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School caringscapes: Understanding how time and space shape refugee and immigrant adolescents' caring practices and wellbeing in Danish schools

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ABSTRACT

Schools are increasingly cited as spaces of support for learners facing adversity. It is therefore not surprising that recent migration flows have contributed to a mushrooming of school-focused policies and interventions looking to promote the mental health and wellbeing of refugee and immigrant learners. In response to a research focus on how teachers, schools and school-based interventions care for the wellbeing of vulnerable learners, this article explores ethnographically how school-going refugee and immigrant adolescents develop their own practices of care for self and others. It draws on fieldwork carried out between December 2018 and June 2019 and includes participant observations in two Danish preparatory classes for newcomers and in-depth interviews with 13 learners and five teachers. Drawing on the concepts of *caringscapes* and *carescapes*, our analysis not only reveals how newcomers form significant caring practices, and co-produce spaces that foster collective wellbeing, but highlights the temporally and spatially bounded nature of their care. We found their caring practices to be oriented in relation to biographical time, highlighting how newcomers enrol past experiences, present needs and future aspirations in their caring. We also noted that newcomers' caring practices are contingent on the character of their school environments, including teacher practices, and wider policy contexts around refugee and immigrant children's education and residence. We conclude that efforts to understand and promote refugee and immigrant learners' wellbeing in school contexts must take heed of the temporally and spatially bounded nature of their agentic capabilities to care for themselves and their peers.

1. Introduction

There is growing interest in charging schools with caring responsibilities to address social ills, whether it is to promote physical and mental health or to support greater inclusion (Skovdal and Campbell, 2015). This interest is particularly evident in the context of current international migration and forced displacement of children under the age of 18. A rapidly expanding body of research is examining the role of schools as nodes of support for newly arrived refugee and immigrant children (Fazel, 2015, Fazel et al., 2016, O'shea et al., 2000, Pastoor, 2015). As refugee and immigrant children often face complex mental health problems (Barghadouch et al., 2018, Borsch et al., 2019, Kosonen, 2008, Oppedal et al., 2009), schools are also increasingly becoming spaces of formalized mental health promotion and care through a range of school-based interventions (Bennouna et al., 2019, Fazel and Betancourt, 2018, Rousseau and Guzder, 2008, Sullivan and Simonson, 2016, Tyrer and Fazel, 2014). Such analysis and action, however, is largely

adult-centric, and focuses on what school leadership, teachers or mental health providers can do to care for and support learners facing hardship.

While adults *do* play a central role in safeguarding the wellbeing of learners facing adversity, such efforts must not only be embedded within broader support structures (Skovdal and Campbell, 2015, Häggström et al., 2020), but also be informed by, and resonate with, learners' self-grown caring practices and support for each other. It is therefore critical to recognize learners' own ways of caring. Social support, including feeling supported and cared for by one's peers and at school, has been found beneficial to mental health and wellbeing in newcomer refugee and immigrant children (Fazel et al., 2012, Pieloch et al., 2016). Yet, Wernesjö (2012) and Kallio and Bartos (2017) argue that studies of refugee and immigrant children's wellbeing generally overlook the importance of children's own everyday social agency and ways of caring for self and others. Such perspectives are likely absent in the literature since children are generally viewed as dependent on adult

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caregivers (Haugen, 2007). Much research on refugee and immigrant children has a tendency to position them as vulnerable to poor mental health and in need of adult protection (Wernesjö, 2012). Because children are often viewed as vulnerable beings in the making, their informal care of others often goes unnoticed (Leu and Becker, 2017). This is disconcerting, as studies have found that children and young people's care for others can be a form of self-care, enhancing their wellbeing and resilience (Skovdal and Andreouli, 2011, Ungar et al., 2011). Research into children and young people's informal care, however, is largely restricted to their care of family members because of illness (Evans, 2012, Becker, 2007, Skovdal et al., 2009), divorce (Haugen, 2007) or disability (Newman, 2002). Little has been done to ethnographically unpack; one, how immigrant and refugee adolescents might care for each other, and how this might contribute to resilience and wellbeing; and, two, how their everyday care practices and agencies unfold within different school contexts. A general dearth of school-based ethnographic work with newcomer refugee and immigrant learners has arguably undermined efforts to identify strength-based conceptualisations of how adolescents themselves, through everyday practices within their school environments, achieve psychosocial wellbeing.

Against this background, and given the expanding interest in the role of schools in promoting the mental health of refugee and immigrant learners, we set out to ethnographically explore the following research question: *How do newly arrived refugee and immigrant adolescents provide care for each other and themselves in two different school contexts in Denmark?* With inspiration from the concepts of *caringscapes* and *carescapes* (Bowlby, 2012, McKie et al., 2002, Bowlby et al., 2010, Bowlby and McKie, 2019), we show how the adolescents' caring practices are bound up with concerns for the past, the present and the future, just like they are connected to the school space and wider national-policy contexts. We not only demonstrate the ingenuity of newly arrived refugee and immigrant learners to avail care and support for each other in school settings, but offer novel insights into the processes of how biographical time and school spaces shape learners' caring practices and wellbeing. We argue that these empirical and theoretical insights are critical for informing future research and interventions targeting the mental health and wellbeing of refugee and immigrant learners in school contexts.

1.1. Care, caringscapes and carescapes

We take inspiration from the feminist political philosophy of Joan C. Tronto, whose work *Moral Boundaries* (Tronto, 1993) stands as one of the seminal texts on the concept of care. According to Tronto and Fischer, care is 'everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our world' (Tronto, 1993, p. 103). In the context of resettlement and school life, we argue that maintaining, continuing and repairing worlds is exactly what the young newcomers do as they *maintain* hope, create *continuity* in their lives, and *repair* their own and each other's self-images. While Tronto (1993) implies that care necessarily involves practical work of care-giving, recent childhood research has asserted a need for understanding children's mundane caring practices, which do not entail practical care work as such (Kallio and Bartos, 2017, Bartos, 2012). As Bartos argues, 'children's everyday caring practices can allude to the values and concerns they have for their world' (Bartos, 2012, p. 159). Thus, in this article, we approach care as a *practice* as well as an *orientation* in the world to understand 'what matters' to refugee and immigrant newcomers' wellbeing.

To unpack how care is temporally and spatially bounded in newcomer refugee and immigrant learner's school lives, we draw on the caringscapes/carescapes framework (Bowlby, 2012, McKie et al., 2002, Bowlby et al., 2010, Bowlby and McKie, 2019). This framework focuses on informal caregiving in the form of unpaid caring activities. The concept of caringscapes refers to how multiple temporalities and spatialities intersect and interact in people's practices and organisations of care as well as how they feel about these aspects. Caring practices

within certain caringscapes depend on the available resources and services. Bowlby and colleagues refer to these service and resource contexts around caringscapes as *carescapes* (Bowlby, 2012, Bowlby et al., 2010, Bowlby and McKie, 2019). The availability of resources depends on economy, government and policy as well as social and technological change. As such, there may be certain carescapes of a nation state, a government (Bowlby, 2012), or, in our case, preparatory classrooms. For the purposes of this study, we examine how the caring practices and time-space orientations (the caringscapes) of the young refugees and immigrants relate to the resources in schools as well as the current immigration and education policies and discourses in Denmark (the carescapes).

The caringscape/carescape framework builds on the metaphor of a multidimensional 'terrain' to illustrate the way we may think about and organize our caring activities, primarily in a life-course perspective, but also in relation to everyday routines. Throughout life, the terrain we travel as well as our fellow travellers will change and dynamically influence our ways of caring. The metaphor most explicitly relates to the present and the future, but also illuminates the significance of the past as memories and habits of past 'travel' and caring influence current choices of routes. Caringscapes imagery builds on the concepts of 'locales' or 'settings of interaction' coined by Giddens (1984), illustrating how social relations and social meanings across different spatial scales contribute to the constitution of certain spaces of care interactions over time (Bowlby, 2012). For example, preparatory classrooms are particular spaces where teachers' competencies and care ethics, immigration and education policy, and the perspectives and actions of newly arrived learners converge and create unique settings of care interactions.

Originally, the caringscapes/carescapes framework provided an adult-centered lens for understanding care in time-space, primarily assuming children to be recipients of care (Bowlby, 2017); an approach also adopted in a more recent study of the care provided for young unaccompanied refugees in The Netherlands (De Graeve and Bex, 2017). Bowlby herself now calls for studies exploring child-centered caringscapes, asserting that 'Thinking about the caringscapes of children suggests we should explore what kinds of futures children and adolescents in different socio-spatial contexts and with different embodied social capital (Holt, 2008) imagine and how they enrol past experiences into present and anticipated caring relationships.' (Bowlby, 2017, p. 247). We set out to place adolescents as the subjects of caringscapes by focusing on the ways in which newly arrived young refugees and immigrants in public schools in Denmark orient their caring practices in relation to the past, the present and imagined futures, within the context of specific school spaces. While previous research on child-centered caringscapes has been focused on children in youth-headed households affected by AIDS in the global South (Evans, 2012), and on Norwegian families in the aftermath of divorce (Haugen, 2007), our study centers the analysis in schools in Denmark and among peers rather than in homes and among family members. Furthermore, existing caringscape/carescape studies (Haugen, 2007, Evans, 2012, McKie et al., 2002, De Graeve and Bex, 2017) mainly approach caring as an explicit task directed towards other people. Through our analysis, we expand the framework to also include caring as an orientation in time and space towards certain projects or activities.

Finally, the caringscapes/carescapes framework suggests a life-course perspective, relating caring decisions and activities to socially expected, age-related transitions, such as leaving school, having children, and marriage (Bowlby, 2012, Evans, 2012). However, we primarily draw on insights from sharing school spaces with the learners at a particular point in time and not over the course of life stages or transitions. Nevertheless, time, in a biographical sense of lived pasts, presents and imagined futures, appeared in our study as key to how the adolescents collectively navigated, negotiated and exercised care. By exploring the caringscapes and carescapes of refugee and immigrant newcomers in this way, we wish to contribute to a discussion of the tempo-

ral and socio-spatial dynamics shaping care conducive to wellbeing at school.

2. Methods

The first author (ASB) conducted ethnographic fieldwork in two preparatory classes for newcomers over the course of six months (December 2018 to June 2019). The fieldwork forms part of a larger study on a preventive school-based psychosocial wellbeing programme for newly arrived refugee and immigrant adolescents. The teachers of the classes implemented the programme in the spring of 2019. Findings presented in this paper are mainly based on the initial stages of fieldwork, which focused on developing an in-depth understanding of the already existing care and social-support practices in the two schools. The ethnographic research approach was therefore chosen, allowing ASB to immerse herself into the explicit and subtle caring practices as they unfolded in everyday school life.

2.1. Field sites and study participants

The Danish public compulsory school (*folkeskole*) system offers free education for children of the ages 6 to 16 with legal residence while asylum-seeking children must be offered an equivalent of public compulsory education, either in the asylum centre or at a local school. Since the 1980s, refugee and immigrant children arriving in most municipalities have been assigned to preparatory classes (in Danish, *modtagelsesklasser*) in the public compulsory school system once they obtain a residence permit. Preparatory classes previously offered instruction in Danish as a second language (DSL) as well as training in the learners' first languages to sustain their knowledge of and connection to their countries of origin. However, policy changes since the late 1990s have directed the classes towards a more exclusive focus on Danish language, culture and society (Tørslev and Borsch, 2017). Preparatory classes are age-based groups covering no more than three grades. Newcomers can attend the classes for a maximum of two years and should be gradually included into mainstream teaching as their DSL skills develop.

The two preparatory classes recruited for this study were located in different parts of Denmark, selected following a maximum variation logic as they represented very different settings for refugee and immigrant resettlement. This recruitment strategy stemmed from an interest in gaining a nuanced understanding of school life for newcomers in Denmark. One school, henceforth referred to as Stonebridge School, was located in a major Danish city and had a high proportion of foreign-born learners (around 40%). The newcomers at this school were from South and East Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East and North America and were between 13 and 16 years old. While some had fled wars or had been reunified to family members with refugee status, the majority had settled in Denmark because their parents migrated for work. We refer to these learners who did not come from war-torn countries as immigrants. The other school, referred to as Lakeside School, was located in a small town, predominantly populated by ethnic majority Danes, which had received a substantial number of refugees and family reunified to refugees in recent years due to the spatial dispersal policy on refugee settlement in Denmark (for a discussion of this policy, see Larsen (2011)). Hence, the majority of newcomers in this class were young people from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan, the age group ranging from 15 to 18 years of age.

National legislation outlines the general features of preparatory classes, but the practical organisation of instruction for newcomers is subject to local policy variations between municipalities. Stonebridge School was in a municipality where policies encouraged individual monitoring of learners' academic progress to facilitate early mainstreaming. In contrast, many of the learners in the Lakeside preparatory class stayed in the class past the two-year limit. The school had applied for a dispensation to let the learners stay since Lakeside School was the only available setting for them to be in a learning environment with other

adolescents. This was also the reason for this preparatory class having an older learner group than what would normally be expected in compulsory schooling.

ASB first obtained access to the schools by contacting the principals. They shared ASB's contact details with the teachers responsible for the preparatory classes who reached out and gave her access to their classrooms. At the beginning of the fieldwork, the Stonebridge and Lakeside classrooms had 15 and 17 learners, respectively. They were all invited to participate in the study to obtain as nuanced a picture of newcomer perspectives as possible. However, due to high rates of school absence and learners frequently moving classes, not all ended up engaging with the research.

2.2. Generating empirical materials

To generate material for the study, ASB spent 40 days amounting to approximately 180 hours observing and participating in class activities. In the early stages of fieldwork, which form the primary empirical basis of this paper, she conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with 13 learners, including seven learners at Stonebridge (four girls and three boys) and six learners at Lakeside School (three girls and three boys). The interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes and were steered by a topic guide covering (i) peer relationships in class, (ii) relationships with teachers, (iii) joys and challenges of living and going to school in Denmark, (iv) and hopes and aspirations for the future. The interviews were conducted in Danish and English. Following the learners' requests, ASB also interviewed a couple of learners in their native languages using an interpreter.

Prior to the interviews, all learners were invited to participate in a photography workshop. Each participating learner was asked to take photographs of (i) what they liked most about school, (ii) what they liked least about school, (iii) what their relationship with their classmates was like, and (iv) what their classmates would do when the learner was going through a difficult time. The intention was to provide a space for the learners to take control of the research process and capture dimensions of their social lives that they might not articulate spontaneously during interviews. The learners recorded the meaning behind their photographs in short written memos or by explaining to ASB who would write down their accounts verbatim. For the learners who also participated in interviews, their individual photographs were used as a starting point for the conversation. The learners granted ASB written permission to publish selected photographs, some of which are featured in this paper.

ASB also conducted interviews with teachers responsible for the preparatory classes (two in Stonebridge and three in Lakeside). The teacher interviews were conducted in Danish and took an average of 90 min. They covered the teachers' motivations for working with newcomers, difficulties and available support in their work, and their understandings of class dynamics and learners' psychosocial needs. Since our interest in this paper is to let the learners' voices take centre stage, we will not quote the teacher interviews, however, they form an important context for our findings.

Acknowledging that the learners were well aware of ASB being a majority ethnic Dane in her late 20s doing research, ASB did not make attempts at positioning herself as a learner during fieldwork. Instead, she sought to present herself as an 'unusual type of adult' (Christensen, 2004) whose position and demeanour was different from that of teachers and other school staff. In classes and during breaks, ASB would follow along with any cues and invitations from the learners without seeking to direct their activities and behaviour or dominate the conversation. While this meant that ASB would sometimes engage in activities that the teachers did not endorse, it was a way of demonstrating genuine interest in understanding the world from the learners' perspectives. Although this strategy appeared fruitful, we cannot deny that ASB would possibly have had access to different stories from the adolescents, had she herself been a person with an immigrant background.

2.3. Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency. Formal ethical approval is not required for this type of research in Denmark. We obtained informed consent from all participants in writing. However, rather than treating consent as a once-and-for-all event (Skovdal and Abebe, 2012), ASB re-confirmed the participants' consent at the beginning of each new research activity. The learners' caregivers and parents were informed about the study in a language they understood via parent-teacher conferences using interpreters, or in written communication from the teachers, which had been translated. Parents, caregivers and adolescents also received information flyers explaining about the study in more detail. The flyers explained that the study was about wellbeing in preparatory classes and about how schools can support wellbeing and social relationships among newcomer adolescents. In accordance with Danish data protection policy, we obtained caregiver or parental consent for participants under the age of 15. We use pseudonyms to keep all participants' identities confidential.

2.4. Analytical process

All interviews were digitally audio recorded, then transcribed and subsequently analysed in NVivo alongside the photographs and ASB's field notes. The post-fieldwork analytical process began by reviewing the empirical material, recording initial ideas building on those already developed during fieldwork. Next, we developed a coding framework, allowing a cross-sectional labelling of the material, guided by the research question. Inspired by Attridge-Stirling's (2001) approach to thematic network analysis, the codes were then collated into a number of basic themes, which represented a more interpretive level of meaning across interviews, field notes and photographs (such as 'becoming good Danish learners' and 'creating continuity and homeliness in a transient school environment'). In dialogue with our theoretical framework, we then clustered the basic themes under three organizing themes, which were finally connected in a global theme. To increase the validity of emerging themes and ideas, ASB asked for respondent feedback during fieldwork and we discussed analytical ideas with other research colleagues.

The emerging global theme represents the overall narrative of the paper. The organizing themes constitute the sub-headings structuring the presentation of our findings, unfolding how the learners engage in caring practices in the time-space of school and resettlement. Recognizing that the dimensions of biographical time (past, present and future) are intimately linked and cannot be understood in a unanimously linear way (Hanson, 2017), we nevertheless structure our account in relation to these dimensions since they appeared in the analysis as important to the adolescents' ways of thinking about and practicing care. We discuss the adolescents' caring agencies in relation to the present and the future and finally go on to consider how the young refugees and immigrants enrol past experiences and family histories in their caring.

3. Findings

3.1. Caring for the present: creating safe spaces at school

'When I came here the first time and I didn't speak Danish and I didn't have any friends, I was very scared [...] some of the students came to talk to me so that I was not scared. And now, when new students are coming, I do the same. Because I know that they are scared.' (Kannika, age 14, Thailand, Stonebridge School)

Starting a new school is described by Bowlby and colleagues as a transition, which involves changes in caring relationships (Bowlby et al., 2010), and for young newcomers in Denmark this is associated with discomfort and uncertainty. The language is strange and there are no familiar faces around. Feeling uneasy when new in school came up in nearly

all interviews with the learners. However, due to their common experience of having migrated recently, the adolescents shared an understanding of what is at stake for newly arrived learners. This, as described by Kannika above, placed them in a unique position to be attentive to each other's needs and support each other. In this section, we outline how the preparatory classes were constitutive of caringscapes where learners facilitated feelings of social and academic safety among each other.

Based on her own memory of classmates trying to make her feel comfortable in the past, Kannika oriented her present caring practices towards making new learners feel welcome and included. Especially at Stonebridge School, this ability to help peers settle was in high demand: local policies of closely monitoring learners' academic progress to promote early mainstreaming meant that there was a steady flow of learners arriving in and leaving the class. Consequently, the young newcomers at Stonebridge were highly skilled in 'integrating' new classmates, making introductions, asking them questions, exploring common interests. A number of practices in the surrounding carescape supported this caringscape of transient community: the teachers reminded the learners to always give a warm welcome to new classmates. They also made efforts to 'match' learners whom they thought would become good friends by assigning them to seats next to each other in the classroom or having them work in groups together. Thus, the carescape around the learners in Stonebridge was one of many dynamic shifts where the teachers, through spatial interventions such as the seating plan, sought to create a sense of continuity and help new learners feel included.

In both schools, caring in the sense of 'maintaining and continuing worlds' (Tronto, 1993) was an important part of how the young newcomers navigated their caringscapes in relation to the present. At Lakeside School, learners insisted on throwing birthday parties for each other in class, rearranging the classroom tables to build a buffet for snacks and drinks, music from their countries of origin blaring out of the loudspeakers by the blackboard. The majority of the learners in this class had refugee backgrounds and had experienced sudden shifts and ruptures in the past. Celebrating the passing of time with songs and familiar foods that had travelled from the places the adolescents still called home carried emotional significance. Zahra (age 18, Syria) remembered her first surprise birthday celebration in class:

'It was great! Because it was the first time that somebody thought of me that way. Like, what they could do to make me happy. Or what my birthday should look like. It was so good. I hope they will do it again. I am hoping and wishing!'

The birthday celebrations at Lakeside School showed the classroom as a space where the learners' pasts and personal backgrounds had a place and were dimensions that the learners cared about. In addition to food and music, Syrian learners introduced classmates and ASB to Arabic dabkeh dancing. The learners also brought drawings and other artwork that the teachers would encourage them to hang on the walls. These practices attest to the character of the carescape, or resource context, for the learners' caringscapes at Lakeside: With many students having experienced significant peril, the relationship between teachers and learners in this class was just as much a personal relationship as an academic one. Furthermore, the absence of mental health support for newcomer refugees in the municipality made teachers' pastoral care for learners an even more critical resource. This possibly contributed to the learners' wishes to make the classroom a safe space invested with their personal meanings.

At both schools, learners were also concerned with creating continuity in the school space in more mundane ways, which did not directly involve displays of their cultural backgrounds. In the photography workshop, several learners photographed spaces at school which made them feel comfortable. These were typical leisure spaces for adolescents, like in the photograph that Samuel (age 18, Eritrea) took of the football field at Lakeside, the table football area in the Stonebridge cafeteria captured by Yasin (age 14, Syria) or the couch in the Stonebridge corridor in Kannika's photo (Fig. 1–3). Common to such spaces was the predictability



Fig. 1. Samuel feels happy when he plays football with classmates and Danish peers.



Fig. 2. Yasin enjoys playing table football with his friends in the cafeteria at the same time every day.



Fig. 3. The couch in the corridor, Kannika's favourite space at school.

and safety that the learners ascribed to them as a result of the daily activities they shared with their peers here. Samuel played football every day with a couple of classmates and learners from the mainstream classes. He explained: 'When I play football, I can learn Danish. When I play football, I am very happy'. At Stonebridge School, Yasin enthusiastically explained that he and other boys from the preparatory class would go play table football at the same time every day while Kannika described how sitting on the couch, chatting or playing games with her friends while looking at the world outside, was an established after-school ritual. The learners thus associated the preparatory classes in both schools and the spaces around them with safety and predictability. In their caringscape orientations related to the present, they worked together to maintain these spaces by repeating activities together with their peers.

Finally, the preparatory classes also constituted academic safe spaces for the youth as they struggled to learn the Danish language. 18-year-old Amir, a Syrian learner at Lakeside, had lessons each week in the mainstream class down the corridor, but he was not eager to go:

'It depends on how many from my class are also attending the lesson. Because if there are other students from my class, I feel more safe. That there are others who are like me [...] The others may hear that I say something the wrong way and maybe they will laugh at me. So if there are other students from my own class, it is less embarrassing.'

Caring about the presence of 'others who are like me' in the school space was not only a theme among learners with refugee backgrounds. At Stonebridge School, 15-year-old Hailey from the United States, who had initially been assigned to a mainstream class at a different school, expressed similar feelings:

'I think – and it's really weird, I usually hate presenting, but I really like this class 'cause even if I don't hang out with them after school, when I'm presenting, it's really comfortable, like, you know, in Danish. Everyone knows you're probably not going to say that right, but that's okay [...] at the end we're like "yeah, we tried", you know [...] And that's why it's probably a lot easier to speak it than in a normal Danish class where people will be like "haha, you don't say it like that"'

By being present in the same physical space as language minority learners, the newcomers provided each other with a sense of safety, regardless of whether they had fled a war like Amir or moved with their parents for a job opportunity like Hailey. In both classrooms, the teachers' practices and pedagogical skills were important resources for this dimension of the learners' caringscapes. Teachers spoke slower, used simpler phrases, and adopted an encouraging attitude towards the learners.

Thus, in relation to the present, the preparatory class caringscapes revolved around practices and orientations, which enabled the learners to feel socially and academically safe. This happened through shared experiences of being newcomers and collective efforts to create continuity at school. At Stonebridge School, this was related to a carescape where teachers encouraged learners to socialize and be welcoming to new classmates. This was necessary to support learner wellbeing, given local policies, which caused many shifts in the class composition. At Lakeside, the carescape was characterized by teachers as important caregivers in the adolescents' lives. This possibly encouraged learners to invest the classroom with practices of cultural and emotional significance.

3.2. *Caring for the future: maintaining hope*

One day, after a lunch break at Lakeside School, ASB found Abdul from Syria sitting hunched by the blackboard, two of his teachers and a few classmates gathered around him. 'What if I get sent back tomorrow? I don't want to go to school if I am going to be sent back anyway,' Abdul said, his voice heavy with despair. At this time, the Danish government was in the process of passing a bill, which would facilitate deportation of people who had been granted refugee status. This bill had received a lot of media attention, making many learners at Lakeside anxious. The teachers spoke softly to Abdul, telling him that he would not be deported from one day to the next and that education is useful no matter where in the world you end up. One teacher poured Abdul a cup of black tea while Amir got up and grabbed two lumps of sugar from a bowl on the teachers' table, placing one in his own mouth and giving the other one to Abdul. Abdul dropped the sugar lump in the tea and drank in silence.

This situation shows how pervasive uncertainty about the future was a condition for many of the learners with refugee backgrounds as policies around refugee resettlement were continuously subject to change. In the context of policies signalling that refugees were only welcome on Danish soil temporarily, the teachers offering comfort and a hot drink came to constitute important caring resources, which in turn inspired Amir to care in his own way. Later in the fieldwork at Lakeside School, ASB spoke to 18-year-old Samuel from Eritrea about his time in the asylum centre ('the camp'). Similar sentiments came up when he spoke about some of the things he and his friends would do while waiting for their protection status to be determined:

'We were out in the camp and we smashed a window or something, but we didn't care [...] It is boring. Are you going to stay here in Denmark or are you going to be kicked out? We thought a lot about that. So we did nasty things or smashed something.'

Later in the interview, however, Samuel explained how his perspective on the future had changed after he was granted a residence permit, especially in the context of being in school:

'The best thing is to be in school because when you are in school, you can learn to understand everyone, what is going on, what Danish people do, how do you become – how do you get a job. And getting an education. That is the best. Language and getting an education. That is what's best for me. If I learn these things, I can do what I want.'

While the discomfort of uncertainties ahead sometimes took over in the classroom, Samuel's accounts illustrate how education played an important part in many of the young newcomers' caringscapes in relation to the future. Though caringscape terrains ahead may not be fully visible (Bowlby, 2012), they are nearly impossible to navigate if they are not visible at all, like in the case of Samuel's past in the asylum centre. As he phrased it: *we didn't care*, much like the sentiment expressed by Abdul sitting by the blackboard. Attending school, however, had given Samuel a sense of a possible future to care about. As such, being in school was a tangible source of hope for the learners.

Relatedly, regardless of migration background, a central orientation in relation to the near future for most of the learners in our study was

to improve their Danish proficiency enough to enter mainstream class or progress to the next level in the educational system. Especially at Stonebridge School, early mainstreaming was an explicit local policy priority, which informed the carescape, or the context, for the learners' caringscapes. Moving to mainstream class, often referred to as 'normal class', was frequently discussed during school hours, at parent-teacher conferences, and in the interviews. Even if the learners found the preparatory class to provide a sense of safety, the aspiration of not being confined to a separate space at school one day was a central care and concern. Learners cared for each other's hopes for the future by helping each other out with homework, sometimes feeling that the other learners 'explain to me in a more easy way than the teacher' (Thahan, age 14, Thailand). Thus, early mainstreaming policy and the discourses about the merits of mainstreaming that came with it produced specific caring behaviours in the learners in the form of mutual academic support.

Besides the hope of being included in mainstream education soon, the learners' wishes to improve their Danish language skills also related to building greater self-confidence and avoiding stigma and prejudice from their surroundings. 'I would like to learn Danish very fast,' said Leila (age 16, Syria), a learner at Stonebridge School, 'because there are a lot of people who say, "oooh, that girl, she does not speak proper Danish"'. The learners' ways of caring about language learning were thus not only influenced by policies directed at early mainstreaming. Their caringscapes were also embedded in national contexts of minority-majority power relations and negative discourses around newly-arrived immigrants. This made supporting their own and their peers' language acquisition an important caring activity for the young newcomers.

While learners' caring practices in relation to the future were mostly focused around academic aspects at Stonebridge School, the Lakeside classroom was also a space where the learners navigated their caringscapes by imagining better futures together. 17-year-old Mariam from Afghanistan was frustrated because her parents did not approve of her boyfriend. To cheer her up, Mariam's teacher asked her if she and her brother would like to come visit him at home during the summer break. Mariam did not want to go with her brother, so instead she suggested: 'I will just go see you with my boyfriend'. Her classmate Zahra chimed in: 'Then you can hide at my place if your family goes looking for you!' Mariam smiled, but declined the offer, placing her hand on her heart: 'There is no need because we will buy a big house with a garden and go live there'. It was highly unlikely that Zahra would be able to offer Mariam and her boyfriend to stay in her family's home, neither was it likely for Mariam to buy a big house in the near future. However, Zahra expressed her concern and care for Mariam by mirroring the teacher's offer of opening his home to her and imagining that she was able to do the same. In this way, the girls collectively imagined a future in which they possessed an agency that they did not currently have. Around the same time, Khalil (age 17, Syria) lost his home and a couple of boys from his class let him stay temporarily with them at a residence for unaccompanied young refugees. Having a place to stay while in-between homes, Khalil told ASB that he was hoping to move into an apartment he had found in the nearby town. The learners in the Lakeside preparatory class thus offered each other emotional as well as practical care in times of crisis, attempting to instil hope for the future by either symbolically or literally opening their private spaces, their homes, to each other.

In relation to the future, the caringscapes of the learners in both preparatory classes were thus strongly connected to hope. The most pronounced hope that the learners cared for was that of learning Danish and progressing in the educational system, especially at Stonebridge School. At Lakeside, however, the learners' caring practices were also oriented around maintaining hope in the face of uncertain futures.

3.3. *Caring for the past: enrolling family histories in caring*

On a gloomy winter afternoon at Stonebridge School, 16-year-old Chau was talking to her mother in Vietnam via Skype while sitting in the corridor with four classmates. It was Friday, most other learners had left

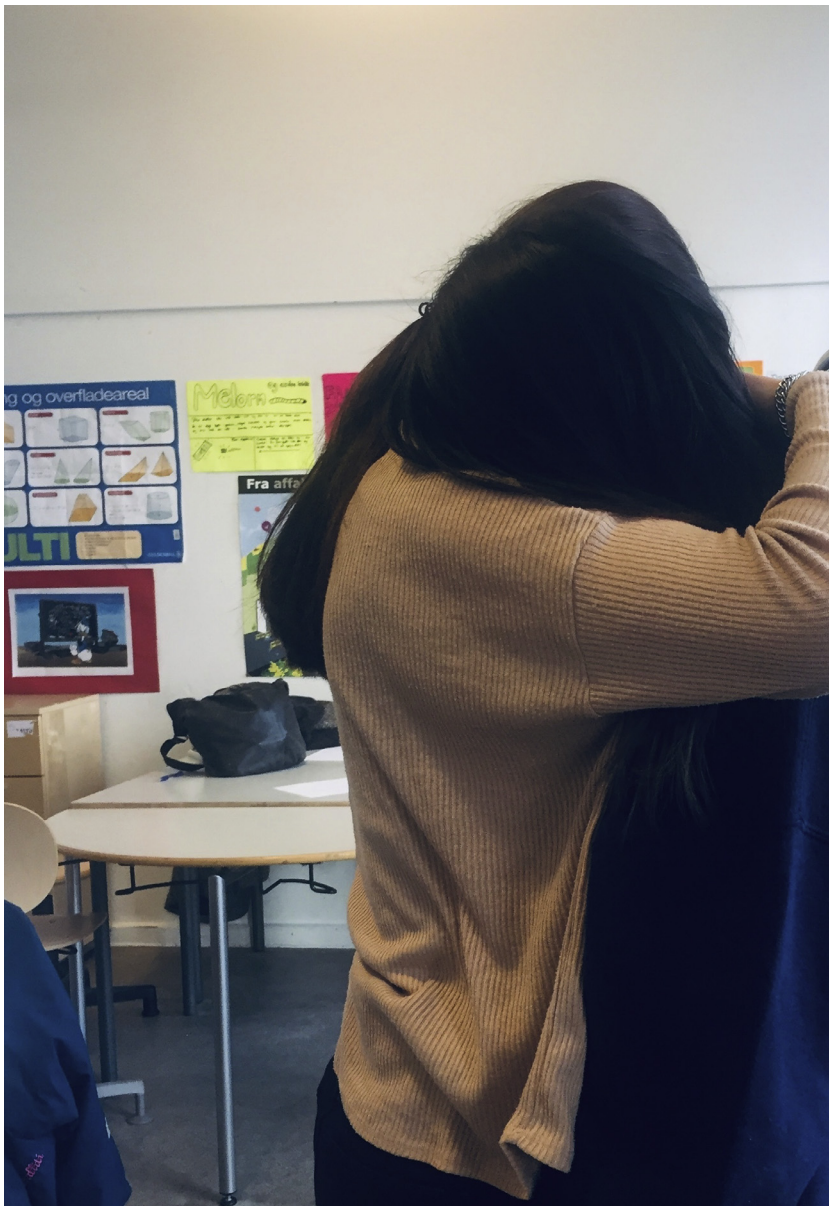


Fig. 4. Chau's staged scene of a classmate comforting her when she is feeling down.

and the corridor appeared arid in its emptiness. Having migrated a year earlier with her father and older sister, Chau was struggling with the loss of having left her mother behind. When her mother suddenly burst into tears during the call, Chau also teared up. The other learners instantly put their arms around Chau, hugging her as she whispered: 'I miss her so much'. The adolescents' way of reaching out to comfort Chau without hesitation reminded ASB of what Mariam at Lakeside School had said earlier the same week: 'We have all had to leave someone behind'.

Homesickness and longing for people in distant places of the past were feelings that informed the learners' ways of navigating their caringscapes. These feelings about the past offered a common ground for the learners to offer each other emotional support at certain times. In the photography workshop, Chau had staged a picture of a classmate hugging her (Fig. 4). This, she explained, was meant to show how some of her classmates would care for her if she was sad, much like the situation unfolding in the corridor a few weeks later. Several learners expressed how they believed that they understood each other's struggles better than would peers who had not migrated.

Yet, there were limits to the support and care the learners were able to offer each other in this regard. One of the learners comforting Chau

was Leila. Her father had fled the war in Syria, after which Leila and her siblings had been reunited with him in Denmark in 2016. However, Leila's mother had not been able to join the family. While Leila was aware that many learners in her class had been separated from family members, they did not discuss this very much: 'If I talk to them about it, what should they do? They cannot do anything about it,' she said. Instead, Leila would focus on her mother, trying to provide emotional care for her from a distance:

'[...] sometimes I talk to her and tell her that she should not be sad, she just has to wait a little while and then she will be able to come to Denmark. If my mom is happy, I am happy.'

Thus, Leila tried to maintain hope in her mother, even if she knew that it was up to the Danish immigration authorities to determine whether her mother could come to Denmark. By asserting that her own and her mother's happiness were closely connected, it appears that Leila's efforts at making her mother feel better also served as a strategy for her to care for herself and, perhaps, keep her own hopes up. The examples above demonstrate how the adolescents performed care not only within, but also beyond the school space. Using technologies that con-

nected them to loved ones in distant spaces, the learners enrolled past care-related experiences in their caringscapes (Bowlby, 2012) as many of them now considered themselves responsible for caring for their parents who had cared for them.

Migration in the recent past had caused major changes in the dynamics in many of the learners' families. Especially those whose parents had migrated for work felt a sense of lost connection to their parents: 'My dad is working and does not have time for me,' said Thahan from Thailand, a learner at Stonebridge School. His classmate, 14-year-old Deepak from Nepal, exemplified the fact that the learners had not chosen for themselves to come to Denmark. This influenced how they spoke about their cares and concerns in the light of the past:

'My dad said I have to settle here [...] I have to learn something here and I have to go to school here. So it is not what I want, but it is what I have to do [...] Because he thinks that, here in Europe, the education is much better here. One of the best educations in Europe, it's here. Not even in the U.K., Denmark! I think it's that.' (Deepak, age 14, Nepal, Stonebridge)

Deepak appeared to accept his father's plans for him more out of necessity than anything else. This pattern was most explicit at Stonebridge School where many learners had dreams of future careers that did not resonate well with their parents' wishes. Knowing that they could not do much about this here and now, the learners nevertheless tried to affirm each other's identities and priorities. Like Chau explained that Kannika had told her: 'You have to be yourself!'. Other learners emphasised that their parents had made sacrifices in the past and now a concern for them was to not let their parents down:

'My dad always thinks that – before, because when he was in Syria, he thought that he would continue studying, but he has not – because the country was a little poor... 20, 40 years ago [...] So he stopped and he worked for a while and made money for the family. So because he did not get to have more education, he wants his daughter to have it. So I think it is best for me that I always say yes to my dad. And I should not make him sad.' (Zahra, age 18, Syria, Lakeside)

Zahra thus carried the story of the things her father had had to give up in the past as an important tool of navigation in her own life, or in her personal caringscape. Similarly to Leila, Zahra expressed how caring for a parent's emotional wellbeing, in her case by caring about school, was a concern for her. Like Leila, Zahra considered this as closely related to her own wellbeing – 'it is best for me'.

In relation to the past, the adolescents' perspectives demonstrate the ongoing negotiations among and within them about how to exercise and orient their caring. Past experiences of leaving loved ones behind in distant places and of (parental) decisions to migrate to safety or a better life stayed with the learners as they sought to find their ways in their present life situations and education. In other words, the past was always present in their navigations of their caringscapes.

4. Discussion

Bowlby and colleagues (Bowlby et al., 2010) have alluded to schools as spaces where children, in interaction with peers, learn and develop their own ways of caring. However, this reflection remains theoretical and other studies exploring child-centered caringscapes are primarily preoccupied with children's and young people's care for family members, outside of school (Haugen, 2007, Evans, 2012). In this study, we have explored how newly arrived refugee and immigrant adolescents provide care for each other and themselves in the context of everyday school life. Our study shows that newly arrived adolescent refugees and immigrants are not merely passive recipients of care, but actively contribute to caring practices at school, fostering wellbeing. This not only testifies to their agentic capabilities and strengths, but highlights the immense responsibilities and structural pressures that the newcomers find themselves subject to and their need to act in the con-

text of resettlement and school life. By adapting and taking inspiration from the concepts of caringscapes and carescapes, we have disentangled some of the socio-spatial and temporal elements that in different ways shape the school-based caring practices and wellbeing of adolescent newcomers.

Socio-spatially, learners in both classrooms provided each other with a sense of academic and social safety and helped each other maintain continuity by co-creating spaces of celebration and leisure activities. Furthermore, learners provided emotional support for each other and their family members in distant places. This resonates with Haugen's (2007) previous findings on children in post-divorce families showing great emotional consideration for siblings and parents as well as Evans' (2012) discussions of the emotional labour for siblings undertaken by children in youth-headed households in Tanzania and Uganda. Although situated in different contexts from the present study, they support our observation that troubling life situations spark emotional caring practices among adolescents. While learners in both classrooms engaged in emotional care, the specific practices through which they cared for each other and themselves were different between the two school settings. The learners' caringscapes in Stonebridge were oriented around helping new classmates settle. In contrast, the caringscapes at Lakeside were invested with a need co-create spaces to display cultural and emotional meanings at school.

Temporally, we noted biographical time to shape the learners' caring practices at school, both in terms of how they supported each other's and their own wellbeing, and in terms of how they navigated in relation to their past, present and anticipated futures. Especially at Stonebridge School, learners had a strong desire to progress to mainstream education and escape the position of 'recent immigrant' in the nearest possible future. Thus, schoolwork and helping each other out with academic activities became important strategies for learners to care for each other and themselves. At Lakeside, the learners' caring activities were oriented towards alleviating the pressures of uncertain residence status and precarious life situations. The learners offered each other practical support, such as housing, or imagined a better future together. Existing research in caringscapes demonstrates how caring practices are shaped by temporal elements like the relationship between school, work and free time (Haugen, 2007, Evans, 2012, McKie et al., 2002), seasonal changes (Evans, 2012), daily and bodily rhythms (Evans, 2012, Bowlby, 2012), or life phases with particular social and moral expectations (Evans, 2012, Bowlby, 2012). Our findings show that critical temporal dimensions of caringscapes also include the adolescents' considerations and feelings about their lives as biographical constructs made up of pasts, the present and futures. As a further dimension of caringscapes, we have demonstrated how the learners enacted self-care by engaging in activities they deemed important for their futures, such as learning Danish. This attention to self-care adds to Bartos' (2012) discussion of how children's caring practices do not only involve care work for others, but can also be directed towards other aspects of children's worlds that are important to them. Finally, while the metaphor of caringscapes, according to Bowlby (2012), most explicitly draws attention the present and the future, our temporal lens showed how the past was always present in the learners' caring practices, whether it was by offering comfort to peers missing their loved ones, or through negotiations of how to meet parents' expectations while being true to oneself.

These socio-spatially and temporally shaped practices were related to different carescapes, or contexts, for the newcomers' care interactions. As we have seen, Stonebridge was characterized by teacher practices and local policies aimed at early mainstreaming. Meanwhile, the carescape of the Lakeside classroom was influenced by the uncertainties of ever-changing immigration policies targeting refugees, as well as teachers taking on caring roles. This resonates with the work of Kallio and Bartos (2017) who argue that immigration politics are intimately linked to exclusionary expressions of care, creating a divide between 'us' and 'them'. Our study illustrates how national and local policies and discourses around refugees and immigrants mobilize the

learners to care in certain ways, often facilitated by their teachers, who responded to the political context too.

Overall, our findings demonstrate the complex concatenation of socio-spatial elements and biographical orientations that come together in school environments to shape the caring practices of adolescent newcomers – key to their wellbeing. By engaging with this topic, we have taken steps towards a new conceptual lens for understanding schools as potential nodes of support for refugee and immigrant children. Much existing research is largely exploratory, and when theory is applied, it is often limited to the identification of factors nested within a number of concentric circles representing different levels of community, social and political structures and determinants. Our adaptation of the concepts ‘caringscapes’ and ‘carescapes’ to the empirical context of schools have enabled us to approach newcomers’ care as social practices, making visible how socio-spatial and temporal elements, in different ways, interact to shape the extent to which newcomers are able to form caring practices and co-produce spaces that foster collective wellbeing. In this article, we thus move towards an alternative approach to understanding how schools can support refugee and immigrant adolescents’ psychosocial wellbeing. Building on the work of Bowlby et al. (2010), we propose ‘school caringscapes’ as a lens for understanding how learners care for each other and themselves through everyday practices and orientations in the world, influenced by biographical time and the socio-spatial features of their school contexts. More specifically, our findings point to the contours of ‘school caringscapes’, which include, but are not limited to:

- **Temporality:** The role of biographical time in learners’ caring practices (e.g., efforts to co-create safe spaces for the present, caring about language learning and long-term residency as key resources for realizing aspirations for the future, and providing emotional care for relatives who have cared for the learners in the past);
- **School environment:** The way school spaces, teacher practices, institutional and policy contexts intersect and influence learners’ caring practices (e.g., how teachers’ encouraging behaviour in the classroom facilitate learners’ co-construction of academic and social safe spaces, and how teacher responses to learners’ frustrations with immigration policy inspire learners to care for each other in their own ways);

Temporality and school environments permeate the following additional elements of ‘school caringscapes’:

- **Practices:** Everyday practices through which learners care for each other and themselves (e.g., offering emotional support, engaging in school work, and maintaining daily routines);
- **Orientations:** The values, hopes and obligations that are expressed through learners’ caring practices (e.g., hopes of escaping the position of ‘recent immigrant’, and obligations to parents who migrated to bring their children to safety and/or better opportunities);
- **Social positioning:** How these values, hopes and obligations relate to learners’ life situations and social positions, at school and in society at large (e.g., being a language minority student at school, being a young newcomer in the context of restrictive immigration policies);
- **Disempowerment:** The socio-spatial and temporal dynamics, which leave learners powerless and unable to care (e.g., restrictions on family reunification and uncertainty about future residence status).

These are just some of the areas that deserve closer scrutiny as school caringscapes are investigated and supported. We argue that attention to these constituent elements of ‘school caringscapes’ enable researchers, policy makers and practitioners to explore and facilitate children and young people’s co-construction of school spaces that foster care and social support. We found the ethnographic approach to be particularly well suited for this endeavour, and encourage others to ethnographically explore children and young people’s caring practices at school. Observing these practices, and engaging in conversations with the learners about their practices, reveal learners’ agentic capabilities, which may

otherwise go unnoticed. Recognizing children and young people’s caring practices is useful for more strength-based conceptualisations of how to further their resilience, mental health and wellbeing. We thus argue that ethnographic studies adopting a ‘school caringscapes’ lens can inform future programmes targeting the mental health of adolescent newcomers, which resonate with, and build on, the newcomers’ self-grown caring practices.

Our study has some limitations that deserve mentioning. First, different languages may have diverging vocabularies and ways of ascribing meaning to topics like social relationships and wellbeing (Kleinman, 1987, Bracken, 1993). Since ASB carried out the interviews mostly in languages that were not the learners’ first languages, or using an interpreter, it is likely that some nuances in the learners’ perspectives have been lost in translation. Second, questions about the past and family relations did not make up a central element in the interview topic guides, yet many learners brought up family relationships. This indicates that children’s pasts and family histories need to be taken even more into account when trying to understand and promote their mental wellbeing in the school setting, especially in the light of schools being inherently future-oriented spaces. Third, we explored the lives of refugee and immigrant adolescents in specific classrooms for newcomers. Thus, practices and teaching in these classrooms were widely tailored to newcomer learners and their (assumed) needs. Further research is needed on the support and care unfolding when refugee and immigrant newcomers enter mainstream education and on how mainstream classrooms can be better equipped to welcome newly arrived refugee and immigrant adolescents.

4.1. Conclusions

Drawing on the concepts of *caringscapes* and *carescapes*, we have shown how adolescent refugee and immigrant newcomers in Danish schools form caring practices and co-produce spaces that foster collective wellbeing. These caring practices are shaped by biographical time and the socio-spatial features of the school environments of the young newcomers, including teacher practices and the current policy context of refugee and immigrant education and residence. Efforts to understand and promote refugee and immigrant learners’ wellbeing in school contexts must take into consideration the temporally and spatially bounded nature of their agentic capabilities to care for themselves and their peers.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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