potentially indicative of ‘the heaviness of place’ (Corbett 2013).

The evidence on whether or not this means that spatial flexibility may be regarded as a kind of ‘patriarchal resource’, cf. my combined discussion of Gustafson (2006) and Rutherford (2001) above, is inconclusive. Partly because my sample is small and qualitative, but mainly because the geographic mobility patterns related through the interviews in most cases seem to have less to do with securing oneself advantageous job or promotion opportunities, and more to do with a predominant patch-work like quality of careers among my interviewees. As Corbett phrases it, such decisions are often less about choice than about ‘strategizing from a social location’ (2013, 279). And in the case of these interviewees, the social location is both defined by work opportunities, family commitments, kinship ties and knowledge about ‘the way things are round here’ (Forsberg 1998).

Those most mobile among my interviewees seem to be patching up holes in their employment through moving elsewhere or commuting outside the local area. And as opposed to the pattern of combining several income producing activities, as described by Nilsen (2014) about rural Norway during the first half of the 20th century, and by Aure (2001) in relation to a more contemporary rural Norwegian context, these people are not job sharing or combining different types of income simultaneously. Rather, they

are engaged in serial employment-related mobility, which means that they engage in a pattern whereby they continuously leave the local community in search of jobs/income, but also return between jobs or when job openings in their original community appear. So while place is a constant factor in Nilsen's and Aure's respective analyses, place seems a more variable factor in the working lives of my interviewees, although they clearly feel attachment, as they return whenever possible.

To understand the relationship between mobility, place and gender inherent in these practices, it is illuminating to turn to Bourdieu's early work on changes in peasant societies in France. (Although not published in English until 2008, these essays are based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in 1959-60). Bourdieu describes how peasant society has opened up to the outside world both in objective and subjective ways, and how this process has 'progressively neutrali[sed] the efficacy of the factors which tended to ensure the relative autonomy of that world and to make possible a particular form of resistance to the central values' (2008, 174). He further argues that there is a distinctly gendered, classed and generational aspect to these changes, as the older sons, who have traditionally been ensured a high social position due to their customary inheritance of the land, are the only ones really standing to lose from this conversion of values. Bourdieu argues, therefore, that women (and to a lesser extent the younger sons and the poor) end up being the 'Trojan horse' of the urban world, as a collective conversion to a world view that confers symbolic power to urban life is required for this to become the dominant value. Hence, 'the symbolic revolution is the cumulated product of countless individual conversions, which, beyond a certain threshold, drag each other in an ever faster race' (Bourdieu 2008, 178). Such conversion of forces of attraction amounts to a Copernican revolution, according to Bourdieu.

Elaborating further, one may speculate that such a Copernican revolution would enable nullification of the gravitational pull of place.

Following in daddy's footsteps?

Apart from the widespread practice of working abroad, another recurrent theme in the interviews was stories about either following in one's father's footsteps (no-one mentioned their mothers' previous occupations) and/or talking about the likelihood or desirability of one's own children following in one's footsteps. These parts of the narratives serve as focal points for this last section of the analysis. Some of these stories relate to gendered notions of work flexibility and family life, others seem more interrelated with questions of place, and a few tie in all four aspects of gender, generation, place and work flexibility.

The one story which most obviously draws together all aspects is Carl's. He seemingly prioritised work over family life, at least insofar as he saw Skype as a solution to his lack of spatial presence for his son. Acknowledging that this might be problematic, he ventured on to remark: 'My life has always been like that, and that's how I grew up, my own dad travelled a lot, fishing and so on... I couldn't imagine it differently'. Later on during the interview he added:

Carl: All of us here descend from fishermen and farmers, and we know damn well that when there is an opportunity to make money, then we need to pitch in until it stops, and then there is a period where there is perhaps not so much to do. So it is embedded in people who come from around here [...]. We know very well, us from the coastal towns, if there is something, well, then hang in. And then you may relax later.

Carl thus seemed to refer to a specific local understanding of when and under which circumstances flexible availability for work would be the norm – a norm which seems

explicitly male, given the reference to historically typical male occupations in farming and fishing. 'Fisheries [is] usually perceived as a male domain', although it is 'women's business, too' (Máñez and Pauwelussen 2016, 193). Hansen also remarks how he has been unable to trace any mentioning of women's contribution to fisheries in historical sources on Hirsthals (2011, 223). Furthermore, although women have always taken part in farming, Kærgaard and Dalgaard (2014) note how women's contribution to farming has historically been ignored in popular imagination and official statistics in Denmark. In population counts they were simply noted as 'housekeepers' if not employed outside the farm. Thus, Carl's remark resonates with Forsberg's notion of local gender contracts, and her idea that 'we act out of intentions and identities that have spatial roots' (2001, 161).

Shirley, like Carl, had also clearly followed in her father's footsteps, even to the extent of having the exact same type of job. In her case, however, there seemed to be no spatial rootedness involved in the 'intentions and identities' she had acted out of – on the contrary, she had left the country of her childhood aged only 19. And she predicted that history might be repeating itself: 'unfortunately my daughter wants to go into my line of business - now I persuaded her to do something else first, go to university and then find out if that is what she wants'. Shirley gave two reasons for wanting to dissuade her daughter to follow in her own footsteps: the working hours, and the likelihood that her daughter would have to leave the country to really climb the ranks.

Shirley: It's a tough business, our industry. It is weekend shifts, it is nightshifts, you have to be ready to work anytime, anywhere. It is hard. Is that really what you want? If you want to go high up in this business, you must be willing to perhaps move to the US or France.

The aspect of the quote which I find most interesting is the implicit rejection of good career prospects in this line of business for her daughter within the local region. In fact,

she expected both her daughter and her son to leave and probably not return: 'I also don't imagine that my children will stay here, they will not'. The same was true of both Otto and Brian when they spoke about their children and the future they envisaged for them. Otto advised his children to expect greater global competition for attractive jobs, and was greatly concerned about the region's inability to retain its younger population. Being concerned about demographic developments (partly because he as employer depended on being able to hire suitably qualified staff), he experienced a situation in which the young people were leaving town to go to university – 'and I am afraid they are not coming back'. He did not see any of his four children as likely to want to take over the business after him, nor had he followed in his own father's footsteps.

Likewise, Brian had certainly not followed in his father's footsteps nor did he expect or hope that his children would do like himself. Concerning his childhood, he explained that he had spent as much time as possible with his neighbour, who was a farmer whom he lent a helping hand as a child – partly to earn pocket money and partly to escape his father's beatings. He had made sure to leave his childhood home as early as possible, and was even granted permission to leave primary school prematurely, without obtaining the otherwise obligatory exam. Despite his lack of formal qualifications, Brian had managed to make quite a career for himself, and had worked both as a travelling fitter all over Europe, in construction in Sweden for several years, as a fisherman and later on board an oilrig in the North Sea, and now as self-employed with a successful little company in which he usually hired in 5-6 extra staff for the busy summer season. Being a busy man, however, also meant that he had not spent as much time with his children as he would have liked to. Reflecting on this fact and on their futures, he said:

Brian: [my son] he just started at the University [...]. He wants to be a civil engineer. And the little one, she will enter 10th grade at a private school after the summer break. So they will both get a good education. Fortunately. I certainly would not hope for them to spend their life on something like what I do.

Reviewing the interview evidence, it brings forward a story not so much of a local gender contract, but more a generational contract – namely hopes for one's children to achieve a better education than oneself and the explicit expectation that a successful future for the children would involve leaving the region in pursuit of education. This finding stands somewhat in contrast to observations by Hansen, who speaks about 'a defensive approach' to educational attainment (2011, 84) complemented by a valorisation of hard manual labour. However, Hansen also emphasizes that the migration trajectory of the family has an influence on the attachment and sense of commitment people feel to the local community, as young people from families who had moved to Hirtshals during its boom years between the 1950s-1980s, feel 'neither mentally nor structurally obliged to stay in Hirtshals, as its conservators and guardians' (Hansen 2014, 266, own transl).

Focusing on my interviewees – many of whom had, indeed, faced a life of hard manual labour – it is striking how they do not seem to valorise manual labour to the extent one might expect, given that many had obtained quite comfortable incomes from their work. Despite several confirmations that pay levels were high in the maritime sector, none wished for their children to enter it. Considering overall demographic trends and prospects for the local labour market, Otto remarked:

Otto: It might mitigate some of it, if they [young people planning to leave the region] are told the good story about how well it really goes in the maritime industry, and that you can actually make quite a reasonable salary [...]. But given the demographic development, we cannot be sure that a good story will be enough for local communities.

This observation by the local business owner Otto seems readily relatable to a point raised in the theoretical discussion above, namely the proposition that the changes which local labour markets experience after globalisation are so profound as to ‘affect both the formation of identities and the recognition of interests’ (Blossfeld, Mills, and Bernardi 2008, 3), in Otto’s prediction to the detriment of local communities.

This empirical situation contrasts with Nilsen’s (2014) analysis of rural modernisation in Norway during 1900-1950, which aims to ‘explain why Norwegian modernisation has taken place while the population pattern has remained predominantly scattered’ (2014, 50). Nilsen argues that a key to explaining this pattern is that modern occupations (e.g. in the mining or manufacturing industries) often became ‘elements in the typical flexible occupational strategies of rural households, which enabled many of them to stay in their native communities’ (Nilsen 2014, 53). He further refers to Drivenes (1985) for the point that ‘the farmer-fisher did not end up as a miner, but in periods he was *also* a miner’ (as quoted in Nilsen 2014, 53). Hence, what Nilsen describes is a process of rural modernization without occupational specialisation. He furthermore argues that ‘strong egalitarian values prevalent in the local communities in the north have hindered local entrepreneurial careers’ (2014, 53).

In contrast, turning the lenses to Northern Denmark post-2010, the workers interviewed for this study are highly specialised (and several of them are specialised in several fields). They are not job sharing or combining different types of income, but are engaged in serial employment-related mobility, whereby they continuously leave the local community in search of jobs/income, but also return when they see fit. These experiences with high levels of specialisation combined with extreme levels of temporal and spatial mobility (and perhaps an absence of strong egalitarian values – and certainly a presence of many local entrepreneurs) appear to make them wish for something

different for their children. Extending Bourdieu's argument, individual conversions to urban values appear to have a kind of cumulative effect, which potentially counteract gravitational principles of place attachment. While Hansen in his study (2011, 2014) primarily interviewed workers dependent on place-based resources (fishing and fish processing), my interviewees were less place-bound in their work, although not necessarily less place attached in an emotional sense.

Concluding discussion

As discussed above, mobility may sometimes be a cultural dimension of place (Walsh 2013). One of the meanings of place for the interviewees in my study seem to be readiness for flexible work conditions, as demands for spatial and temporal flexibilisation of work are phenomena which they seemingly associate with the place in which they live. Hence, Blossfeld, Mills, and Bernardi's point about how job insecurity will 'determine where, and with what degree of sharpness, lines of social and economic division in modern societies are drawn' (2008, 3) resonate well with the empirical data: Place seems to impact on the social production of expectations and experiences regarding gender and generation, as well as temporal and spatial availability for work.

Drawing inspiration from how my empirical findings seem to contrast along specific dimensions with findings by Hansen (2011) and Nilsen (2014), I venture on to further theorising the relationship between place and work mobilities. Thus, I propose to distinguish between two alternative working life patterns, which by way of contrast may illuminate the negotiated outcomes vis-à-vis place attachment, generational relations and access to income. The relationship between place of work and source of income could be conceptualised as two different ideal type patterns. The first pattern can be characterised as 'sedentary, simultaneous, non-specialised multi-jobbing', whereas the alternative pattern is characterised by 'mobile, serial, specialised, consecutive jobs'.

These two patterns signify contrasting ways of securing an income vis-à-vis one's geographic emplacement.

To elaborate, pattern one (sedentary, simultaneous, non-specialised multi-jobbing) is characterised by a sedentary working life (although it may involve geographic mobility in the form of commuting) with high levels of temporal work flexibility. This signifies a potentially less specialised working pattern based on simultaneous multi-jobbing and deriving income from various sources whose relative importance may vary over time (traditionally, such variation would be season-based, although seasonal work such as fishing and farming need not be part of the current income base). This pattern may not to the same extent as the pattern described below lead to great emphasis on the value of formal education, whereas it is a pattern which is highly compatible with high levels of place attachment. Thus, pattern one entails a cosmology where place and place attachment take primary importance.

In contrast, pattern two (mobile, serial, specialised, consecutive jobs) refers to a geographically mobile working life with high levels of spatial work flexibility, which may or may not involve returning to one's place of origin during the working life cycle. This signifies a highly specialised work pattern based on serial activation of skills in different geographic locations as one moves through them in pursuit of work. This pattern of securing oneself an income through high levels of mobility combined with high levels of work specialisation very likely leads to recognition of the value of education and potentially less emphasis on place attachment for oneself and/or for the coming generations. Pattern two thus entails a cosmology centred on work. As part of this Copernican reorientation, according to Bourdieu, schools end up being seen as 'the only agency capable of teaching the aptitudes that the economic or the symbolic market demand' (2008, 186), which means that former skepticism and resistance to

schooling diminishes. Furthermore, 'submission to the values of the school reinforces and accelerates the renunciation of the traditional values that it presupposes' (Bourdieu 2008, 186), entailing that generational effects accumulate.

The identification of how such evolving patterns of employment-related mobility seem to go along with a valorisation of education and a potential de-valorisation of generational ties to places is very interesting, not least for those interested in demographic and economic developments in 'peripheral' areas. De-valorisation of place attachment has historically, according to Bourdieu, been led by women and the poor, because these groups 'perceive earlier and better than the others the advantages associated with emigration' (2008, 178). In Forsberg's understanding, one such advantage could be distancing oneself from the local gender contract. This article has shown, however, that the local place is an important component in the construction of expectations for the future regarding both employment-related mobilities, as well as gender and generational relations between both men and women, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters.

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Notes on Contributor

Helene Pristed Nielsen is Associate Professor at FREIA Center for Gender Research, Aalborg University, Denmark. Recently, she was co-coordinator of the 'Global Periphery' project which focuses on gender and diversity and how globalization is affecting place practices and place attachment at the social level. This project resulted in a couple of edited volumes, including *Remapping Gender, Place and Mobility: Global Confluences and Local Particularities in Nordic Peripheries* (2015), edited together with Stine Thidemann Faber, and published by Ashgate in the series 'Gender in a Global/Local World'. Helene Pristed Nielsen's general research interests revolve around issues of inclusion and participation of minorities at the political as well as the social level. Recent publications include: 'A strange familiarity? Place

perceptions among the globally mobile' in *Visual Communication* 2014 and 'Offshore but on track?: Hypermobile and hyperflexible working lives' in *Community, Work & Family* 2016.

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