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IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, PLACE ATTACHMENT AND
PLACE ATTRACTIVENESS FROM A LIFE COURSE
PERSPECTIVE IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

BY
HELLE DALSGAARD PEDERSEN

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2018



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ENGLISH SUMMARY

In an economy that increasingly depends on knowledge-based innovation (Larsen 2017), access to human capital has become central in regional development, as the basic argument is that by attracting and retaining knowledge sources regions become more competitive and better geared to meet the demand for competences of the knowledge economy (Hansen and Niedomysl 2009). Accordingly, the ability of places to attract and retain human capital receives high policy focus internationally, nationally and regionally. However, increased urban centralisation within public services, higher education and employment opportunities across many industrialised nations (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Hansen, Håkonsson, and Weatherall 2016; Hansen and Winther 2012; Lorentzen and van Heur 2012) has challenged many places outside the large cities and has led to population decline, lack of economic growth and ageing societies, decreasing the attractiveness of these regions. Such urban centralisation puts demands on the residents in areas outside the large cities (in the thesis, these places are referred to as ‘rural places’), as they need to be increasingly mobile in relation to the labour market and higher education due to the limited number of employment opportunities and educational offers outside the large cities (Aner and Hansen 2014; Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hersbøll 2013; Holm 2011; Kristensen and Andersen 2009; Tanvig 2010). Youth from rural areas accordingly face the mobility imperative due to expectations concerning further education, and this has led to increased out-migration among rural youth (Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Holm 2011; Larsen 2017; Lyck 2014).

Regional policymakers are challenged by these developments, and in attempts to attract in-migration they increasingly engage in stimulating place attractiveness (Jensen 2007; Landry 2008; Lorentzen 2009; Thulemark 2015) by investing in place-branding campaigns, image boosterism and flagship projects to promote the specific potentials and resources of a given place (Jensen-Butler, Shachar, and van Weesep 1997; Newman and Thornley 1996), often, however, with questionable success (Niedomysl 2007). History with a place and place belonging may influence future return migration (Emerek and Kirkeby 2015; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Feijten, Hooimeijer, and Mulder 2008), and concentrating on motivating people who have left the rural place to pursue further studies in the city may therefore prove to be more valuable than reaching out to potential newcomers. Yet, limited research has studied the return migration of well-educated individuals to rural areas following educational completion in the city (Andersen 2017; Haartsen and Thissen 2014; Niedomysl and Amcoff 2011). This overall topic is in focus in this thesis, where the aim is to examine the processes through which youth’s and young adults’ relationships with places develop and are sustained over the life course with a view to understanding the subtleties of rural-urban migration dynamics and discerning what makes some people return to their place of origin, while others cannot imagine doing so. In order to address this topic, I apply a life course perspective focussing on late youth to early adulthood, and I draw mainly on the research fields of identity construction in

connection with place, place attachment and place attractiveness. These three theoretical topics will be applied to analyses of the central bonds between people and places, how places serve as contexts for people's identity construction over the life course and in which ways the attractiveness of places is determined relative to changes in life situation.

The studies are set in a Danish context, and I adopt an interpretive and qualitative approach to examine the relationship between people and places, as I aim to capture the voices and to understand the life worlds of youth and young adults. The study draws on 52 individual and joint qualitative interviews with 45 women and 37 men aged 18-40 years, who either live in or have moved away from one of two Danish rural municipalities.

While considerable research has focussed on rural out-migration, fewer studies have focussed on how place attachment, identity construction and place attractiveness interweave in migration trajectories and shape and sustain relationships with places across time and place. Applying these three theoretical topics to the study of youth and young adults with a rural background has revealed how narratives on urbanity as a place to articulate youthfulness (Farrugia 2016) can be traced in and frame young people's migration trajectories, as using the opportunities of rural-to-urban migration is taken for granted and considered a necessity when young people finish academic upper secondary school. Rurality is not a place to be young, nor a place for self-development, which makes the decision to return complex, as a potential return is associated with stigmatisation and prejudice from peers. However, the findings also reveal that youth and young adults are proud of their rural background and use it for identifying purposes, just as they cherish and cultivate their old circle of friends to retain continuity. The results, moreover, show that both urbanity and rurality are used to bridge new life situations with old ones, as favourable constructions of either rural or urban are used as identity markers over the life course. The presented empirical findings do not support normative assumptions of jobs as a first-order influence in migration decisions, as the thesis concludes that the determining factors in return migration are changes in life situation, not least the birth of a child, and social networks and kinship ties. Return migrants, in other words, move not for jobs, but for kinship networks, a sense of security when raising children and a less stressful life.

Applying a life course perspective to the study of the processes through which youth and young adults shape and sustain relationships with places has facilitated a thorough understanding of the subtleties of rural-urban migration dynamics, and how evaluations of places vary across the life course. In light of these findings, the thesis concludes by discussing the practical implications and suggestions for further research.

DANSK RESUME

I en markedsøkonomi, der i stigende grad bygger på vidensbaseret innovation (Larsen 2017), er adgang til human kapital blevet central i regionale udviklingsindsatser. Det grundlæggende argument er, at regioner, der formår at tiltrække og fastholde human kapital, vil være konkurrencedygtige og dermed bedre stillet ift. vidensøkonomiens øgede kompetencekrav (Hansen and Niedomysl 2009). Som følge heraf er steds evner til at tiltrække og fastholde human kapital kommet på den politiske dagsorden internationalt, nationalt og regionalt. Dog har den stigende centralisering, som opleves i mange industrialiserede lande i forhold til offentlige ydelser, videregående uddannelsesinstitutioner og jobmuligheder (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Hansen, Håkonsson, and Weatherall 2016; Hansen and Winther 2012; Lorentzen and van Heur 2012), udfordret mange områder uden for de større byer og har ført til fraflytninger, økonomisk nedgang og en aldrende befolkning, hvilket forringer sådanne steds attraktivitet. Den stigende centralisering stiller krav om øget mobilitet til befolkningen i områder uden for de større byer (i nærværende afhandling bruges 'landlige steder' som betegnelse for sådanne områder), da de i stigende grad skal være villige til at flytte eller pendle i forhold til arbejdsmarkedet og videregående uddannelser på grund af et begrænset udbud af jobmuligheder og uddannelses tilbud uden for de større byer (Aner and Hansen 2014; Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hersbøll 2013; Holm 2011; Kristensen and Andersen 2009; Tanvig 2010). Unge fra landlige områder står derfor over for et mobilitetsimperativ på grund af forventninger om videregående uddannelse, hvilket har medført en stigende fraflytning af unge (Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Holm 2011; Larsen 2017; Lyck 2014).

Denne udvikling udfordrer regionalpolitikere og i forsøg på at tiltrække tilflyttere, griber de i stigende grad til redskaber, som vil højne stedets attraktivitet (Jensen 2007; Landry 2008; Lorentzen 2009; Thulemark 2015). Dette sker bl.a. ved at investere i place branding kampagner, gennem forsøg på at booste stedets image eller ved at søsætte storstilede fyrtårnsprojekter, som har til formål at promovere stedets særlige potentialer og kvaliteter (Jensen-Butler, Shachar, and van Weesep 1997; Newman and Thornley 1996), ofte har disse dog tvivlsom succes (Niedomysl 2007). Historik med stedet eller stedstilknytning kan stimulere fremtidig tilbageflytning (Emerek and Kirkeby 2015; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015), og et fokus på at motivere tilbageflytning kan således vise sig at være mere værdifuld end forsøg på at tiltrække nye tilflyttere. Dog er der begrænset forskning, der har studeret tilbageflytning til landlige områder blandt veluddannede efter færdiggørelse af deres uddannelse i byen (Andersen 2017; Haartsen and Thissen 2014; Niedomysl and Amcoff 2011). Dette overordnede tema er i fokus i denne afhandling, hvor formålet er at udforske, hvordan unge og yngre voksnes forhold til steder udvikler sig og opretholdes over forskellige livsfaser. Dette gøres med henblik på at undersøge migrationsdynamikkerne mellem land og by, samt hvad der får nogle til at flytte tilbage, mens andre end ikke kan forestille sig at gøre det. For at undersøge dette emne anvender jeg et

livsfaseperspektiv, der fokuserer på den sene ungdom til den tidlige voksenalder, og jeg trækker primært på litteratur om identitetsdannelse i relation til steder, stedstilknytning og steders attraktivitet. Jeg anvender disse tre teoretiske felter i analyser af båndet mellem personer og sted, hvordan steder fungerer som baggrund for personers identitetskonstruktion hen over livet og på hvilke måder, steders attraktivitet bliver evalueret i forhold til forandringer i livssituation.

Det empiriske fundament for afhandlingen tager afsæt i en dansk kontekst. Her anvender jeg en kvalitativ og fortolkningsorienteret tilgang til at undersøge forholdet mellem personer og sted, idet jeg søger at forstå unge og yngre voksnes meninger og livsverden. Studiet bygger på 52 kvalitative individuelle og gruppeinterviews med 45 kvinder og 37 mænd i alderen 18-40 år, som enten bor i eller er flyttet fra én af to danske landkommuner.

Mens der er blevet forsket betydeligt i fraflytninger fra landet, er litteraturen sparsom, når det gælder forbindelsen mellem identitetskonstruktion, stedstilknytning og steders attraktivitet i sammenhæng med migrationsmønstre, samt hvordan stedsrelationer udvikles og vedligeholdes over tid og på tværs af sted. Resultaterne viser, at narrativer om det urbane som stedet for unge (Farrugia 2016) danner rammen for unge menneskers migration, da dét at flytte til byen tages for givet og opfattes som en nødvendighed, når de unge afslutter ungdomsuddannelsen. Landlige områder opfattes dermed ikke som steder, man kan være ung, og det er heller ikke steder, der rummer mange muligheder for selvudvikling, hvilket komplicerer beslutningen om at vende tilbage, da en eventuel tilbageflytning har en stigmatiserende karakter og møder mange fordomme. Dog viser resultaterne også, at de unge og yngre voksne er stolte af deres landlige baggrund og bruger denne aktivt i skabelsen af en særlig identitet, ligesom de værdsætter og dyrker deres gamle vennekreds for at bevare en vis kontinuitet i deres liv. Resultaterne tegner desuden et billede af, at både land og by bruges til at danne broer mellem nye og gamle livssituationer, da konstruktioner om disse bruges som identitetsmarkører gennem forskellige livsfaser. De empiriske fund bakker ikke op om normative opfattelser af, at jobmuligheder er førsteprioritet i beslutninger om at flytte, da afhandlingen konkluderer, at ændringer i livssituation, ikke mindst etablering af familie, samt sociale netværk og familiebånd er afgørende faktorer i forhold til at flytte retur. Familiære relationer og en oplevelse af et mindre stressende liv samt en tryghed i at opfostre børn i landlige omgivelser, er med andre ord mere afgørende for, at personer flytter tilbage til deres barndomsegn, end jobmuligheder er det.

Gennem et livsfaseperspektiv har undersøgelser af måderne, hvorpå unge og yngre voksne udvikler og bevarer en relation til steder bidraget med en grundig forståelse af dynamikkerne mellem land og by, samt hvordan evalueringer af steder varierer over forskellige livsfaser. Baseret på resultaterne, afsluttes afhandlingen ved at diskutere praktiske implikationer og fremtidige forskningsretninger.

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Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Lean back and take a moment to ponder what you associate with rurality. Perhaps you see images of wide open spaces, green forests and small, vibrant farming communities? Maybe a clear blue sky, yellow cornfields and an old thatched cottage? Or what about remote fishing villages, gigantic windmills and neglected farmsteads? Do you see any people? What gender are they, what do they look like and what are they doing? Are they working or just visiting? Are they young or old, rich or poor, black or white? What about industries? Are there farms with free-range animals, office complexes or factories? Are there any schools, shops or banks? Do you see children playing in the park, women shopping in the market place, or does the place look deserted? Do you see any problems of decay or crime, or is everything idyllic and peaceful?

I have chosen to open my thesis with this short prelude to illustrate how rurality to a large extent is subjectively and intuitively understood, as we all bring our own perceptions, comparisons and experiences into play when trying to understand and construct the rural. These are founded in a multitude of personal experiences based on childhood memories, political debates, media representations, children's story books, films and documentaries, branding campaigns, news stories etc. We might have grown up in the countryside, holidayed or visited friends and relatives there or simply just driven through the countryside from time to time. Such experiences all contribute to shaping the images of rurality we form in our minds, and, hence, the rural is by no means straightforward, but an abstract and usually subjectively understood concept, which most people intuitively have a clear idea about. There is no standard definition of rurality or of what makes a place rural or not, since a variety of intersecting, contrasting and vague definitions on rurality exist, often relying on objective measures and sophisticated models based on statistical criteria like population size, density and growth, land use, proximity to urban centres, degree of urbanisation etc. (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Rye 2006b; Woods 2005). This multitude of definitions not only complicates our understanding of the concept of the rural, but also make international comparisons difficult (Bæck 2016; Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Woods 2005). Yet, millions of people across the world still regard themselves as rural, as leading a rural life and as living in rural places (Woods 2005). Media representations also very much affect our perceptions of the rural, as the implicit and explicit media-induced portrayals of places in general are significant in creating people's perceptions of places. By telling particular stories in different ways, media representations serve as critical inputs to what becomes public discourse by producing and representing certain understandings and ways of thinking about localities, which affect the relationship between people and places (Holloway, Hubbard, and Hubbard 2000; Luedecke and Boykoff 2017).

This complexity and ambiguity in understanding rural and the potential territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant 1996, 2007) inherent in social and media representations of the rural have triggered my interest in examining how rural geographical representations affect the identities and life worlds of individuals with a background in a rural part of Denmark, more specifically individuals from one of two rural municipalities located in the mid-northern part of Denmark. Further, since places are important mechanisms in defining, situating and ascribing identity to people from particular places, as the symbolic qualities of place can be transferred to identity (Dallago, Perkins, and Santinello 2009; Leyshon 2008; Prince 2014; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Wiborg 2004), this complexity in understanding rural has also triggered my interest in scrutinising how relationships with places permeate feelings of attachment and act as frameworks for people's lives and everyday interactions in the context of migration in and out of rural places.

In this introductory chapter I will present the context of the research and outline the direction of the study, which will lead to the research questions that guide my research. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the methodological approach and will also outline the chapters of the thesis.

1.1. RURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

We have witnessed increased centralisation across many industrialised nations, as public services, institutions of higher education and employment opportunities are increasingly concentrated in urban environments (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Hansen, Håkonsson, and Weatherall 2016; Hansen and Winther 2012; Lorentzen and van Heur 2012), reshaping the large cities as 'centres of consumption, excitement and cultural sophistication' (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014b p. 1038). This has triggered rural-to-urban migration on a large scale (Argent, Rolley, and Walmsley 2008; Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Butler and Muir 2017; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Gabriel 2002), leading to growth and progress in urban areas and to stagnation and shrinkage in many rural areas (Kabisch, Haase, and Haase 2006; Polèse and Shearmur 2006). In academia some criticise the current literature for perpetually focussing on urban places, hereby treating these as more worthy of attention than rural places (Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014a; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003). Furthermore, in an economy that increasingly depends on knowledge-based innovation (Larsen 2017), access to knowledge sources has become central, as human capital is associated with increased productivity and income, as well as higher levels of economic growth (Aner and Hansen 2014; Artz and Artz 2003; Stockdale 2004, 2006; Tanvig 2010; Woolcock 1998). Accordingly, higher education has come to play a central role in international competitiveness and economic growth (Paulgaard 2015), making higher education and the academic preparatory tracks,

which feed the higher educational systems, necessary steps for young people and significant themes in explorations of youth (Looker and Naylor 2009).

Numerous studies (e.g. Alston 2004; Beck, Ebbensgaard, and Beck 2009; Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014b; Gabriel 2002; Hansen 2014; Larsen 2017) have demonstrated how rural young people, due to centralised structures, must leave their rural communities to access educational opportunities in the city, which not only leads to significant out-migration from rural areas, but also means that the young people, regardless of whether or not they actually wish to leave their communities, are forced to do so, often at an early age (Alston 2004; Gabriel 2002). Moving forward is thus equated with urban milieus and lifestyles, and remaining in the rural community becomes synonymous with backwardness and social exclusion (Farrugia 2016; Looker and Naylor 2009), as inability or unwillingness to move away positions rural people ‘as failures within definitions of success based on the valorisation of mobility’ (Farrugia 2016 p. 839). Migration, in other words, is the only option left for moving forwards and making a career for oneself (Argent and Walmsley 2008; Beck, Ebbensgaard, and Beck 2009; Bloksgaard, Faber, and Hansen 2015; Corbett 2007; Green 1999; Ní Laoire 2000; Trell, Van Hoven, and Huigen 2012), expressing a ‘need to “get out” to “get on”’ (Green 1999 p. 42), which is problematic for the resilience of rural places, since it harms the social and economic vitality, signalling overall deterioration of the quality of life (Kabisch, Haase, and Haase 2006; Rieniets 2005; Rybczynski and Linneman 1999).

Regional policy makers are challenged by these developments; however, actively planning for or even admitting the likelihood of future population decline seems to be a taboo, as there is often a one-sided focus on what regions can do to reverse the decline and to start growing again, even in places where future population growth is unlikely or even impossible (Rieniets 2005; Schatz 2010). As Beauregard (2003) explains, ‘in a political economy where growth, particularly for civic leaders, has always been ideal, population loss – whether absolute or relative – is a stigma’ (p. 673). Hence, focussing on reversing population decline, rather than finding ways to deal with it in a way that improves the quality of life of the remaining residents, is the custom, as shrinkage is regarded as a weakness, a sign of place failure and as something that must be prevented or turned around (Schatz 2010). Due to this, place developers increasingly engage in stimulating place attractiveness, which makes attractive living environments growing topics of debate (Jensen 2007; Landry 2008; Lorentzen 2009; Thulemark 2015). In times of decreasing regional development, marketing campaigns focused on stimulating place attractiveness can be a convenient way for policy makers to demonstrate strong governance, however, there is no general evidence for a positive impact of such on attracting in-migrants (Niedomysl 2007). Research demonstrate that belonging to place is the main reason why some return to the local place of their childhood (Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015), and that place of birth is significant in shaping residential choices later in life, as a person who was born and grew up in a particular region will have a significantly higher chance of

moving to that region later in life compared to individuals who were born outside the region (Emerek and Kirkeby 2015; Feijten, Hooimeijer, and Mulder 2008). Further, people who have previously lived in rural areas are far more likely to return to these later in life compared to people with limited or no previous experience of rural living (Aner and Hansen 2014; Davies 2008; Ní Laoire 2007; Stockdale et al. 2000). Hereby, belonging to and history with a place can influence future settlement, and while limited research to date has examined the return migration of individuals to rural areas following educational completion in the city (Andersen 2017; Haartsen and Thissen 2014; Niedomysl and Amcoff 2011), focussing on getting out-migrants back may prove to be more valuable for rural areas than focussing on reaching out to potential newcomers.

Whereas considerable work has been done on rural migration in general (Alston 2004; Argent, Rolley, and Walmsley 2008; Corbett 2007; Farrugia 2016; Prince 2014), not least in a Nordic context (e.g. Beck, Ebbensgaard, and Beck 2009; Bloksgaard, Faber, and Hansen 2015; Bæck 2016; Bæck and Paulgaard 2012; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hansen 2014; Larsen 2017; Rye 2006a; Thulemark 2015), focus is often on the impact of youth out-migration on the areas they have left, on the negative economic and demographic characteristics of rural life, on the gendered challenges or on a delimited group of people, e.g. rural stayers, youth who have moved to the countryside from the city, 'creative class' and lifestyle migrants etc. However, in the context of increased mobility (Urry 2000, 2007) and in an ever more urbanised and knowledge-based society (Artz and Artz 2003; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009; Hörnström, Olsen, and Van Well 2012; Stockdale 2004), where the lives of individuals are embedded in the social, cultural and economic changes that reshape their localities (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014b), the ways in which 'attachment to one place compare[s] to and influence[s] the processes of attachment for a single person [to] other places' (Cross 2015 p. 516) is significant, as preferences and propensities for places vary across the life course (Ní Laoire and Stockdale 2016) and are reliant on 'our interactions with, and movements between, different places' (Holloway, Hubbard, and Hubbard 2000 p. 48). In this way, there is a complex interplay between migration flows, preferences for places and life course stages, and Manzo and Devine-Wright criticise current research for demonstrating 'restricted notions of place attachment that do not account for memory, mobility [and] multiple simultaneous place attachments' (Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014 p. 2). This thesis seeks to apply a life course lens to better comprehend the subtleties of rural migration dynamics in late adolescence to early adulthood. This is done by paying attention to the processes through which youth and young adults shape and sustain relationships with places across time and place, and by scrutinising how evaluations of places vary across the life course. I propose an interpretivist framework that focusses on understanding the life worlds and the complexity of the thoughts and aspirations of individuals at the three life course stages of late adolescence, emerging adulthood and young adulthood. Focussing on three separate, but highly related life stages permits greater understanding of the complexities and influences evident in the processes of

forming relationships with places across the life course, as it will contribute with insights into how individuals in their late teens, twenties and thirties 'build bridges between the present and the past, and thus grow roots in new places' (Lewicka 2014 p. 57). Each life stage hereby allows me to analyse how individuals in the here and now, through perceptions, everyday activities and memories actively form and maintain relationships with places, providing insight into the significance of nostalgia and distance in time and place in understanding the processes through which relationships with places develop and are maintained over the life course.

Kyle et al. (2003) argue that 'the extent to which an individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting' (p. 250) is central in constructing a sense of attachment to place. This suggests that the emotional bond between people and places is important in understanding how relationships with places permeate feelings of attachment and act as frameworks for people's lives and everyday interactions. Recent reviews of the literature on place call for clarifying the 'processes through which people form their meaningful relations with places' (Lewicka 2011 p. 226). I seek to respond to this call by examining how the relationship between people and places interrelates with aspects of place attachment, identity construction and migration behaviour across time and place, hence also the title of the thesis: 'Touched by Place', which not only bears testament to the importance of emotions in relationships between people and places, but also to the significance of everyday doings and interactions with place. Research has tended to regard place attachment as a primarily positive construction, whereas less favourable or even negative feelings contributing to attachment have been less recognised (Giuliani and Feldman 1993; Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and Krasny 2012; Lewicka 2014; Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014; Manzo 2003). This calls for greater exploration of the ways in which a range of both positive and negative emotions and experiences affect our relationships with places and are equally meaningful to place attachment. I therefore explore how individuals with a rural background express and characterise their relationships with places, and these individuals' stories will enable a discussion on the elements used to emphasise attachment to, identification with or alienation from a place, just as they will help us to understand what makes some places attractive and others less so.

I am particularly interested in understanding what youth and young adults' reasons for leaving, staying or returning are based upon, what is being resisted and desired, which aspects they draw upon to shape their identity, which processes cause them to become attached/detached to places, and how the changing role of social networks vary at different life stages. Also, I am interested in how constructions and narratives of rurality and rural-urban differences frame and position people, and how these affect identity construction, processes of 'othering' and if such constructions foreshadow migration behaviour. Furthermore, investigating processes of forming relationships with places, as a non-linear temporality, along with paying close attention to longing allow me to explore how the past and the future intersect with the present through imagined and actual migration and place attachment processes. Applying theories on

identity construction and the processes through which individuals grasp a sense of who they are, with specific attention to place as a framework for people's lives, will shed light on the ambivalent and contradictory identity and migration-related struggles individuals experience. Furthermore, applying theories on place attachment, understood as the emotional bond between people and place, along with theoretical perspectives on place attractiveness and the complex set of push and pull mechanisms related to different places, allow for an examination of the processes people go through in constructing relationships with places, just as it will challenge normative assumptions about migration decisions and place attractiveness.

To sum up, the objective of this thesis is to contribute with analyses of how relationships with places are formed through dynamic contexts of social interaction, external representations, emotional bonds and everyday practices, and how they vary over the life course through the late stages of youth and early stages of adulthood in the context of migration. Studying three different, but related life stages will contribute with a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the interrelationship between the development and maintenance of place attachments, the associated rub-off on identity and the influence of multiple simultaneous place attachments on migratory aspirations. Examining how the migrants think about their past, present and future location-wise and which elements and considerations affect these perceptions and evaluations across the life course will enhance our understanding of the ways in which a rural background affects perceptions of place attachment, migration and identity construction and of the elements that are decisive in evaluations of place attractiveness in a rural-urban context. Hence, this thesis contributes with new knowledge on the processes through which people's relationships with places develop and are sustained over the life course – essentially how people are touched by place across time and place, both in terms of their emotional bonds and their everyday doings and interactions with place. This overall objective can be expressed in the following research question:

How are identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness shaped in the everyday, negotiated across the life course and anchored in time and place? And how do these processes contribute to the formation of relationships with places and shape current lives and future migratory aspirations among youth and young adults with a rural background?

The studies are set in a Danish context, and in order to obtain an in-depth answer to this overall research question, four interrelated sub-questions are investigated and guide my research:

Sub-question 1:

How do rural youth evaluate their local places, and what role does aspirations for obtaining coolness play in rural youth's negotiation and articulation of identities and visions for a desired future?

Sub-question 2:

How do rural childhood places shape out-migrants' everyday lives in the city, and how is place attachment grounded in the everyday and how does it influence future migration aspirations?

Sub-question 3:

Why do highly educated individuals return to their rural place of origin, which place attraction factors come into play, and what are their relative importance and interconnectedness?

Sub-question 4:

How are people's relationships with places continuously constructed through the late stages of youth and early stages of adulthood, and what is the character of social relations, nostalgia and place hierarchies in evaluations of place over time?

1.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Being an industrial PhD fellow and collaborating with external partners (two municipalities and an academy of higher education), the purpose of my research has been both theoretical and practical. From an academic point of view, the most essential aspect has naturally been to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the underlying mechanisms that affect migration as experienced by youth and young adults with a rural background and, thereby, also the thoughts, reflections and opinions that these individuals have about moving away from, staying in and returning to their childhood community. However, being externally funded and having contractual obligations to the external partners, the thesis is not purely of academic interest, but must also have a concrete and practical output, relevance and applicability in the two municipalities I collaborate with. Hence, I have tried to implement a kind of reciprocity in my work in order to give something valuable back to my external partners. By reflecting on and making visible the opinions and attitudes of individuals

towards their childhood place, I have continuously attempted to bring the findings of the research to the public and political agenda in the municipalities. This is done to allow the findings to contribute with knowledge on a larger scale to well-informed decisions concerning how regional policies will be drafted in relation to what makes people move away from and return to their childhood place.

The two municipalities in focus in this thesis, Mariagerfjord and Skive, share essential characteristics with regard to geography, demography and culture, and both can be characterised as Danish rural, coastal regions (the research settings will be discussed in-depth in section 3.2). However, being termed rural does not mean that the regions are geographic areas with no urban qualities of any kind. Instead, they have elements of both rurality and urbanity, as both municipalities have a main town of some size (12,000-20,000 inhabitants), which experiences population growth and has some shopping, employment and higher education opportunities, along with a number of smaller rural villages and settlements that are struggling somewhat. While the municipalities are considered rural from a national perspective (Christiansen 2015; Danish Business Authority 2017), the main towns at the same time constitute local centres for villages and settlements in the vicinity. Hence, internal rural-urban, centre-periphery dynamics take place within the municipalities. Furthermore, the municipalities are both located about an hour's drive from the boundaries of the two urban areas of Aalborg and Aarhus, and the localities are thus not part of what Høst (2016) refers to as 'the extreme geographical outskirts in Denmark' (p. 124), but are something in-between – neither truly peripheral regions, nor truly central regions. This is interesting, as much research on rural migration and development in Denmark has focussed on the more classic, peripheral Danish outskirts (see for instance Hansen (2014) on studies on Hirtshals, Larsen (2017) on studies on Bornholm and Vendsyssel and Nielsen (2016a) on studies on the northernmost part of North Jutland). Focussing on these somewhat in-between places can therefore provide new insights into migration in Denmark.

I aim at understanding the meanings attributed to place by youth and young adults from their own point of view. To do so I adopt an interpretive and qualitative approach that focuses on capturing the voices and understanding the life worlds of the participants, and which invites narratives and reflections on hopes and aspirations in relation to place and to future life planning. Here I primarily draw on 52 individual and joint qualitative interviews with 45 women and 37 men, who either live in or have moved away from one of the two municipalities. More specifically, the empirical foundation of the study consists of the following:

- 23 joint interviews with 49 youth, who live in one of the two municipalities. The interviewees consist of 26 female and 23 male students aged 18-20 years old in the final year of an academic upper secondary education programme,

who consequently face immanent choices of further education and/or labour market entry.

- 13 individual or joint interviews with seven female and seven male out-migrants in their early twenties, who have grown up in one of the two municipalities, but have moved to an urban place to pursue higher education at a Danish university.
- 16 individual or joint interviews with 12 female and seven male return migrants in their late twenties or thirties, who have returned to either their exact rural place of origin or to the close vicinities of the rural place in which they grew up after having lived in an urban place for years.

1.3. READING GUIDE

The thesis consists of three individual papers along with this overarching frame elaborating on the theory, the methodological considerations and a linking analytical chapter crisscrossing all my empirical data. The papers each have a unique aim and individual, delimited objectives, while still addressing various aspects of the overall aim of the thesis through their specific theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions. Throughout the thesis, the three papers will be referred to as paper I, II and III and relate to the publications below. The papers are numbered according to research question and not according to date of publication. The analysis and discussion in this overarching frame relate to sub-question 4.

Paper I (sub-question 1):

Pedersen, H. D. and M. Gram (2018) 'The brainy ones are leaving': The subtlety of (un)cool places through the eyes of rural youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(5), pp. 620-635,
DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2017.1406071.

Paper II (sub-question 2):

Pedersen, H. D. (2018) Is out of sight, out of mind? Place attachment among rural youth out-migrants. *Sociologia Ruralis*.
DOI: 10.1111/soru.12214

Paper III (sub-question 3):

Pedersen, H. D. and A. Therkelsen (2017) 'Like a pair of worn-out slippers': Place attraction factors among return migrants to peripheral places. Pp. 56-69 in A. Campelo (Eds.) *Handbook on Place Marketing and Branding* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited).

The thesis has seven parts. The first chapter has established the aims of the thesis and briefly described and positioned the research subject. In Chapter 2, I will account for and develop the theoretical foundations underpinning the thesis, as I will deepen, broaden and expand the theoretical readings, which were not given enough space in the individual papers by reflecting on the relations between identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness and on how these form our relationships with places in the context of migration. Concluding the chapter, a model will bring together the theoretical parts in an overall conceptual framework informing the empirical study. While Chapter 3 gives an introduction to the research setting and the research participants, Chapter 4 explores the methodological considerations, including the research methodology, applied methods for data collection and analysis as well as the research process and choices pertaining to this. Also, the empirical data will be thoroughly presented. Chapter 5 will provide a short summary of the three papers, and each paper is included in full length in its accepted or published format separately as an addition to the thesis. In paper I, I explore place dynamics and aspirations for obtaining coolness, how this relates to academically oriented young people's local rural places, and how they construct, articulate and sustain identities and visions for desired futures based on such place dynamics. In paper II, I scrutinise how rural childhood places shape youth out-migrants' everyday lives in the city, and how place attachment is grounded in the everyday and influences future migration aspirations. In Paper III, I analyse the reasons why some highly educated individuals return to their rural place of origin, and I try to understand which place attraction factors come into play in this decision. I recommend reading the three papers before the analytical Chapter 6, where focus is on how people's relationships with places are continuously constructed throughout the life course, since this chapter builds on the discussions and findings of the three papers. In Chapter 7, the study's conclusions, central contributions for research and practical implications are suggested, as are recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reading up on the literature on youth out-migration and place attachment, I soon realised that the research field is extensive, covering various disciplines like geography, sociology, design, economics etc. Adopting an iterative process, working consecutively and concurrently on theoretical readings and empirical data construction, I loosely began to sketch a theoretical framework reflecting the overall subject around which this thesis is framed: how young people in different life situations evaluate the attractiveness of places and relate to places in various ways through processes of place attachment and identity construction in the context of migration. This central theme, which to a great extent emerged inductively from the interviews, allows me to bring several key themes together: attachment with people and a specific, physical place, evaluations of what makes places attractive, when, why and for whom, and the role of social relations, place and imagined and actual migration trajectories in young people's identity construction. I use this to analyse how people negotiate migration aspirations, produce continuity in a situation of change and construct identities within different spheres of life. Hereby, the thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on the interrelationship between people and places in the context of increased mobilities.

To discuss the complexities inherent in the process of forming relationships with places and exploring the interrelationship between attachment to place and future migration aspirations, I situate the interviewees' narratives, longings and accounts of rural life within theories related to place attractiveness, identity construction, migration and place attachment stressing the importance of continuity, social relationships and life course changes. This is done to understand the stories people produce to define themselves, the role of place and the construction of geographical spatial dichotomies in identity construction and migration behaviour as well as the role of memories that are interlaced with understandings of place in the decisions people make about their lives and the possibilities they see for themselves in relation to where to live. The need to pay attention to people's experience of place as well as the ways in which individuals bring emotions and beliefs to interactions with place are issues of much consideration in social science today (Cresswell 2008); as are the exodus of particularly young people from rural areas seeking education and job opportunities elsewhere. However, youth out-migration is not new, but the meaning and context of migration and the significance of place in relation to this are argued to have changed due to globalisation (Gustafson 2001; Wiborg 2004).

My point of departure in discussing people's relationships with places in the context of migration is based on an understanding of the interrelationship between people and place, and it is to this understanding that the chapter now turns. First, I discuss the

significance and meaning of place, highlighting how places emerge in social contexts. This will be followed by a section on the importance of place in identity construction, where I discuss how identity is embedded in cultural processes and social constructions through which people evaluate themselves and others and legitimise and understand their identity based on the place and group to which they belong. Next, I explore the multidimensionality of place attachment, focussing specifically on the role of continuity in creating a sense of attachment and rootedness in the context of migration as well as the range of emotional qualities inherent in place attachment. This shows how both positive and negative elements are equally meaningful and contribute to place attachment. Then I explore what makes places attractive and try to understand how uneven geographical patterns of development and constructions of spatial dichotomies situate urbanity and rurality within a symbolic hierarchy of worth, which affects migration aspirations. Finally, I turn to the life course-related dynamics behind migration, exploring the motivation for and the difficulties of migration. In this way, the theoretical chapter connects research on place, identity, place attachment, place attractiveness and migration in order to equip me with the tools to critically analyse the stories the interviewees produce to define themselves and their migration trajectories and aspirations.

2.1. MEANINGS OF PLACE

As Hayden (1995) points out, ‘place is one of the trickiest words in the English language, a suitcase so overfilled that one can never shut the lid’ (p. 15). It carries a variety of different meanings, and is neither scale-specific, since ‘a place could be your favorite armchair, a room, building, neighborhood, district, village, city, county, metropolitan area, region [...] state, province, nation, continent, planet – or a forest glade, the seaside, a mountaintop’ (Gieryn 2000 p. 464). Nor is it limited to the physical world, as place can also be said to be both metaphorical and virtual, and individuals can have very different and even conflicting understandings of place (Gustafson 2006). This makes it difficult to define place, as there is no agreed-upon consensus on its meaning. When I discuss the youth and young adults’ relationships with places, the meaning of place is not the boundary around a physical locality or the various statistical indicators from which census data can be extracted for analysis. Instead, place in this thesis is related to the location-specific experiences and nostalgic commemorations inherent in people’s lives, as the significance of place, in my understanding, has less to do with place in and of itself, but more with the meanings people give a place: ‘The meanings of places may be rooted in the physical setting and objects and activities, but they are not a property of them – rather they are a property of human intentions and experiences’ (Relph 1976 p. 47). Hereby, Relph points to the emotional and deeper significance of places to individuals, and he suggests that places are made meaningful through life histories, social relations, emotional attachment and culture. This is similar to Tuan’s (1977) understanding of

place, as he argues that ‘what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value’ (Tuan 1977 p. 6). Space is thus seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning, and it is not until individuals invest meaning in and are attached to space that it becomes a place (Cresswell 2004); a process described ‘as the meaningful practices of day to day life that turns a mere physical location into a “neighbourhood” or a “town”’ (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014a p. 1154).

Places are not static, though; they are very much in process (Cresswell 2008, 2015; Gieryn 2000; Massey 1993; Thrift 2008), as places are dynamic and our understandings of place should be ‘less concerned with stability and more concerned with movement, interactivity, and continuous birth’ (Thrift 2008 p. 4). Places can therefore be regarded as collections of ‘stories-so-far’ (Massey 2005 p. 130), as relationships with places are made meaningful through experiences and everyday life practices, where people gradually attach meaning to geographical settings. While the meaning and understanding of a place can develop in a short amount of time, ‘the “feel” of a place takes longer to acquire, growing out of a large number of routine activities and everyday experiences, as well as more significant life events’ (Gordon 2010 p. 757). The construction of place is thus the product of everyday practices in which ‘they become imbued with meaning through lived experience’ (Tuan 1977 p. 3). Place retains its meaning through continual expression and is not something that simply is, but is always in the making (Tuan 1977). Place does not have ‘one specific meaning or set of meanings, agreed upon by everybody – individuals and/or social groups may have widely differing and even conflicting views of places that are important to them’ (Gustafson 2006 p. 18).

This understanding of place, relying on people’s experiences with and of place over time, relates closely to the purpose of the thesis, as I seek to respond to calls to clarify how people form meaningful relationships with places and how these permeate feelings of place attachment and act as frameworks for people’s identities, everyday interactions and migration trajectories. In the remainder of this theoretical chapter I zoom in on the interconnections between place and identity, how attachment to different places is constructed and maintained, what makes some places attractive and others less so, and how all of this intertwines in a migration context.

2.2. IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Arguably, the meaning and significance of place are undergoing fundamental change, because of ‘global interconnectivity, the increasing significance of mobility, and the relationship between global and local processes and lives’ (Farrugia 2015 pp. 611–612). This causes uncertainty about place as a framework for people’s lives and identity construction (Gustafson 2001, 2014; Lewicka 2011; Wiborg 2004), and due

to this it is relevant to delve into how people form, preserve and gain new identities and how these are related to the places we are part of. Hence, this section focuses on the interlinkage between place and identity.

2.2.1. SOCIAL IDENTITY

While few people are the ‘same’ as others, people situate themselves within social networks (Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003) through which they define themselves as a group, an ‘us’ with a contrasting ‘them’ (Crang 1998). ‘Who is counted as part of a group or excluded from it will depend on which things are chosen as being significant’ (Crang 1998 p. 60), for instance gender, ethnicity, age, income, geography etc. Belonging, hence, depends on which selected characteristics define membership of the group. In the 1970s Tajfel (1974) introduced the social identity theory proposing that groups which establish positively valued distinctiveness from other groups give members a sense of social identity and are significant sources of pride, self-esteem, status and prestige. They provide the individual group member with a distinct meaning, identity and sense of belonging. Thus, belonging to or affiliation with certain groups contributes favourably to the individual’s identity, as the group identity is internalised as self-definitions, providing the group members with positive intergroup distinctiveness from which they can derive their identity (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Hogg and Abrams 2006). Hereby, positive assessment of the group with which one identifies provides the individual with a feeling of social value and worth (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996).

A key perspective on identity is that identities are dynamic and always in the making, as they are affected by our contexts and by the social groups we are part of (Liechty 1995; Zackariasson 2014). When collective dimensions of identities are created, a group of people can implicitly or explicitly be labelled as a certain ‘kind of person’. Along with this follows a set of beliefs about what is ‘regarded as appropriate behaviour for a person belonging to that category or collective identity’ (Zackariasson 2014 p. 157). For the people who fit the label, it has social and psychological effects, as the labels influence not only how people regard themselves, but also how they are perceived and categorised by others (Zackariasson 2014). This is in line with Butler’s (1998) notion that other labelling ‘produces a social structure where we are all measured against an unspecified yet apparently desirable “norm”’ (p. 85). This also implies that people classify themselves in relation to others, and the construction of identity is therefore just as much about determining who we are *not* and how we see ourselves as different from others, as it is about determining who we are (Hemming and Madge 2011; Hockey and James 2003; Zackariasson 2014). Accordingly, identity construction is the outcome of ongoing interaction between the individual and the social environment, where the individual relates positively to some group characteristics, while at the same time acknowledging existing differences between

groups. Processes of ‘othering’ and ‘we-they’ distinctions are hereby used to construct a simplified, less ambiguous picture of the social world by dividing people into different categories and hierarchies, which may, however, result in rigid and undesirable stereotypes and generalisations (Hogg and Abrams 2006). The production of such stereotypes and generalisations also implies that ‘people see themselves through the eyes of others and form self-concepts via the reactions of others’ (Reed 2002 p. 245). Crang (1998) argues that ‘us’ and ‘them’ are often territorially delimited and that ‘the mapping of identity on to geography exposes the unequal relationships between groups and the importance of naming or being named, being the subject or the object of this process’ (p. 61).

2.2.2. PLACE AND IDENTITY

Places are made meaningful through social contexts, and according to Cresswell (1984), a set of unspoken rules guide the behaviour, practices and actions of people and define what is appropriate and inappropriate in a specific place. If a person transgresses these unspoken rules or invisible boundaries, he or she is labelled as ‘out of place’. Cresswell provides an example: We are quiet in the library because that is what we believe is the appropriate way to behave, but by being quiet we actively reproduce the norms and contribute to the continuation of what is perceived as appropriate – in this case, being quiet.

Place is produced by practice that adheres to (ideological) beliefs about what is the appropriate thing to do. But place reproduces the beliefs that produce it in a way that makes them appear natural, self-evident, and commonsense. [...] Thus places are active forces in the reproduction of norms – in the definition of appropriate practice. Place constitutes our beliefs about what is appropriate as much as it is constituted by them. (Cresswell 1984 p. 16)

Knowing how to behave in specific places hereby generates normative places in which it is possible to be either ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 1984). A similar reasoning is made by Haugen and Villa (2006), who argue that in smaller communities where everyone knows everyone small town tittle-tattle and outright gossip are expected, which has consequences for the people who live there: ‘Visibility facilitates negative informal social control, such as gossip and the spreading of rumours. Gossip – or the threat of gossip – represents strong expectations and exerts forces on individuals in terms of how to act and live’ (p. 210). Social expectations about behaving in certain ways in small communities are thus significant and make individuals act according to normative expectations, irrespective of their own preferences. However, such informal social control also strengthens ‘social bonds by enhancing the solidarity of the group or social network’ (Haugen and Villa 2006 p.

210). Hence, small town gossiping is not exclusively a bad thing, but points to how places, in many ways, work in similar ways as social identity, as places to some extent prescribe what is appropriate in a given place and allow people to find a position and sense of belonging.

Similarly, places are intrinsically involved in the creation of personal and social identities (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996), as 'places are an integral part of the social world of everyday life; as such, they become important mechanisms through which identity is defined and situated' (Cuba and Hummon 1993 p. 112). People use places to communicate qualities to self or other and to communicate social rank through the symbolic character of neighbourhoods and places (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Place identification hereby enables individuals to express membership of a place or a group of people defined by location much like social identity allows individuals to express membership of groups. The meaning people ascribe to place and the way they describe their relationship with a place are hence part of their construction and management of identity (Wiborg 2004), and the importance of place, therefore, has less to do with the place in and of itself, but more with the meanings people give to the place (Relph 1976). Place meanings denote what kind of place the physical setting is to the people who hold the meanings, but identities based on place are also ascribed to us in ways that do not necessarily correspond to our own understandings of self, though they still affect how others relate to us (Hemming and Madge 2011; Zackariasson 2014). An individual's socialisation with the physical world and relationships between place and identity thus have complex implications, as the way we ascribe meaning to places affects the ways in which we situate people in the social landscape, because the understandings we attribute to different places have consequences for the identity we ascribe to the individuals who live there (Wiborg 2004). This demonstrates that 'sites are never simply locations. Rather, they are sites for someone and of something' (Shields 1991 p. 6).

An important contribution by Relph (1976) is the construction of the concepts of insiderness and outsiderness, which he regards as a dualism:

It is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure, or simply here and there. From the outside you look upon a place as a traveller might look upon a town from a distance; from the inside you experience a place, are surrounded by it and part of it' (Relph 1976 p. 49).

Insiderness refers to a personal, emotional integration with place, a feeling of belonging to and identifying with the place, and the more profound the integration, the more likely is the person to identify with the place: 'If a person feels inside a place, he or she is here rather than there, safe rather than threatened, enclosed rather than exposed, at ease rather than stressed' (Seamon and Sowers 2008). Outsiderness, in contrast, describes a separation or alienation from a place, where people feel a division

between themselves and the place (Relph 1976). This is a state often felt by people who are new to a place or who return to their place of origin, only to feel as strangers, as they find that the place is no longer what it was when they left. Accordingly, the individuals no longer feel part of the place or at home there (Seamon and Sowers 2008). Insideness and outsideness are not fixed states, though. They stand in dialectical relation to each other and are shaped by an individual's intentionality in a place at a time: 'In short, as our intentions vary, so the boundary between inside and outside moves' (Relph 1976 p. 50), leading to a dynamic and ongoing relationship between place and person, where different circumstances over the course of time alter one's sentiments towards that place. Individuals' relationships with places are interactional processes through which they form emotional attachments and associate places with meanings which occur at individual, collective and cultural levels, leading to 'self-concepts that are based in part on place' (Hauge 2007 p. 44). Hereby, identity is embedded within cultural processes and social constructions, where people evaluate themselves and others and legitimise and understand their identity partly based on the places and groups to which they belong.

Relph (1976) identifies roots and attachment to places as important human needs, and he argues that the places to which individuals feel the strongest attachment are places for which they care and in which they 'have had a multiplicity of experiences and which call forth an entire complex of affections and responses' (p. 38). However, caring for a place is not equal to simply being concerned about it; it means feeling true commitment to, responsibility and respect for the place in and of itself as well as for its meaning to oneself and others. Places are thus important elements and constitute significant frames of reference for identity construction, and our relationships with places contribute to a sense of belonging and order. Furthermore, place is not only embedded in the past and present through memories and everyday doings, but also in who individuals imagine themselves to become in the future (Prince 2014). This highlights how places influence identity-related aspirations, which impact on migration intentions, as our attachment to places (positive, negative, ambiguous, contradictory, etc.) affects our longing to move to/away from specific places.

2.3. PLACE ATTACHMENT

There are many concepts that seek to describe different aspects of people's relationships with places. These are often discussed in terms of place attachment (Altman and Low 1992; Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014; Riley 1992) or similar concepts such as place identity (Cuba and Hummon 1993; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996) or sense of place (Cross 2001; Hay 1998; Howley 1997; Trentelman 2009b). The diversity of concepts discussing the relationships between people and places has been widely recognised in earlier place research (e.g. Altman and Low 1992; Giuliani and Feldman 1993; Hernandez,

Hidalgo, and Ruiz 2014; Lewicka 2011), and instead of going into a discussion of these issues or trying to clarify which is the superordinate concept or the relationship between the wide array of existing definitions, I will focus on one consistently defining aspect in these discussions, namely the emotional quality, referring to the emotional bond or link between people and places (Clark, Duque-Calvache, and Palomares-Linares 2017; Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and Krasny 2012).

In the thesis I adhere to the concept of place attachment. I do not discuss its relation to place identity, sense of place or similar notions, but instead focus on the ‘people place bonding’ and how people construct a sense of continuity in their attachment to places and how such attachment is complex and multidimensional (for discussions on the variety of disciplines that have explored people’s emotional relationships with places see for instance Manzo [2003] and Lewicka [2011]).

2.3.1. CONTINUITY IN PLACE ATTACHMENT

Numerous studies have focussed on the nature of people’s relationships with places, demonstrating that these are dynamic, continually ongoing and can provide people with social connections and commitment (Howley 2006; Nugin 2014; Wiborg 2004), just as interactional processes and shifting conditions shape our relationships with places (Cross 2015). According to Urry (2000, 2007), modern society is characterised by increased mobilities driven by greater levels of movement of people, capital, ideas and information, and it is widely argued that young people are less dependent on traditional institutions, but instead assign great significance to mobility, not least in rural areas where the decline in local opportunities highlights the importance of access to urban places (e.g. Chisholm et al. 2005; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Shucksmith 2004). Although being mobile is paramount today, place remains an important element in our everyday lives and our construction of self (cf. section 2.2.2). Furthermore, feeling attached to a place is ‘associated with higher life satisfaction, better social capital, and higher overall adjustment’ (Lewicka 2014 p. 51), pointing to the significance of place attachment. It has been argued that increased mobility weakens people’s attachment to places, though, as mobile individuals traditionally are portrayed as less likely than others to develop strong senses of attachment to places (Fallov, Jørgensen, and Knudsen 2013; Gustafson 2009; Holton 2015). On the other hand, others suggest that mobility and place attachment need not be regarded as opposite processes, because, they argue, mobility may coexist with and even strengthen ties with places (Båtevik 2001; Fallov, Jørgensen, and Knudsen 2013; Gustafson 2009, 2014; Holton 2015; Lewicka 2011; van der Land 1998). Such contradictory arguments raise questions about the attribution of meaning and attachment to places in the lives of individuals in the context of migration.

Studies show that youth out-migrants who have moved to urban places to pursue higher education often have strong bonds to the home place and continue to feel attached to the place, while at the same time gradually becoming part of another milieu, which according to Wiborg (2004) can lead to an uneasy feeling of being 'betwixt and between' (p. 418). Giuliani, Ferrara and Barabotti (2000) suggest that place attachment in fact emerges more clearly when people move, and that these bonds are significant in 'shaping our identity, filling our lives with meaning, and in enriching it with values, goals and significance' (p. 111). Previous studies include home ownership as an essential element of place attachment (see Windsong 2010), and according to Case (1996), the meaning of home is shaped by absence of and journeys away from home: 'By being away from home, the things, places, activities and people associated with home become more apparent through their absence' (p. 1). The literal and symbolic meaning of home and the familiarity and predictability associated with this are of significant importance in times of change and stress, as it can provide the individual with some stability, social connections and commitment and a sense of rootedness (Howley 2006; Korpela and Hartig 1996; Manzo 2005; Nugin 2014; Trell, Van Hoven, and Huigen 2012; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Another way to deal with the increased mobility and the uncertainties of relocation is through 'homing' activities, which is the act of *making* specific places in order to feel at home there. 'Living between the contrast of a home (a specific home) and a none-homely-element (nomadism) is a condition for the late modern person in a global society' (Petersen et al. 2010 p. 265). Hence, people take different measures and deploy various tactics to relate to specific places for the purpose of creating a homely feeling.

Place attachment encompasses a degree of continuity over the life path across time and situations, demonstrating how 'relationships to places are a life-long phenomenon. They develop and transform over time, so that past experiences in places influence our current relationships to places' (Manzo 2005 p. 83). This points to the temporal dimension of place attachment, which provides a connection between past, present and future, as memories of places act as a glue between people and places by building a bridge between past and present 'with the hope that this relationship will continue in the future' (Lewicka 2014 p. 51). Memories of places can 'serve as a facilitator of attachment to new places' (Lewicka 2014 p. 49), and to manage and cope with the uncertainties of relocation memories can support individuals in constructing identities and attachments to different places (Antonsich and Holland 2014). Memories created through emotional engagement with places hereby allow people to make their own identities and form attachment to places (Leyshon and Bull 2011 p. 161). Hence, the 'greater power of place lies not in inhabiting it but in remembering it' (Riley 1992 p. 20). Memories of places thus provide an 'anchor point from which we can tell different stories of our temporal encounters in the world' (Leyshon 2015 p. 625), and the use of the past and having the cultural knowledge to tell shared place-related stories can then craft a sense of attachment and identity in relation to place (Cross 2015; Williams 2008). This means that through shared stories and memories of places individuals stake a claim about their relationship with and attachment to the

place (Acott and Urquhart 2012). Memories are thus crucial to the processes that make places matter, as attachment to former places can ‘act as markers or referents to past selves and actions. For some people, maintenance of a link with a specific place that has emotional significance provides a sense of continuity to their identity’ (Chow and Healey 2008 p. 364). In their research on place and identity, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) found that place plays a significant role in the construction and maintenance of a person’s identity through continuity. They specifically differentiate between place-referent continuity, referring ‘to the maintenance of continuity via specific places that have emotional significance for a person’ (p. 208), and place-congruent continuity, denoting ‘the maintenance of continuity via characteristics of places which are generic and transferable from one place to another’ (p. 208). This means that individuals on the one hand work to maintain identities through the understandings and emotions they associate with particular places, while on the other hand they also physically and mentally move on to ‘types’ of places that correspond to their desired identities (Farnum, Hall, and Kruger 2005; Manzo 2005; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). The latter marks a separation from former places and is referred to as ‘conscious discontinuity’ (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996), where movement towards a new environment marks a new stage in life.

2.3.2. THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF PLACE ATTACHMENT

While place attachment is typically associated with a positive relationship between people and place (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and Krasny 2012; Manzo 2003, 2005), research, although much less explored, demonstrates that negative or ambivalent attachment with a place can also take place (Klenosky et al. 2007; Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014). Giuliani and Feldman (1993) explain that the overly positive focus on place attachment has challenged the understanding of negative experiences, because ‘to speak of negative attachment contrasts with the everyday meaning of the word. The places where Nazi lagers were located are certainly “places” with a strong emotive value, in particular for Jewish people. Would they say that they are “attached” to them?’ (p. 272). Attachment to places can hereby involve a tension between ‘belonging and exclusion, and positive and negative affect’ (Manzo 2014 p. 178), and focussing primarily on positive emotions in our attachment to places neglects our more mixed, nuanced and at times displeasing relationships with places. Relph (1976) also argues that ‘our relationships with places are just as necessary, varied, and sometimes perhaps just as unpleasant, as our relationships with other people’ (p. 141), hereby suggesting that there is a multidimensionality in people’s relationships with places, and that sometimes these bonds may be strong, but not necessarily positive.

Giuliani and Feldman (1993) shed light on how negative emotional attachment to places develops, and they assert that ‘negative information about an area through the media or via word-of-mouth, visiting an area during a disaster or time of war, or

having bad personal experiences at a place' (p. 43) can contribute to negative place attachment. Likewise, memories of places are not always positive, as people can also have negative emotional memories of places (Jamieson 2000), and in their study of young people who migrate from urban to rural environments Tyrrell and Harmer (2015) underscore how individuals use prior experiences and met or unmet expectations in their evaluations of different locations, closely linking the physical and the remembered. Chawla (1992) argues that there is a 'shadow side' to our relationships with places, referring to our ambivalent, frustrating and negative experiences and feelings towards places. However, feelings that are oppressive, repelling and restrictive are just as meaningful to place attachment as feelings that contribute with a positive sense of attachment (Manzo 2005; Manzo and Devine-Wright 2014). Acknowledging the entire range of emotions and experiences with places is necessary, as place attachment depends on the value people assign to these meanings (Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and Krasny 2012). Hereby, an emotional link or bond between people and place is demonstrated, and the significance of a specific geographical setting is based on the individual's ability to ascribe meaning to the place, as 'any exploration of place as a phenomenon of direct experience must be concerned with the entire range of experiences through which we all know and make places' (Relph 1976 p. 6). Place attachment involves mixed elements of both positive and negative emotional bonds, and it must include 'acceptance of the restrictions that place imposes and the miseries it may offer' (Relph 1976 p. 42) and not simply of the positive elements. The dynamics between these emotions towards a place expresses the individual's relationship with place and may demonstrate an underlying ambiguous place attachment, in which our experience of place 'is a dialectical one – balancing a need to stay with a desire to escape' (Relph 1976 p. 42).

2.4. PLACE ATTRACTIVENESS

The subject of migration trajectories and aspirations of people with a rural place of origin is currently receiving much attention and policy focus, since the ability of rural places to retain and attract inhabitants, in particular young educated people, is of importance to local and regional development aimed at remedying the increasingly ageing population and at stimulating economic development (Faggian, Corcoran, and Rowe 2017). The attractiveness of places is, however, a topic that is difficult to approach due to its abstract and subjectively understood nature. Place attractiveness is not universal or agreed upon by everyone, as people have widely differing and conflicting views on what makes places attractive or not (Niedomysl 2007). Yet, Florida's (2002) 'creative class' theory and Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory of 'the experience economy' have achieved wide recognition among practitioners as ways to inspire relocation of people by transforming places into attractive areas to live, visit and work. The appeal of places is hereby increasingly recognised as a key factor in enticing people to relocate, enabling a range of factors to influence residential choices

(Fotheringham, Champion, and Wymer 2000; Niedomysl 2010; Thulemark 2015). This makes attractive living environments growing topics of debate (Jensen 2007; Landry 2008; Lorentzen 2009), and it creates more room for quality of life-related considerations to influence destination choices, which has stimulated a global competition among geographical settings, as it has become increasingly important to stand out from the crowd by creating a unique place on social, cultural and economic levels. This has led municipalities reinvent and rebrand places as tourism, leisure and service economies (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014b; Farrugia 2014), or to invest in image boosterism and flagship projects in order to promote the specific potentials and resources of a given place (Jensen-Butler, Shachar, and van Weesep 1997; Newman and Thornley 1996). Place attractiveness is hence increasingly regarded as an important growth driver, and this focus has transmitted into regional policies too, since more or less every place seems to have a local development policy to increase the attractiveness of the region and ‘to meet the challenges of territorial competition’ (Andersen 2002 p. 94). While a positive effect of marketing efforts on attracting in-migrants cannot be ruled out conclusively, there is no general evidence for a positive impact of such, hence questioning the likelihood that a brochure, poster or TV commercial will motivate people to relocate from their current residence (Niedomysl 2007). However, for policy makers who increasingly feel the pressure to act in times of decreasing regional development ‘place marketing campaigns might be a convenient way of putting up a façade of energetic and strong governance when there are no other certain roads to success’ (Niedomysl 2007 p. 708). Ward (1998) also suggests that marketing may be ‘intended as much to boost internal morale as to change external perception’ (p. 231), hereby pointing to how marketing can be aimed towards existing residents and used as an internal starting point for a more optimistic regional development.

Niedomysl (2010) presents a pyramidal framework for evaluating place attractiveness in a migration context, as he argues that needs, demands and preferences are central elements in people’s migration decision-making. In his framework, needs refer to basic requirements, demands refer to more or less non-negotiable factors, and preferences refer to ‘that something extra’. Niedomysl suggests that distinguishing between these factors can help differentiate between elements that are highly important to migrants in making a decision on where to move, and elements that are less important, as ‘the attractiveness of places increases with the successive fulfilment of these factors; but on the other hand, the more factors a migrant seeks to fulfil in his or her destination selection, the fewer the choice possibilities’ (p. 97). Niedomysl hereby provides a useful framework for evaluating place attractiveness and the number of places that live up to the individual’s needs, demands and preferences, while he also acknowledges that individuals are faced with a number of life course-related constraints and limitations, which affect the ways in which people prioritise and experience places (cf. section 2.5). Much literature (e.g. Barcus and Brunn 2010; Lee 1969; Piiparinen and Russell 2013) has related a variety of push and pull factors to the attractiveness of place, describing how all places contain a number of factors

which motivate people to stay in the area or which attract people to it, while other factors simultaneously tend to repel or stimulate people to leave. These include for instance ‘opportunities for improved work-life balance, and the natural environment interlinked with life-cycle issues’ (Borén and Young 2013 p. 197). This points to how people are motivated to migrate based on the degree to which ‘the individual maximizes his/her economic, social, familial, or employment situation, or combination of these factors’ (Barcus and Brunn 2010 p. 282). I recognise that migration processes and evaluations of places are complex and vary across the life course, and therefore, I regard migration outcomes and place attractiveness as intersections of diversity and multiplicity. In the following section, I delve into discussions on the elements that are central in affecting the attractiveness of places in the context of migration, as I investigate how social and media representations impact on people’s evaluations of places and look into how place hierarchies are constructed and relate to place attractiveness.

2.4.1. SOCIAL AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

Social and media representations affect people’s evaluations of a given place’s attractiveness by disseminating certain representations across geographical and social borders. However, little is known about the effects and influences of media on migration (Piotrowski 2013), but since ‘the nature of discursive knowledge production has an effect on what actions are undertaken and thus what outcomes are likely within any socio-cultural context’ (Hannam and Knox 2005 p. 26), the implicit and explicit portrayals of places in films, novels, television programmes, paintings, news stories etc. are important mechanisms in producing the attractiveness of places, as people understand places through place representations.

Knowledge is acquired through our interactions with, and movements between different places. These interactions may be first-hand, as when we acquire information from a place that physically surrounds us, or it may be indirect, as when we experience a place vicariously, through media representations, maps, videos and so on. What is important is that this information is processed, via mental processes of cognition, to form stable and learnt images of place, which are the basis for our everyday interactions with the environment. (Holloway, Hubbard, and Hubbard 2000 p. 48)

While these understandings may be partial, simplified or even distorted, since they are built upon individual perceptions of place representations (Holloway, Hubbard, and Hubbard 2000), the practices of media, public figures, academic discourses etc. all contribute to the production and reproduction of central narratives of rural and urban life. They are also important mechanisms in defining and situating identity, as

the symbolic characteristics and representations of places can be related to identity and be used as markers of privilege and power, or lack thereof, hence giving ground for collectively ascribing a particular identity to the people who live there (Dallago, Perkins, and Santinello 2009; Leyshon 2008; Prince 2014; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996; Wiborg 2004).

Broader social and public narratives construct hierarchies of places, with urban places often represented as superior to rural places (Farrugia 2016; Jensen 2012; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003) and representing ‘a distinctive lifestyle usually coupled with a strong positive affect’ (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996 p. 207). Similarly, urbanity is frequently related to career opportunities and moving forwards, as urban places are associated with dynamic engines of growth, urban sprawl and economic development (Argent and Walmsley 2008; Beck, Ebbensgaard, and Beck 2009; Bloksgaard, Faber, and Hansen 2015; Green 1999; Ní Laoire 2000). Rurality, in contrast, is primarily presented in terms of either the rural idyll or the rural dull (Rye 2006a, 2006b, 2011), where the former is a notion of the rural way of life as the good life, which presents life in the countryside as more natural, as opposed to life in the city. In this narrative the social, transparent fabric of rurality is highlighted, where ‘everyone knows everyone’ and accordingly care for one another and about what is going on in the community, providing a feeling of security (Haugen and Villa 2006). Another quality in this narrative is that of rural life as serene, safe, peaceful and tranquil, compared to the restlessness of urbanity (Glendinning et al. 2003; Rye 2006b; Tyrrell and Harmer 2015; Villa 2000). The belief that rurality provides safe and harmonious surroundings is predominant in the common view that rurality is a good place for raising children (Valentine 1997; Villa 2000), and it has resulted in a nostalgia for the rural way of life, where children are free to roam and people can live in agreement with nature and breathe fresh air (Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003). The countryside in this narrative is ‘pictured as a less-hurried lifestyle where people follow the seasons rather than the stock market, where they have more time for one another and exist in a more organic community where people have a place and an authentic role’ (Short 1991 p. 34).

The narrative of the rural dull, in contrast, is associated with boredom, dreariness and lack of opportunities regarding employment, education and leisure activities (Rye 2006b, 2011). Rurality is described as gossiping, constraining and controlling, and the feeling of security found in the idyllic version of rurality where ‘everyone knows everyone’ leads to a form of negative social control that fosters a culture with less tolerance for those who succeed or deviate from the norm: ‘The social pressure to behave in certain ways in small societies is huge and leads to individuals acting in line with the expectations, regardless of their own preferences and interests’ (Haugen and Villa 2006 p. 210). In their study on the role of narratives of rural-urban difference in the construction of young people’s identities, Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003) also found that ‘labelling someone “country” was sometimes used as a form of mocking or insult between young people in an attempt to mark someone as unsophisticated or unfashionable, and young people had to perform “urban” correctly or be liable to the

charge of being “countrified” (p. 254). This points to Cresswell’s (1984) notion that knowledge of how to behave in specific places generates normative places where it is possible to be either ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ (cf. section 2.2.2). The dualism between rural and urban is very powerful and can, as both Vanderbeck and Dunkley’s and Haugen and Villa’s research demonstrates, be used as a referent for marking oneself as distinct from others, influencing how people define themselves (Leyshon 2011) and what future possibilities they see for themselves (Prince 2014). Hence, individuals are much affected by other people’s categorisations, and a spatial shorthand is used, among other things, to sum up the characteristics of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Crang 1998).

2.4.2. PLACE HIERARCHIES

Education is a widely acknowledged explanation for the massive rural-to-urban migration many industrialised nations have witnessed (Hansen 2014; Jamieson 2000; Larsen 2017; Ní Laoire 2000), and according to Corbett (2007), the ‘school is the “ladder”, the “bridge”, the “gate” and the “stepping stone”, while the community is “static” and “dying”’ (p. 50), implying that people have to get an education to make something of themselves. Several studies have investigated the influence of education on rural youth out-migration (e.g. Hansen 2014; Jamieson 2000; Larsen 2017; Ní Laoire 2000), and how the increasing concentration of higher educational institutions in urban environments draws young people to the city, as education has become a ‘naturalised discourse’ (Alloway et al. 2004) and an accepted cultural norm. Easthope and Gabriel (2008) label this as a ‘culture of migration’ (p. 173), signifying the idea of out-migration as an assumed and expected process, which ‘despite the loss to rural families and communities that youth out-migration represents’ (Abbott-Chapman, Johnston, and Jetson 2014 p. 296) is primarily regarded as a normative and taken-for-granted act among young people in achieving future aspirations (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). Hereby, education is regarded as both a practical necessity and a moral imperative, which is used as a means to gain some control over one’s life (Wyn 2007), symbolising a ‘mobility ticket’ (Corbett 2007) and a way out of the community into a world with more opportunities for becoming something and somebody (Alloway et al. 2004; Corbett 2007).

This strong internal imperative to ‘become somebody’ and the external pressure on young people to obtain high levels of education lead to a double mobility imperative that is both social and geographical. The fact that young people more than ever before pursue further education in the cities has changed rural youth’s relationships with their local places, as it has forced rural young people to form relationships with urban places in order to build future lives (Farrugia 2014). This also influences their values, ideals and expectations to life, as ‘education is not solely a means to a good job, it also implies intellectual development and self-realisation’ (Dahlström 1996).

Pursuing higher education, in other words, leads to greater expectations among young people regarding jobs with self-realisation and self-development opportunities, jobs which are less widespread in rural areas (Dahlström 1996; Fosso 2004). Young people taking a higher education thus ‘educate themselves away from their home communities’ (Dahlström 1996), and, in contrast, rural youth who are unable to or do not wish to migrate are perceived as failures, according to ideals of success based on the importance of mobility (Farrugia 2016; Looker and Naylor 2009). This highlights how young people’s response to the education and mobility imperative is not only a move through geographical places, but also a move through symbolic hierarchies (Farrugia 2016).

While the countryside is perceived as a good place to grow up, research has shown that rural youth to a great extent describe their lives with words like lack and absence and as being uneventful and boring, which makes many want to leave (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014a; Farrugia 2014; Sørensen and Pless 2017). In other words, rurality is not a good place to be young, as it is associated with an absence of opportunities, and according to Shucksmith and Brown (2016), ‘referring to the future and the rural in the same breath is something of an oxymoron’ (p. 1), as the rural apparently lies in the domain of the past, which only increases the urge of young people to leave (Leyshon 2008; Sørensen and Pless 2017; Wiborg 2001). Several studies have highlighted how rural communities are perceived as places that cannot accommodate young people, and how being young in the countryside is about breaking away, as youth feel out of place here (Argent and Walmsley 2008; Beck, Ebbensgaard, and Beck 2009; Bloksgaard, Faber, and Hansen 2015; Green 1999; Ní Laoire 2000; Sørensen and Pless 2017). Other studies have found that young people growing up in rural places are positioned as outside of what is associated with being young and modern, creating a yearning to leave the countryside for dreams of an urban way of life (Farrugia, Smyth, and Harrison 2014b; Liechty 1995; Pilkington 2004; Rye 2006b). Rural life is considered more traditional and less progressive than urban life (Rye 2006b; Waara 1996), and accordingly, the city enables youth to place themselves within a stimulating and sophisticated urbanity in ‘the locus of the future’ (Farrugia 2016 p. 843). Hence, ‘there is a connection between the dominant narrative about a good youth life as spatially bound to the city and the urban way of life and a sense of belonging, which is characterized by longing for getting out and away from the local area’ (Sørensen and Pless 2017 p. 8). Sørensen (2015) found that people, if they could choose freely, would ‘want to live in the residential environment that they think will give them the highest status among fellowmen’ (p. 419), and since urbanity is often conceived of as the most attractive by young people, they will accordingly be less likely to subscribe to the rural way of life (Rye 2006b).

2.5. MIGRATION FROM A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

Research demonstrates that as individuals' life situations change, the ways in which they understand and experience places change as well, as life situation and family responsibilities impact on migration and perceptions of place (Borén and Young 2013; Brown 2014; Cristoforetti, Gennai, and Rodeschini 2011; Niedomysl 2010). Kley and Mulder (2010) demonstrate that 'migration decision-making is mainly driven by life-course events and by perceived opportunities in several life domains' (p. 90). Similarly, identification with a place also changes with different phases of life (Cuba and Hummon 1993), just as 'people climate' (cf. Florida 2002) preferences change relative to their life stage. Boyle (2006), for instance, found strong evidence that urban places are mostly attractive at certain points in life, when people are young and carefree, and that they become less attractive when people enter the life stage where they start a family. Research shows that high mobility is associated with the life stage of being young, single and childless, but as the youth grow older, get a career and have family commitments, they gradually become more 'emplaced' (Brown 2014; Ryan and Mulholland 2014). This is not to suggest that settling down is static, though. Instead of thinking about migration as a simplistic settlement-mobility dichotomy, Ryan and Mulholland (2014) suggest 'a continuum of emplacement whereby migrants gradually extend their stay while, at the same time, keeping future options open' (p. 587). While changes to one's life situation in itself might not be a reason for migrating, changes to one's life situation in the form of marriage, divorce, birth of children etc. may result in changed needs, preferences and priorities potentially inciting migration (Andersen and Nørgaard 2012; Fischer and Malmberg 2001). Hence, a life course perspective is highly relevant when trying to understand meanings and perceptions of place in a migration context, as people have different needs and preferences at various phases of life and relative to changes in life situations.

2.5.1. RETURNING TO THE PLACE OF ORIGIN

While pursuing a higher education in many cases removes rural youth permanently from their local areas, in some cases 'the well-educated young people that once left a rural community, chose to return to try and build up a life that combines the acquired qualifications with a rural life' (Dahlström 1996). It can be an advantage to rural communities if young people choose to return later in life (Piiparinen and Russell 2014; Stockdale 2006), since their experience of the diversity of other places and their 'new skills, insights and a wider sense of the world' (Argent, Rolley, and Walmsley 2008 p. 136) may have equipped them with the knowledge and experience necessary to see new opportunities in rural areas, which can revitalise the rural locality (Dahlström 1996) and create new jobs and industries in rural labour markets (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). It is also argued that return migrants participate in social networks with ease and are thus less likely to experience the kinds of conflicts that can arise

between newcomers and old-timers due to spatial clustering, which is often seen with regard to lifestyle and retirement migrants (Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun 2014).

Hence, return migrants supposedly contribute to the social, demographic and economic vitality of rural settings, as they are ‘a valuable source of human and social capital, and can create a “brain gain”’ (Haartsen and Thissen 2014 p. 88). Consequently, getting young people to return to their rural place of origin is often regarded as ‘a potential solution to the negative effects of out-migration’ (Ní Laoire and Stockdale 2016 p. 43), and young people who have left should therefore ‘be seen not as a loss, but as a group to encourage and to maintain positive connections with – as potential returnees’ (Gibson and Argent 2008 p. 136). According to Davison (2004), return migrants primarily move back to their place of origin because of romantic and nostalgic perceptions of the past rather than because of what actually happens in rural communities. However, this is only one of many reasons given by migrants for returning, and it does not mean that individuals who move back necessarily have purely idealised perceptions of their past rural place, ‘but that they can use this narrative as an explanatory tool to make sense of their emigration and return experiences’ (Ní Laoire 2007 p. 337). Prior experience with and attachment to a place are said to increase the likelihood of return migration (Davies 2008; Emerek and Kirkeby 2015; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Feijten, Hooimeijer, and Mulder 2008; Ní Laoire 2007), just as social networks and in particular proximity to family and friends are described as decisive in the motivation to return (Hall and Donald 2011; Ní Laoire and Stockdale 2016; Nedomysl and Amcoff 2011; Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun 2014).

Returning, however, involves a difficult process of adjustment, because youth who leave for the cities negotiate new positions in hierarchies of social and cultural standing, and they often develop lifestyles and outlooks that are more urban and sophisticated than those they leave behind in their rural community (Easthope and Gabriel 2008; Farrugia 2016; Gabriel 2006). For this reason, an ambivalent and sometimes troublesome relationship with the rural community is adopted by young people, demonstrating ‘symbolic distinctions between the progressive and sophisticated city, and provincial and traditional country’ (Farrugia 2016 p. 844). In such constructions return migration is primarily regarded as a step backwards in terms of personal and career development, often indicating failure more than success (Easthope and Gabriel 2008). Returning, therefore, is more complex than simple constructions of the return home as a safe haven suggest (Ní Laoire 2007), and often narratives of returning involve stories of outsidership (cf. section 2.2.2). Albeit in two very different settings, the work of McKay (2005) and Ní Laoire (2007), for instance, describes how individuals who have returned to their rural place of origin sometimes find it difficult to resettle in the local communities due to processes of exclusion in the local community, but also due to tensions between ‘desires for conformity and a desire for autonomy’ (Ní Laoire 2007 p. 343).

2.6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The point of departure for this thesis is the question of how youth and young adults develop meaningful relations with places, and how these relationships affect place attachment, identity construction and evaluations of place attractiveness in the context of migration across shifting life situations. Although meanings of place and the migration trajectories and aspirations of people with a rural place of origin are not new topics as such, there are, however, aspects that make these subjects timely. As explained, contemporary societal changes with increased mobilities might influence a change in the relationships between people and places, questioning the importance and role of place in the everyday lives of men and women, not least young people increasingly affected by the education and mobility imperative. This gives rise to important questions about how experiences and meanings of place are related to migration behaviour, and it calls for an understanding of the role of continuity in creating a sense of attachment and rootedness in the context of migration. Furthermore, since the rural is often described through its relationship with and comparison to the superior positioned city, focussing on the lives of individuals with a rural place of origin in these debates seems timely as a point of departure for a discussion of how hegemonic rural-urban dichotomies affect processes of identity construction for young people. In the introduction, I argued that there have been calls for clarifying the ways in which individuals construct meaningful relationships with places and that studies on place attachment do not sufficiently account for the variety of experiences and emotions which form our relationships with places. I have discussed how literature on place attachment has focussed mainly on positive bonds between people and place, and I have argued that relying purely on such positive bonds does not suffice for a complete understanding of place attachment. Gaps concerning place attachment based in the multidimensionality of people's experiences in and with places have therefore been identified, and while some research on the subject exists, I argue that in order to fully understand people's complex and multifaceted relationships with places in the context of migration there is still much to explore as to how ambivalent and sometimes uncomfortable experiences and feelings add to place attachment on equal terms with positive feelings and experiences.

Based on the theoretical discussions, I have identified three central elements for discussing the various themes found in the interviews: identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness. These will serve as my analytical approach, as I will apply these three dimensions from a life course perspective to the examination of the migration trajectories and aspirations of youth and young adults with a rural place of origin. In relation to this, the most basic understanding of identity construction refers to the processes through which individuals grasp a sense of who they are. Place attachment refers to the emotional bond between people and places, and place

attractiveness relates to the complex set of push and pull mechanisms related to different places. The interconnections between these three are many, because since place both defines and situates identity, feeling and being attached to a place with attractive connotations is desirable, as places can be used as markers of privilege and power. Perceiving ourselves in the light of an attractive or less attractive place to which we feel attached hereby gives ground for acquiring a desirable or undesirable identity, which may affect migration in and out of different places over the life course. Applying the three dimensions to the empirical study may not only add important nuances to understanding how preferences and priorities for places vary across the life course, reflecting the complex interplay between migration flows, life course changes and what makes up the attractiveness of places, but also to the complexity of the multidimensionality of place attachment and how this affects identity construction over time and across places. Hence, I am interested in understanding the reasoning of individuals with a rural place of origin regarding place attractiveness, identity construction and place attachment, and how the multiplicity inherent in migration motivations evolves over the life course. With figure 1, I suggest that the attribution of meaning to and preferences for places in the context of migration involve assessments of the three primary dimensions represented by each angle, and that these are evaluated in the context of life course changes. The outer circle illustrates interactions with places across life course changes in time and situations, whereas the triangle and its three angles, in the context of migration, represent the variation in the attribution of meaning to and preferences for places and how place and identity intersect.

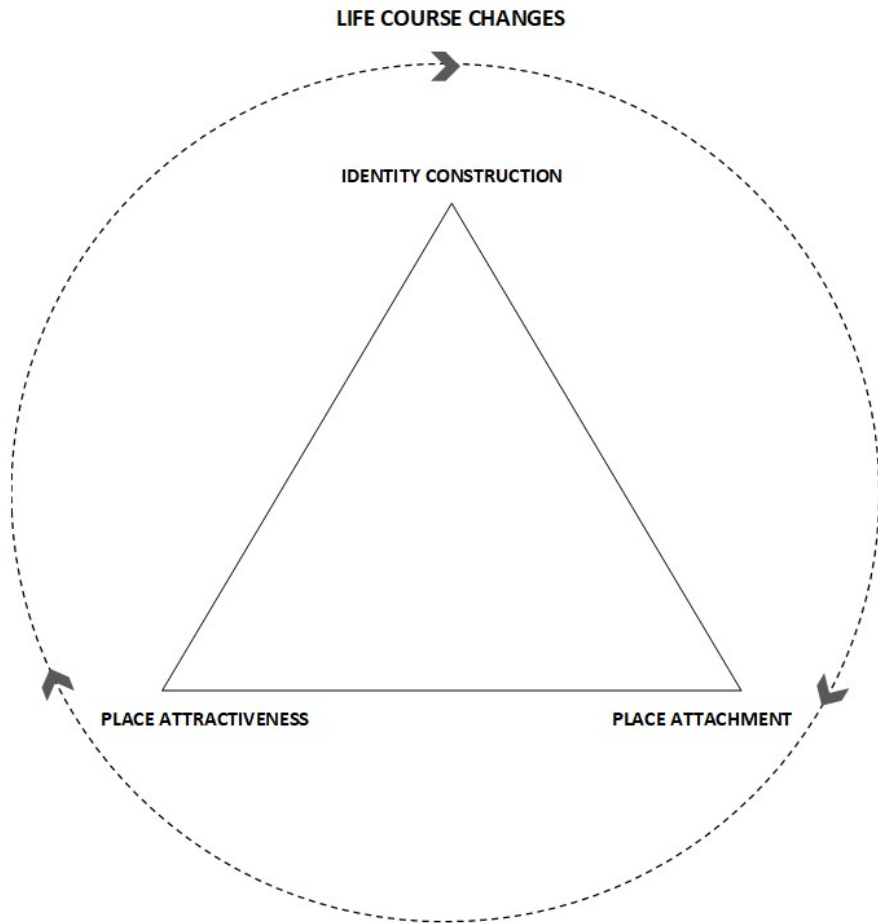


Figure 1: Understanding youth and young adults' relationships with places in the context of migration

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH SETTINGS

In this section, I present the characteristics and particular features of the research settings. First, I provide an overview of the Danish rural-urban divide, and second, I present the particular local research settings in focus in this study. I conclude with presenting the characteristics of the research participants.

3.1. THE DANISH CONTEXT

Denmark has a population of 5.7 million people distributed over an area of 42,916 square kilometres, and it may seem out of proportion to even talk about a rural-urban divide in such a relatively small country with short and manageable distances between larger cities and outlying areas. Most of the places that are recognised as the rural outskirts of Denmark would hardly qualify as even semi-remote in many other countries (Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Sørensen and Pless 2017), which illustrates how distances are culturally produced, as ‘what is close-by in one country can be far-away in another’ (Høst 2016). Regardless of the geographical landscape of Denmark with relatively short and manageable distances between rural and urban areas, many rural places are experiencing significant structural and demographic challenges that alter the living conditions in relation to the viability and cohesion of the areas. Denmark is far from the most urbanised country in the EU, but the country is facing an imbalance between in-migration and out-migration, as Denmark has experienced one of the largest movements from rural to urban areas in recent years relative to the rest of the EU, as the part of the Danish population that lives in urban areas has increased by 6 per cent compared to 2007 (KL 2014). More specifically, in 2012 almost 72 per cent of the Danish population lived in or close to one of the 11 largest Danish cities¹, while 28 per cent lived in rural villages and small towns considerable distances away from these 11 largest cities (Ministry of Housing Urban and Rural Affairs 2013).

While recognising that the term rural is debatable regarding scale and what is and is not considered to be rural, and that there is a risk of offering only a partial or stereotypical view of people’s experiences of places, I have chosen to consistently use the term rural as a unifying term for the research settings in focus in this thesis. In paper III (which was published first), however, I use the term peripheral on an equal footing with the term rural, but as the PhD project evolved I realised that the term

¹ THE 11 LARGEST DANISH CITIES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: THE CAPITAL REGION OF COPENHAGEN, AARHUS, ODENSE, AALBORG, ESBJERG, RANDERS, KOLDING, HORSSENS, VEJLE, ROSKILDE, HERNING AND HELSINGØR (MINISTRY OF HOUSING URBAN AND RURAL AFFAIRS 2013).

peripheral in everyday usage denotes a process of decline and deterioration and a distance from centres of development, which is somewhat misleading for the research settings in focus in this study. Processes of centralisation and peripheralisation can take place in all types of geographical settings, and both processes are often seen simultaneously within the same region, as part of the region might be experiencing centralisation, while other parts are experiencing peripheralisation. Hence, in this thesis rural refers to smaller settlements, villages and towns outside the large Danish cities, which on the one hand struggle with issues of depopulation, lack of economic growth, ageing societies and youth out-migration, altogether challenging the areas in terms of future growth and sustainability, but which also experience development within certain areas. Hence, I understand Danish rural areas to be places outside the 11 largest cities characterised by:

- being more severely affected during and after the economic crisis of 2008 in terms of a decline in the number of jobs and in the influx of highly educated people.
- having relatively high shares of unskilled and vocationally educated residents combined with low shares of highly educated residents.
- an ageing population, often as a result of a high degree of youth out-migration.
- having relatively large numbers of vacated premises along with relatively low housing prices.

(Andersen, Møller-Jensen, and Engelstoft 2011; Aner and Hansen 2014; Larsen 2017; Nørgaard 2011; The Danish Government 2016)

Growth and development in Denmark primarily take place in a number of regions around the largest cities, while rural areas experience stagnation or decline in terms of population, functions and economy, which puts demands on the residents in these areas, who need to be increasingly mobile in relation to the labour market (Aner and Hansen 2014; Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hersbøll 2013; Holm 2011; Kristensen and Andersen 2009; Tanvig 2010). Also, Denmark has seen increased centralisation of studentships, with 66 per cent of the total number of studentships (96 per cent of studentships at universities) now located in and around the four largest Danish cities: Copenhagen, Aarhus, Aalborg and Odense (Danmark på Vippen 2016). This clearly highlights how young people from rural areas in Denmark face the mobility imperative due to immanent choices concerning further education, as such decisions are indeed also spatial decisions, and it has led to increased out-migration among rural youth, who move to the cities in pursuit of higher education and better career opportunities (Damvad 2013; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Holm 2011; Larsen 2017; Lyck 2014). It is estimated that only about 15 per cent of Danish youth leaving rural areas for educational purposes return (KL 2016), resulting in an increasingly ageing population. This puts pressure not only on the economy, but also on the supply of services that go with such changes in demography, for example in the form of the need for day care facilities, schools etc., which often

eventually lead to the closing of institutions and loss of local jobs (Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hersbøll 2013). In this connection, there is a growing concern that Denmark is ‘breaking in two’, referring to how the four largest cities are increasingly becoming prosperous and dynamic engines of growth, urban sprawl and economic development attracting resourceful young people, while the rural parts are growing steadily more redundant and are characterised by a low-skilled and ageing population (Grund 2010; Nielsen 2016b; Svendsen 2013a, 2013b; Sørensen and Pless 2017; Østergaard 2009).

For some years, Danish rural areas have been referred to negatively (Houlberg and Hjelmar 2014; Nørgaard 2011), as the Danish mainstream media have primarily presented the discourse of the rural dull with headlines like ‘Denmark is skewed’ (*Det skæve Danmark*, Østergaard 2009), ‘Bye, bye boonies’ (*Bye, bye bøhland*, Hansen 2015) or through documentaries like ‘Being screwed in Nakskov’ (*På røven i Nakskov*, TV2 2015a). A number of less flattering terms have also appeared ‘in the vocabulary of the Danish media when talking about rural areas in Denmark, e.g. the terms “Outskirt Denmark” and “The Rotten Banana”’ (Sørensen 2018 p. 81), just as national debates among politicians, public figures and the general population have raged in media (Eriksson, Nielsen and Paulgaard 2015), discussing rural-urban inequalities and how to reduce population, education and employment centralisation in urban areas. Media portrayals like these co-produce and add to our understanding, perception and image of Danish rural places, and they ‘might have given rural areas an undeserved bad reputation in the eyes of the Danish population which in turn could have a negative effect on the population development in rural areas’ (Sørensen 2018 p. 81). Hereby, such representations amplify and feed into the reproduction of existing or new discourses of rural places, and a possible consequence is that the negative representations might provide a breeding ground for further negative development.

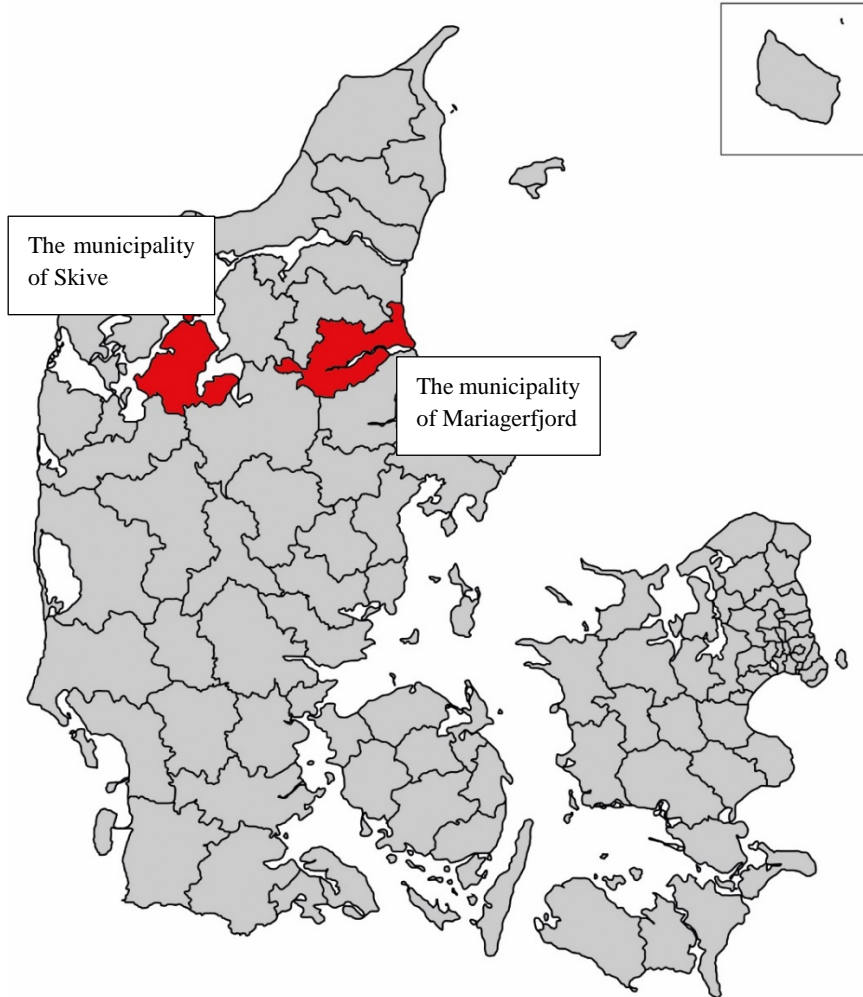
Accordingly, population issues with regard to rural settings are high on the agendas of regional and national policymakers, and mayors in rural municipalities often express concern regarding such issues, for instance in columns and letters in national newspapers and other media (e.g. Baumann 2017; Leonhard 2017; Vibjerg 2016). Spurred on by these worries, many municipalities have become increasingly engaged in competing for new residents and investments, and important elements in these efforts are attempts at transforming the regions into cool places to work and live through place branding campaigns (see for instance the place branding campaigns for Brønderslev Municipality [2017] and Skive Municipality [2017]). On the national level, actions are also initiated to delimit the uneven development of Denmark with initiatives in the form of policy objectives and strategies aimed at spreading public sector and educational activities across the country (Ministry of Finance 2018; Ministry of Higher Education and Science 2017; Ministry of Industry Business and Financial Affairs 2016). Recently, the Danish Government has relocated about 4,000 state jobs and 1,000 studentships to areas outside the capital region, just as the financing of Danish higher education is currently undergoing changes (Ministry of

Higher Education and Science 2017) favouring educational institutions with geographically decentralised educational offers. Other initiatives that may positively affect rural places include the new Planning Act of 2017 (The Danish Parliament 2017), the reduction in ferry fares to Danish islands in support of ‘traffic equality’ (*Landevejsprincippet*, Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Interior 2017) as well as the political proposal for a so-called ‘rural filter’ (*Udkantsfilter*, Christensen 2017), referring to a process of assessing whether new laws will have consequences for the areas outside the big cities, and if so what these consequences will be. Recently, 17 recommendations for how to strengthen and make Danish rural areas more attractive were also published by a board established by the Danish Government (Udvalget for levedygtige landsbyer 2018), hence, demonstrating how steps are being taken to plug the population drain from rural communities. Similarly, the dominant, negative framing of the Danish countryside as a jobless no man’s land with a collapsed real estate market and as the final destination for quirky individuals not fit for the modern way of life has been declining since its culmination in 2010 (Infomedia 2016; Svendsen 2013a), and more varied representations of the countryside are seen today. For instance, media reports in favour of rurality appear in television shows like ‘The world of Vester’ (*Vesters Verden*, TV2 2015b) and ‘A great life in the countryside’ (*Et lækkert liv på landet*, DR 2016), highlighting the rural idyll and the benefits of living in the countryside. In this way, steps are taken both politically and in the media pointing to a more multifaceted picture of Danish rural regions.

3.2. THE LOCAL RESEARCH SETTINGS

Two municipalities were examined in this study, namely Mariagerfjord and Skive (figure 2), and these two settings share essential characteristics with regard to geography, demography and culture: They are rural, coastal regions of approximately 700 square kilometres of land, and both have an official population of about 44,000 inhabitants (Gregersen 2017). Each municipality has one town of some size (12,000-20,000 inhabitants), several smaller rural villages and settlements and numerous separate residences throughout the regions. Both settings are located about a four-hour drive from the Danish capital of Copenhagen and situated in-between the two urban regions of Aalborg and Aarhus.

Figure 2: Research settings



Source: Own making

As mentioned, the credit crunch of 2008 had a considerable impact on rural regions in particular, and both municipalities have suffered from loss of jobs in the period between 2008-2013 (Arbejdsmarkedskontor Midt-Nord 2015a, 2015b), making them less attractive to reside in compared to regions with denser labour markets.

Traditionally, the local economies of the municipalities have depended on transport and trade (KL 2015), but both settings have also experienced growth in new forms of industries (e.g. hydrogen and biogas), and changes in local labour markets are therefore taking place, as these new industries produce new types of jobs. There is a surplus of highly educated labour in Denmark's largest cities (Jakobsen 2015), but there is also a demand for this type of labour in the two municipalities; however, these have difficulties in filling such positions, simply because there are few, if any, qualified applicants.

Some would probably question whether the municipalities are in fact rural or should instead be regarded as catchment areas to the large cities, 'exurbs' (Bell 1992), or settings that in the future will be part of the 'perimetropolitan bow wave' (Hart 1991), as both Skive and Mariagerfjord are located about an hour's drive from the boundaries of the two urban centres of Aalborg and Aarhus. While both municipalities at large are considered rural by census definitions (Christiansen 2015; Danish Business Authority 2017), for instance by not having a city with a population of more than 45,000 inhabitants and thus not qualifying as 'urban' (Christensen 2016), the municipalities have elements of both 'city' and 'country'. Both have one town, large enough to offer education up to the 10th form, and both towns also offer upper secondary schools and some further education opportunities. Hence, the settings cover variations in type of locality-specific characteristics, including urban and rural, which is also evident from the map in figure 3, illustrating how Danish areas are divided according to degree of urbanity/rurality:

and it is therefore too simplistic to say that urbanisation only occurs centrally in the largest cities; it is more widespread and takes place at different levels (Yderområder på forkant 2015).

While the two municipalities in this way have elements of both rurality and urbanity, they are typically perceived as rural in the eyes of outsiders. For instance, in 2014 the semi-professional football team of Hobro (the primary town in the municipality of Mariagerfjord) made headlines nationally and internationally, when it surprised everyone and reached the top division of the Danish football league. Few experts gave them much of a chance and claimed in advance that their debut would end in relegation. However, the team proved the experts wrong with quite a few big wins, and this ultimate underdog story was broadcasted by several news media, and FIFA for instance produced the short documentary 'Walking through fire and water together' (FIFATV 2014) on how success can exist in 'more modest surroundings', to use their own words. In the documentary, the rural location of Hobro is highlighted repeatedly, and this emphasis on the rurality of the place is, for instance, exemplified in the opening lines of the documentary: 'In the north of Denmark, far from the bustle of the big cities, is Hobro. Only 12,000 people call it home, and in these parts, life is fairly laid-back' (FIFATV 2014). The opposing teams' responses to the surprising victories of Hobro also demonstrated the rurality associated with the place as well as the somewhat stigmatising image of the team based on locality: 'It's really lousy that a team like ours [a professional football team on the western outskirts of Copenhagen] come over here and lose *out in the woods*. Christ, it's bad!' (Canal 9 2014). National media often dwelled on the fact that some of the players had part-time jobs as farmers, exemplified in the picture by the Danish cartoonist Roald Als below, which first appeared in the national newspaper Politiken and was later reprinted in a book about the football team (Korsager and Jensen 2014).



Source: Korsager and Jensen (2014). Left speech bubble: 'The grass was too high'. Right speech bubble: 'But Mads [football player and farmer] must put them back in the stable before the Copenhageners arrive tomorrow'.

These narratives and media portrayals demonstrate the perceived remoteness of Hobro, which apparently is incompatible with professional football. A similar example can be found in relation to Skive (the primary town in the municipality of Skive), as the lead singer in a well-known Danish band in a recent interview compared his childhood in Skive with that of Luke Skywalker from Star Wars: 'Being young, I could easily relate to this boy, who lived in a desolated place, where nothing whatsoever happens. You just dreamed of being somewhere else' (Nygaard 2017 p. 17). These examples indicate how both settings are perceived as places with modest draws and where nothing is happening, both in the eyes of outsiders and from the perspective of former inhabitants.

3.3. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I base my study exclusively on individuals between the ages of 18-40 years, who belong to the life stages of late adolescence, emerging adulthood and young adulthood, respectively. These life stages include the peak period for migration, commencing, attending and finishing higher education, high labour force participation and settling down with family (Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun 2014). Focussing on three separate, but highly related life stages may lead one to assume that I will explore the theme of life transitions. However, although I do seek to grasp the meaning of place and migration in relation to different stages in life, paying attention to the diversity of experiences and changing relationships that people have with places over time, the purpose of the thesis is not to discuss the transitional process in itself, but rather to examine how places are meaningful to people in different phases of their lives. I try to expand rather than limit our understanding of the ways in which place influences these individuals, focussing on the diversity of relationships people have with their rural place of origin across time and life situations. Understanding individuals in relation to rural settings, however, not only means understanding the ways in which people and places are interconnected, but also the motivations and aspirations that inform the individuals' thoughts about future possibilities and constraints, especially in a context where educational credentials are regarded as desirable and necessary. I focus specifically on individuals who already have a connection to one of the two municipalities by virtue of having grown up there. The reason for this is that research, as mentioned, demonstrates that individuals' connections to places grow stronger the more experience they have with the place (Trentelman 2009b), just as there is a greater chance of attracting people who already have a history or an attachment to a given place than people who do not have such a connection (Davies 2008; Emerek and Kirkeby 2015; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Feijten, Hooimeijer, and Mulder 2008; Ní Laoire 2007).

In an economy that increasingly competes on its ability to produce profitable innovative knowledge (Larsen 2017), a highly-educated workforce is argued to be central for future growth and economic regeneration (Aner and Hansen 2014; Stockdale 2006; Tanvig 2010). Accordingly, the Danish Government has set a national goal that 90 per cent of a youth cohort should complete an upper secondary education before turning 25 (Ministry of Education 2017), and 60 per cent should complete a higher education (Ministry of Higher Education and Science 2015). This has resulted in an increase in the number of individuals pursuing upper secondary education and has radically reshaped education trends, as an increasing share of young people choose the academically oriented upper secondary education opportunities that prepare young people for further studies at a higher educational institution (Ministry of Education 2018). In fact, the share of youth who pursue an academic upper secondary education after completion of their basic schooling has increased from 58,6% to 74,3% in the years between 2001-2016, while the number of young people who pursue a vocational and training education has dropped from 31,7% to 18,4% (Larsen 2017). Reflecting this development within Danish education, along with the focus on innovative knowledge for future growth, the individuals in focus in this thesis all belong to or will potentially come to belong to the group of knowledge workers in the future. This implies that they either have, pursue or are expected to pursue further education at a university or university college.

While I acknowledge the risk of situating the research in ‘an arena of othering’ (Krumer-Nevo 2002) and hereby potentially fail to capture the diversity and complexity of the interviewees’ relationships with places, I use the formulation ‘academically oriented’ throughout the thesis to signify the educational orientation of the individuals. I am, however, aware that there are significant differences between the individuals in the study within and across different life stages, and that these have a substantial impact on decisions concerning future life paths, migration patterns and identity constructions. That is, I acknowledge that this is not a homogenous group of individuals. However, ‘researchers are dependent on the ability to categorise and delimit: Our research fields as well as our objects and subjects of research’ (Bloksgaard, Kennedy-Macfoy, and Nielsen 2012 p. 70). So, although I take care not to stereotype the research participants or the research settings, I am interested in youth and young adults with a rural background and academic educational orientation precisely because they have these characteristics.

3.4. SUMMING UP

It is interesting to note the rather abstract features that along with their tangible, objective dimensions (e.g. landscape, settlement, population and employment structures) sum up the characteristics of urbanity and rurality. Descriptions of rural and urban often focus on abstract characteristics of how social life evolves in these

areas, for instance traditionalism versus individualism, feelings of community versus impersonal social structures and so forth (Rye 2006b). This leads to the approach to rural and urban that I take in this thesis, as I do not impose an external definition of rural and urban. Although I do describe and somewhat delimit my understanding of Danish rural areas in section 3.1, I pay more attention to people's experiences and perceptions of rural and urban as well as to their responses to being identified as one or the other than to the statistical definitions and geographical boundaries of places. This means that I look at how people respond to narratives of rural-urban difference and at how such characterisations are socially constructed and impact upon aspects of everyday life. Life is never homogeneous or static, neither in rural nor in urban areas, and while I acknowledge that places are also affected by their structural characteristics and preconceived ideas about what rural and urban mean, adopting a multidimensional view on rural and urban relying primarily on the interviewees' own definitions enables me to produce multiple readings of rurality and urbanity.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

In order to ensure a high level of credibility and validity in my research, I have made sure to be reflexive throughout the research process by making my research procedures and decisions transparent and by describing how the emergent research topic and design have unfolded and evolved as the study has progressed (Kvale 1996; Silverman 2006). I have done so to enable the reader ‘to judge the quality of the research, the justifications for the approach taken and the rigour inherent in the research process’ (Phillimore and Goodson 2004 p. 38), hereby clearly explicating my own ‘situatedness’ (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001 p. 77) and how I have proceeded in an attempt to unravel the complexities of daily life (Daly 1997), ‘incorporating the contradictions and inconsistencies in the data’ (Dupuis 1999 p. 58). On this basis, the discussions of the philosophical and methodological considerations as well as the detailed descriptions and reflexive ponderings presented in the following sections are central to ensuring the credibility and validity of my research. Hence, the following will account for the research philosophy, methodological approach and data analysis procedures in my work.

First, the paradigm that informs my research will be addressed in order to demonstrate my premises for conducting research. Subsequently, I will account for the research design and the applied qualitative methods, which includes discussions of in-depth qualitative interviews, the use of photographs and data analysis. This is followed by methodological reflections on my role as a researcher, where I consider the many decisions I have made in the research process, and how these decisions have affected the research design, data collection and results. Hence, this section will include reflections on insider positions and power dynamics. Finally, I provide an account of the delimitations of my work.

4.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The diversity of rural Danish municipalities and the particular circumstances surrounding these preclude a generic ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to resolving the challenges faced by these municipalities, since there is no single causal factor for explaining migration behaviour among rural youth and young adults or for determining success in attracting and retaining these. The overall aim is to understand ‘the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’ (Schwandt 1998, p. 221), seeking to grasp the meanings attributed to place by youth and young adults, and to examine both how the process of forming relationships with places is constructed through everyday practices and feelings of attachment and how this intersects with identity formation and future migration intentions. To do so, an interpretive and qualitative approach that invites narratives and reflections on hopes

and aspirations in relation to place and to future life planning is considered appropriate in order to capture the voices and to understand the life worlds of the participants. Such an approach will contribute with an understanding of how people collectively construct place and how this process is based just as much on discourse and actions as on geography. Accordingly, my research draws on the interpretive paradigm, where 'there is no one set of methods that can bring total insight, the concept of objectivity is rejected, and consequently there is no perfect outcome – no "right" answer to research questions posed' (Phillimore and Goodson 2004 p. 34). Particularly important here is the idea that the researcher is always part of, rather than separate from, the research, since all decisions and choices related to research methods, cases and people studied are affected by the context of the researcher (Cassell 2005; Hardy, Phillips, and Clegg 2001), as our 'lives, experiences and worldviews impact on our studies' (Tribe 2005 p. 6).

With an interpretive approach focussing on understanding the life worlds of the participants and interpreting the information received, reality is considered a social construction of shared meaning, which implies that reality is always in a continuous state of revision, and the interview, for instance, 'is seen as an arena where both interviewer and interviewee are actively constructing and interpreting the process, potentially in different ways' (Cassell 2005 p. 168). This is in line with the hermeneutic approach, which stresses that meaning is characterised by a circular process of interpretation and understanding, where the researcher cannot obtain a holistic understanding prior to understanding all parts comprehensively in and of themselves and in relation to the whole (Gadamer 2004). Hence, the approach consists of a dynamic analytical cycle termed the hermeneutic circle, where the researcher – through a reiterative process of obtaining partial, in-depth understanding and interpreting separate parts which are recurrently related to the whole and continually challenge pre-understandings and preconceptions – gains a deeper, revised and ever more integrated and comprehensive account of the subject (Arnold and Fischer 1994; Gadamer 2004; Riis 2006). Thus, hermeneutic interpretation calls for a continuous understanding, which ideally is a process that goes on forever moving back and forth between the parts and the whole, demonstrating that there is no definitive truth or authoritative knowledge, but instead a multitude of different and co-existing interpretations, all of which can in principle be just as valid (Bryman 2004; Askehave 2006). The results of hermeneutic interpretations are therefore relative, and 'we can only gather different accounts of reality. These accounts can therefore only be represented through our own interpretation, so we are in effect creating another account' (Symon, Cassell, and Dickson 2000 p. 460). Consequently, the search for 'true meaning' (Gadamer 2004 p. 298) never ends, but is an infinite process expressing the idea of the hermeneutic circle, where 'the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole' (Gadamer 2004 p. 291). In my research I have adopted a hermeneutic approach, in which I, through a reiterative process, have worked concurrently and repetitively on theoretical readings and empirical data constructions and analysis, trying to understand youth and young

adults' relationships with places by revisiting the empirical data and interview transcripts, re-reading theoretical literature and returning to and revising pre-understandings and interpretations. While the hermeneutic process is continuously ongoing, I have made a temporary stop by handing in the thesis in its current form. However, I am convinced that new understandings and interpretations will develop through reflections and discussions of the thesis with other researchers and municipal actors.

Taking an interpretive approach, where reality is always in a continuous state of revision and positivist arguments of objectivity and empirical facts are rejected (Nadin and Cassell 2006), also means that it is not possible to study a subject without influencing it. Hence, what a researcher studies 'is not independent of the process of observing but an outcome of the scientists' methodological interaction with, and conceptual constitution of, his/her objects of knowledge' (Cassell 2005 pp. 169–170). This means that being a researcher I must be reflexive throughout the research process, as reflexivity encompasses a continuous internal conversation, which involves 'thinking about how our thinking came to be, how a pre-existing understanding is constantly revised in the light of new understandings and how this in turn affects our research' (Haynes 2012 p. 73). Accordingly, my research has been a non-linear and at times messy process in which I have attempted to enter the hearts and minds of my participants and piece together understandings and interpretations as a 'researcher-as-interpretive-bricoleur' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 p. 183). I embarked on the PhD journey with a set of understandings and pre-understandings about the subject, and according to Gadamer (2004), it is important to be aware of one's own biases to allow pre-understandings to be continuously challenged and new understandings to be established. Entering an interpretive research process with a biased mind is therefore not necessarily negative, as biases may serve as important sources for obtaining deeper understandings. However, I must be attentive in order to understand and consider the relationship between myself as the researcher and the topic I am studying. An understanding of my own part in the research and of how the practice of doing research affects the outcome is hence essential and requires a reflexive stance (Cutcliffe 2003; Hardy, Phillips, and Clegg 2001). In the following, I will present my research methods and explain my reasons for adhering to a qualitative approach, and following this I will return to how I have kept a reflexive stance throughout the research process.

4.2. RESEARCH METHODS

I have used different qualitative methods to understand young adults' relationships with places. The primary method used is semi-structured interviews supplemented with visual methodologies as well as participation in various municipal meetings,

strategy seminars, solution camps etc. Table 1 provides an overview of the empirical data.

Table 1: Overview of research methods

Activity	Participants	Format	Location	Purpose	Documentation
23 semi-structured interviews with youth	26 female and 23 male students at upper secondary education (18-20 years old)	23 joint interviews	Upper secondary schools	Gathering information about relationship with rural place of origin, along with future migration motivations	Audio files and transcribed interviews, memos
13 semi-structured interviews with out-migrants	Seven female and seven male out-migrants (22-26 years old)	12 individual interviews, 1 joint interview and 44 photos	Higher educational institutions, public libraries or via Skype	Gathering information about relationship with rural place of origin, along with future migration motivations	Audio files and transcribed interviews, memos, photographs
16 semi-structured interviews with return migrants	12 female and seven male return migrants (27-40 years old)	13 individual interviews and 3 joint interviews	Private homes, work places or cafés	Gathering information about relationship with rural place of origin, along with future migration motivations	Audio files and transcribed interviews, memos

Three solution camps	Municipal officials, students from Aalborg University, volunteers, local businesses	Workshop	Village halls and municipal offices	Co-constructing ideas regarding regional development and how to attract knowledge workers.	Observation notes, photos, posters with texts, images and notes
Municipal meetings and informal interviews	Municipal officials, local businesses, volunteers	Discussions	Municipal offices	Gaining information primarily regarding regional development and branding efforts	Meeting notes
Municipal seminars	Municipal officials and local businesses	Lecturers and talks followed by discussions in groups	Village halls, municipal offices and gymnasiums	Gaining information on municipal strategies and development plans	PowerPoint presentations and notes

The aim has been to develop an understanding of youth and young adults' relationships with places, how places impact upon identity construction as well as their motivations and experiences regarding migration. Besides the qualitative empirical data, desk research was undertaken, examining statistical accounts and analytical reports. This made it possible to understand the statements of the interviewees within a broader empirical framework. In the following I will present and dwell on my thoughts, intentions and considerations concerning the chosen qualitative methods.

4.2.1. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

To gain an understanding of youth and young adults' experiences with and perceptions of their rural place of origin, I have chosen to use qualitative semi-structured interviews as the primary method for data generation, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that this method is useful for gathering and understanding participants' life worlds and interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon. The study, therefore, took as its starting point an examination of how people view

their everyday lives, rural origins and future migration aspirations based on their own accounts.

All interviewees are Danish and live either in one of the Danish university cities of Aalborg, Aarhus and Copenhagen or in the rural municipalities of Skive and Mariagerfjord. The interviews lasted between 45-120 minutes and were conducted by the author in the period from September 2014 to January 2017² in the interviewees' homes, in their workplace, at the university or at cafes. In two cases with out-migrants, face-to-face interviews were not possible, for example if the informant was doing an internship abroad or because we were unable to find a time to meet in person. Instead, the interviews were conducted over Skype, and while I tried to do the interviews face-to-face, as this form made it easier to establish a rapport, Skype interviews served as a highly useful back-up when face-to-face interviews were not an option.

The interviews took the form of individual interviews or joint interviews. The interviews with return migrants and out-migrants were primarily individual interviews, where only one interviewee was present. However, in cases where, for instance, both spouses or colleagues at the same workplace were return migrants, I spoke with them at the same time. With regard to the young people attending upper secondary education, the interviews took the form of joint interviews with primarily two participants; however, in three cases three-four interviewees participated, as the school scheduled the interviews like this. In cases with more than one participant, questions were both directed at the entire group as well as at individual interviewees. Appendix A provides an overview of all the interviewees along with details on demographic characteristics.

The interviewees did not only belong to different geographical contexts, but also had different ages, educational backgrounds and job experiences, and for this reason a flexible interview structure, allowing the interviewees to express their individual perspectives and tell their own stories (Bennett 2002; Smith 2001), was considered important for dealing successfully with these inherent differences. Hence, all interviews had a semi-structured, open-ended and flexible format with interview guides that were ordered, but flexible (Dunn 2005). This both allowed for proper treatment of the differences between the participants and provided room for clarification during the interviews and for exploring interesting issues mentioned by the interviewees.

The open-ended nature of the interviews means that the process of questioning is flexible and responsive to what individuals have to say. This maximizes the opportunities to obtain from the respondents what they, uniquely, have to offer by way of information, experiences,

² MOST INTERVIEWS WERE CARRIED OUT IN 2014 AND 2015, BEFORE I WENT ON MATERNITY LEAVE. RETURNING FROM MATERNITY LEAVE, I CONDUCTED A FEW INTERVIEWS, PRIMARILY EXPERT INTERVIEWS, IN DECEMBER 2016 AND JANUARY 2017.

attitudes, ideas and so on. (Kent 1999)

The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the interviewees to bring forth themes and sub-topics of the issues raised, which I might not have expected. Accordingly, co-constructed and in-depth knowledge was obtained (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011) concerning the understandings, experiences and meanings the interviewees ascribed to places.

While my role as the interviewer was to elicit the participants' stories and experiences, the interviews had an informal and rather relaxed nature and could be described as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011 p. 109). The dialogue during the interviews centred on relatively tangible subjects related to place experiences in order to meet the interviewees on their own terms (appendix B presents the interview guides used and provides examples of interview questions and themes to cover). With a few adjustments, the key themes and topics covered were more or less the same across the different interviews and included questions about experiences of living in a rural setting, relations with the community and future migration aspirations as well as questions regarding the participants' thoughts on and reasons for migrating. The interviewees were, for instance, asked how they would explain and present their childhood place to a foreigner who had never visited or heard of the place. This was done in order to generate talk about their personal understanding of the place, their feelings of pride or shame as well as their emotional sense of place attachment. The participants also responded to questions about current political issues, recurring events and festivals, public figures and local industries in the rural place in order to reveal their feelings about and experiences with the place. They were also asked to reflect on how the connection to their place of origin and their kinship and social relations there had changed over time to shed light on the role of distance in time and place. Asking these questions, provided me with a thorough understanding of the interviewees' relationship with their rural place of origin, as well as it offered insights into the specifics and contrasts of urban and rural living. However, as the interviews progressed, some participants explicitly mentioned that having this dialogue made them think about the places in new ways, and a concern which must be acknowledged in this connection is therefore that the very act of conducting these interviews and asking people to discuss and describe their relationships with places might have changed the very relationships I am trying to examine (Trentelman 2009a).

I took simple notes during the interviews to make sure that no information escaped my attention without a follow-up question. Furthermore, all interviews were audio-recorded, with the permission of the interviewees, which allowed me to concentrate on the dialogue with the interviewees. Afterwards, all interviews were transcribed verbatim; the transcripts do, however, not include all that was said by the interviewer and the interviewees. Sometimes the dialogue took a detour derailing from the topic, and in these cases a summarising text describes the content and tone of what was said.

The municipal partners involved in this PhD project wanted all academically oriented upper secondary schools to be represented. Therefore, I contacted the three upper secondary schools in each municipality: the Higher General Examination Programme (STX), the Higher Commercial Examination Programme (HHX) and the Higher Technical Examination Programme (HTX)) to get permission to interview their students. One school refused, but the remaining five agreed, and following my guidelines for getting a broad sample of participants reflecting the general composition of young people attending upper secondary education in Denmark at large, teachers at the schools selected the students for the study. I wanted to get an idea of whether educational institution and climate affected the students' relationships with places, and I therefore asked for 10 participants from each institution. However, I soon realised that there were no significant differences institution-wise, and after having conducted about a third of the interviews, moving between the different institutions, I started to recognise patterns and repetitions in the narratives and no significant new insights emerged. Nevertheless, I conducted all the interviews, partly to satisfy the municipal partners.

To locate participants for interviews with out-migrants and return migrants, I used a snowball sampling method (Bernard 2005; Bryman 2004). Snowball sampling takes advantage of the social ties between members of a community, and an advantage hereof is that the interviewee is linked to the study via a familiar, trusted person, who helps to establish the credibility of the researcher (Derrien and Stokowski 2014). As a result, few of the people I approached refused to participate in the study, although it was sometimes difficult to schedule a time for the interview. A disadvantage of snowball sampling, however, is that the participants often come from the same social network, but since I had multiple 'snowball' starting points in the form of both personal contacts and professional networks this was not a big issue. In addition, at the end of each interview I asked the interviewees to suggest additional informants who might be suitable for my study, hereby broadening the empirical sample even further. Having learned from the interviews with the students, I stopped interviewing before I had interviewed all those recommended to me by others, as I started to recognise patterns and repetitions in the interviewees' narratives and hence found that I had reached a point of saturation and redundancy, where no notable new understandings emerged (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Salaff 2001; Spartz and Shaw 2011).

4.2.2. SUPPLEMENTARY INTERVIEWS

I conducted six pilot interviews to gain a preliminary understanding of the empirical field and to identify possible shortcomings in the research design regarding the interview guide as well as the structure of the interviews. For instance, in pilot interviews with youth in their final year at upper secondary school I made an attempt

to actively engage the young people in the interview situation by giving them a small assignment, as I asked the students to discuss and come up with ideas for how to improve the setting as a place for young people. I provided the interviewees with different coloured pens, paper and maps of the municipality, and I then left the room and let the young people talk amongst each other. Though the young interviewees did actively engage in this task, I found that this method did not add any new insights to my dialogue with them, and therefore I decided to drop it in the remaining interviews, as it was quite time-consuming. The pilot study thus enabled me to make a few minor adjustments to improve the structure of the empirical data collection, so that it was both relevant to and fit the age group. In accordance with findings from the pilot interviews, showing that only minor adjustments had to be made to the interview guide, and with my hermeneutic approach, insisting on a continuous, reiterative process, these interviews were included as part of the primary data set.

An expert perspective on regional development was sought through informal interviews with individuals in key positions in the two municipalities. Accordingly, I contacted individuals responsible for organising and implementing the marketing and branding efforts of the municipalities as well as people involved in the strategic regional planning and development to gain knowledge about the municipalities' strategies regarding settlement and regional development as well as the branding efforts and actions they engaged in. Four interviews were conducted with municipal officials at their own offices and lasted roughly one hour each. As the interviewees were interviewed about issues related to their professional lives, the interviews had an informative character. Additionally, at various meetings and workshops I talked to several people, who all participated actively in their municipality's marketing and regional planning efforts by virtue of being employed in organisations or engaging in voluntary work that added to these efforts. These conversations and the interviews with municipal officials were largely informal and hence not audio-recorded, though I did take field notes about my observations. I do not use these interviews and conversations directly in my analysis. Instead, they serve as background and contextual information, as the interviews gave me insight into the implicit understanding that comes from years of working with market communication and regional development aimed at attracting new citizens.

4.2.3. PHOTOGRAPHS

In addition to qualitative interviews, I made use of photographs. The use of visual methodologies in social research, one of them being photography, has become increasingly widespread, and in recent years the literature has expanded to represent different approaches (Back 2007; Knowles and Sweetman 2004). Photographs were used as a scientific method in the interview situation, as I showed all interviewees a number of photographs related to the place in question, and the interviewees were

encouraged to express their feelings and tell personal stories about the places or events being portrayed in the photographs. The photographs for instance showed images of local companies and produce, recurring town fairs or festivals, well-known public figures from the place, “iconic” local buildings, townscape, nature and scenery as well as the municipality’s place brand. The use of photographs was based in my desire to go beyond the more rigorous traditional research methods and ‘to raise new questions, engage reflexively and critically with previously held assumptions, and explore uncharted territory’ (Davis 2014 p. 21). The photographs also served as a way to prevent premature closures, as I often introduced the photographs when the interviews neared their ending. The photographs hereby gave new life to the interviews and inspired the interviewees to elaborate on issues that we had briefly touched upon already or had not discussed.

Inspired by the work of Faber, Møller, and Nielsen (2013), I also asked the out-migrants to bring four photographs to the interview (private or public). These photographs should portray elements that reminded them of their childhood place in either a positive or a negative way, and the photographs could be of anything (e.g. objects, places, buildings, persons, events) as long as they said: ‘This makes me feel good about the place’, or ‘this makes me feel bad about the place’. Most of the photos the out-migrants brought along evoking positive feelings corresponded well with classic representations of the rural idyll, such as ‘quietness’, ‘safe childhood’, ‘neighbourliness’ and ‘beautiful nature’. Photos evoking negative feelings, on the other hand, unravelled the ambivalence towards rural places felt by out-migrants, often eliciting place-specific factors such as ‘abandoned industrial sites’, ‘small town gossip’ and ‘bad infrastructure’. When the interviewees talked about these photos, the conversation became very emotional.

It is hard for people to articulate the meanings of places, as these are often multi-layered, operate at an unconscious level and are in a continuous state of change (Kruger et al. 2008). Here the photographs, both the ones I brought to the interviews as well as the ones the out-migrants brought along, helped to give me an understanding of what the place meant to the interviewees, as they opened up for reflection on the unspoken, the content and meaning behind the photographs. In addition, the photographs forced me to ‘listen with my eyes’ (Back 2007; Back in Knowles and Sweetman 2004), which gave me further insight into the actual experience behind a given event or locality. As mentioned, the photos often put the interviewees in an emotional and nostalgic mood, giving me insight into the lived realities and experiences of these individuals. Hence, the artefacts in the photos were ‘loaded with sentiments that are more than visual’ (Leyshon and Bull 2011 p. 168), and the photographs hereby served to facilitate detailed dialogues about place attachment and place-related experiences in ways which might otherwise have escaped my attention. From these, a vivid picture was built up around the interviewees’ everyday lives and relations to rural settings, and the photographs along with the narratives were useful in gaining an understanding of their relationships with places, as they opened up for

reflection on attitudes and perceptions of places. While I do not show the out-migrants' photographs in the thesis, as I did not get permission to use them, dialogue about the photographs has been included in the analytical discussions in paper III.

4.2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim, which I found to be very helpful in that it ensured accurate rendition of the interviews and made the following processing and analysis of the data more comprehensible. However, at first, I was quite overwhelmed by the sheer size of my data: more than 65 hours of interviewing, around 700 pages of interview transcripts and 44 photographs, along with all my notes and photographs from various meetings, workshops, informal conversations, personal memos etc.³ Deciding which ideas and considerations to elaborate on and which to discard was difficult and involved a lot of moving back and forth between the data and the theory.

When I collected the data, it was not with the specific intention of exploring the interconnections between place attachment, identity construction and place attractiveness in the context of migration, but many of the narratives provided information on how these topics overlapped and intertwined, and hence this theme emerged inductively as an important element in the interviewees' understanding of their relationships with places. In order to keep track of my data, I used the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo to store all the files, and from here I made a thematic analysis by organising findings according to a number of categories and sub-categories related to the ways in which the interviewees discussed and addressed different issues. The coding practice followed the recommendations of Corbin and Strauss (2015), as I grouped expressions that related to the same themes in order to divide the data into more manageable categories that were relatively open, though, and allowed new categories to develop. For instance, I had a category called 'mindset' with sub-categories like 'narrowmindedness' and 'the law of Jante'. Another category, I called 'local patriotism' which sub-categories termed 'local heroes', 'local produce', 'events' and 'uniqueness', and a third category, I called 'stigmatisation' with sub-categories like 'those who did not leave', 'shame of returning', 'rural image' and 'local culture'. I also relied much on the hermeneutic principles for interpretation (Kvale 1996), as my understanding of the interviews developed through an iterative process, moving back and forth between the parts and the whole. The coding process was in this way iterative and data-driven, searching for themes and patterns across interviews in order to capture the richness and complexity of the data. This meant that I repeatedly went through and re-read the interview transcripts looking for recurring

³ THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS, AUDIO FILES, PHOTOGRAPHS AND PERSONAL NOTES ARE NOT INCLUDED AS APPENDICES BUT CAN BE FORWARDED BY REQUEST.

themes and patterns of commonalities and/or contrasts. Consequently, the individual parts of each interview (e.g. specific statements, longer passages, singular concepts, ways of expression etc.) have incessantly been linked to the interview as a whole, just as separate interviews have been compared, contrasted and related to each other to reveal interconnections and contradictions. The coding practice thus encompassed various levels of interpretation, and as themes developed inductively, these were evaluated through re-examination of the empirical data (Ryan and Mulholland 2014). Thus, the process included a series of iterations moving back and forth between patterns/themes and individual interviews, demonstrating my hermeneutic approach.

Going through the interviews, it soon became evident that a number of categories referred to physical surroundings, such as ‘buildings’, ‘infrastructure’ or ‘nature’, whereas other categories related to far less tangible aspects of place affiliation and belonging such as ‘opportunities’, ‘perceptions of small town mentality’, ‘pride and shame’ and ‘physical and mental closeness to family and friends’. At this stage of the analysis the ambiguity inherent in many interviewees’ perceptions of their childhood place also emerged, and it was clear that many had quite contradictory relationships with these places. This became especially evident when I looked closer at the way in which the interviewees formulated different statements. Some interviewees made use of humour and were very ironic and somewhat sarcastic in their expressions, which made me pay careful attention to interpretation and to not use the expressions uncritically. In this connection, it was highly valuable that I had conducted all the interviews myself, as it meant that I was familiar with the context of such expressions.

4.3. THE REFLEXIVE GAZE

Having been raised in a rural part of Denmark and having left my place of origin at the age of 18 to never return constituted some of the contextual hinterland for the choices I made throughout the research process. Furthermore, the research has been adapted along the way, largely based on what happened in interaction with the interviewees, project partners and colleagues, again demonstrating the hermeneutic approach. Accordingly, this PhD thesis is the product of a process filled with socio-historic pre-understandings, detours, bumps, derailed ideas and not least being stuck at multiple times. All of this shapes my story and my attempt at weaving my way into the life worlds of the interviewees to explore the decisions, perceptions, thoughts and motivations behind their relationships with places. This chapter will dwell on what makes up this path, and the aim is to acknowledge how my personal background and experiences have affected the research process as well as to provide an understanding of how a variety of detours and turns and not least a number of negotiations and compromises with external partners have added to the complexity of the journey and research design.

A commitment to be reflexive about my role in the research, revealing personal experiences, decisions, dilemmas and strategies, is an attempt to render visible my biases and the research's weak spots in order to create transparency of the impact situational factors have on my work and interpretations (Hardy, Phillips, and Clegg 2001; Nadin and Cassell 2006). The process of doing research is subject to a number of influences, and a reflexive position is necessary in order to acknowledge and recognise what these influences are to the researcher and the research process (Nadin and Cassell 2006). Cassell (2005) suggests that reflexivity in qualitative research leads to a greater appreciation of the role of the researcher. Al  x and Hammarstr  m (2008) argue that practising reflexivity can be a means to minimising the risk of making the interviewee an object for the researcher. And Finlay (2002) claims that reflexivity can contribute to enhanced trustworthiness and integrity of the data and the findings, as 'the researcher engages in an explicit, self-aware meta-analysis of the research process' (p. 531). Hence, there seems to be overall agreement with regard to the benefits of reflexivity (Nadin and Cassell 2006); yet, it is a process where 'the difficulties, practicalities and methods of doing it are rarely addressed' (Mauthner and Doucet 2003 p. 413).

One tool for maintaining a reflexive stance is a research diary, which provides a record of one's thoughts throughout the evolutionary research journey (Nadin and Cassell 2006). Although I do acknowledge the benefits of keeping a research diary, I have instead used memos, which are somewhat comparable to a research diary albeit in a less structured form. These memos, created in Nvivo, have acted as sites of ongoing conversation with myself and as a place to store my thoughts about different observations, experiences, inspiration that might inform subsequent discussions etc. throughout the many phases of the research (Saldana 2013). For instance, after finishing an interview I often created a memo, noting particular impressions and group dynamics, and later, when uploading the audio files and transcriptions in Nvivo, I linked the memo to the specific piece of data. In this way, the memos have supported me in recollecting impressions noticed during interview situations, just as they have assisted me in moving back and forth in a reflexive attempt to better understand different experiences and how various situational factors influence my work (Nadin and Cassell 2006; Saldana 2013).

4.3.1. REVISING PRE-UNDERSTANDINGS

Conducting any kind of research, the researcher is in danger of becoming too involved with the people under examination, and 'researchers have been warned about overidentification, overrapport, and "going native"' (Dwyer and Buckle 2009 p. 59). Freidman (1991) argues that many researchers do research in settings with which they are familiar, and that this kind of familiarity can prove to be both an advantage and a disadvantage. My own position as a rural out-migrant from the one municipality and

a highly educated in-migrant to the other municipality implies that I am familiar with both research settings through other roles than that of a researcher. These positions have likely affected the course of the research, as my familiarity with the municipalities and the fact that I am somewhat similar to the research participants by virtue of being a highly educated rural out-migrant myself may have sensitised me to specific themes and topics, while at the same time cutting me off from others (Ní Laoire 2007).

Early on in my research I realised that particularly my childhood background along with the media-induced image I held of ‘rural Denmark’ in many ways shaped the directions taken in the interviews. This realisation struck me when driving home after conducting a pilot interview with a female return migrant, who lives just outside of the town where I grew up. When wrapping up the interview, the woman asked me why I had not returned to the place myself. Honestly and strange as it sounds, this was not an issue I had given much thought, and being taken off guard I simply responded that it was due to lack of employment opportunities, although I had not really looked into this. However, sitting in my car pondering this question and my own reluctance to return I realised that my personal experiences with the place influenced not only my own relationship with the place, but also my way of listening to the participants and evaluating their narratives. Due to my insider familiarity and media portrayals I entered into the research with a number of pre-understandings, expectations and beliefs about these settings. From the beginning I thought the interviewees would be bursting with stories about the classic rural idyll and the attraction of the countryside with its less hurried way of life, on the one hand, and the lack of employment opportunities and general decline, on the other. I expected the interviewees to express regret that municipal officials were not doing enough to attract industries, and I anticipated that the male interviewees would feel stronger about the rural places than their female counterparts.

All these expectations were based partly on knowledge gained from the ongoing literature review I engaged in and partly on my own pre-understandings and preconceptions about ‘such places’. Although stories about the rural idyll along with stories of lack of employment opportunities and decline appeared from time to time, these subjects proved not to be significant issues in the interviews in and of themselves. At first, I found it quite distressing not to get the ‘expected’ replies, because it made me uncertain about whether there was actually valuable and interesting information to find in this field. However, as the narratives unfolded and I looked deeper, I gained a different and perhaps more interesting insight, as the interviewees’ slippery, intangible and ambivalent place feelings pointed to a somewhat unarticulated, torn and disguised form of place attachment. For instance, when I asked the interviewees to spell out what ‘home’ meant to them and where they belonged, common responses were ‘Hmm, I haven’t really thought about that’, and ‘That’s a really good question’, demonstrating uncertainty with regard to the definition and location of this ‘home’. Often the interviewees’ stories also

demonstrated elements of attachment and detachment simultaneously, and emotional and cultural manifestations were in the foreground when they tried to explain their (lack of) rootedness in the place. Furthermore, ambivalent and contradictory feelings of pride and shame went hand in hand and pointed to a much more complex and multifaceted relationship with place than I had expected. Freidman (1991) argues that when studying a familiar setting, the findings are often different from one's expectations, and it would be a mistake to take one's knowledge of the situation or setting for granted. This was truly the case in these instances, as I had to make the familiar unfamiliar and put aside my own pre-assumptions.

The point here is that the familiar, when observed from a different stance or a new perspective, may frequently turn out to be quite unfamiliar. This may have a surreal emotional effect on the researcher. [...] Being able to see the 'maze of many' truths requires an openness of mind, a willingness to confront one's own beliefs directly, and the strength of character and intellectual honesty to let go of cherished assumptions. (Freidman 1991 p. 127)

Cutcliffe (2003) suggests that reflection often occurs at the end of an interview, when the interviewee has said something unexpected evoking a certain feeling in the researcher. The starting point of reflection in this research was my own experience of being asked at the end of an interview why I had not returned. Forced to reflect on my own reluctance to return, I realised that at this point I had not really recognised 'personal prejudices, stereotypes, myths, assumptions, and other thoughts or feelings that may cloud or distort the perception of other people's experiences' (Freidman 1991 p. 122). Mentally going through and reflecting on my dialogue with the interviewees I had spoken to so far, I recognised that to fully understand my interviewees and not make the findings 'a product of prejudices and prior experience' (Meyer 2001 p. 344), I needed to acknowledge my own pre-understandings and preconceptions to separate my thoughts and feelings from those of the interviewees. Hence, a simple question from an interviewee led me to recognise and embrace my insider position, and it not only made me pay careful attention to setting my own presuppositions aside, but also to truly listen and wonder and not impose my 'own wishes, desires and biases onto the situation' (Brinkmann 2007 p. 139). This provided me with a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of feelings and experiences the interviewees held of their rural childhood place, as I had to think carefully about my own position and role among the interviewees and not let my feelings and opinions about the specific place control the interviews. For me, researching a familiar setting and being forced to make the familiar unfamiliar not only resulted in heightened awareness and a more subtle understanding of the interviewees' feelings towards the places, the process and reflexivity concerning my own reluctance to return to my childhood place also taught me a lot about myself and my own relationship with place. This did not mean that I tried to put my own background aside completely, though. Instead I kept using myself and my own history

with the places directly in the research (Dupuis 1999); hence, I deliberately used my dual role as both a researcher and an insider in the interview situation, which I will turn to in the following.

4.3.2. THE INSIDER PERSPECTIVE

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that the insider researcher may be inclined to assume similarity and in this process err to wholly explain the participants' individual experiences. Awareness of researcher biases and perspectives is therefore central.

The researcher's perceptions might be clouded by his or her personal experience and that as a member of the group he or she will have difficulty separating it from that of the participants. This might result in an interview that is shaped and guided by the core aspects of the researcher's experience and not the participant's. (Dwyer and Buckle 2009 p. 58)

Although the researcher's insider position can potentially influence the research process in a negative way, in my research I believe it has been beneficial in establishing a common ground and increasing the interviewees' willingness 'to share their experiences because there is an assumption of understanding and an assumption of shared distinctiveness' (Dwyer and Buckle 2009 p. 58). Hence, being an insider led to acceptance and mutual understanding, just as my relatively high level of similarity with the research subjects proved helpful in establishing trust and a good rapport. For instance, when interviewing return migrants who lived in my own childhood place and were around the same age as me, the conversation often turned to common stories about the 'good old days' and what reminded us of our childhood in this place. During these conversations a heavy Jutlandic dialect was often amplified, jokes about certain place-bound characters or incidents were made, and mutual preferences for the locally produced beer, soft drink and milk over competing brands were shared. Although I did not personally know the interviewees beforehand, coming from the same small town and having a shared geographical background, emotional responses such as common understanding, sympathy and identification often spontaneously elicited in me, as my mind was transported back in time to my own childhood in this place. Some would probably argue that I was too involved with the interviewees in these situations, as chances are that I might have missed parts of the interviewees' comments, because these 'flashbacks' might have interfered with my ability to be a good listener⁴. For each interview I conducted, my reflexivity increased, and during the interviews I asked myself the same questions time and again: Am I thoroughly listening to how

⁴ I DID, HOWEVER, RECORD ALL INTERVIEWS, ALLOWING ME TO GO BACK AND LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEWEES' STORIES AGAIN.

the interviewee feels about the place, or am I reflecting on my own feelings and memories of the place? Am I talking about them or am I talking about myself? Researching a familiar setting, self-exploration was crucial, and I recognise that it is important 'to strike a balance between the development of empathy and the pursuit of a distanced, non-judgmental stance' (Freidman 1991 p. 112). However, I feel that the conversations in which my insider status surfaced were often the most fruitful, as it created an atmosphere of trust and common understanding. Although my mind occasionally took a stroll down memory lane, potentially missing remarkable, vivid and individual stories due to my possibly erroneous presumption of similarity, the common understanding paved the way for candid talks about place feelings.

I knew from the beginning that I was biased, but I had to learn how to observe, understand and not judge in order not to over-emphasise shared factors and miss out on factors where the interviewees and I differed. Freidman (1991) argues that as qualitative researchers we have a responsibility 'to attempt to understand and come to terms with them [biases] as honestly and completely as we can, so as not to distort the data' (p. 121). Detailed reflection on the research process, I would argue, has contributed to reducing concerns related to my insider position, and by the end of the day 'the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience' (Dwyer and Buckle 2009 p. 59).

4.3.3. POWER DYNAMICS

When doing research I acknowledge that there are various power dynamics at play, which influence the research process and the data collection (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005). Gender, race, age, education, job position and physique are just some of the dynamics which connect to positions of more or less authority and power. During my fieldwork I noticed different power dynamics, placing me in both superior and inferior positions. In the following I will give some examples of these changing power dynamics.

The interviews I did with students in their final year of upper secondary school took place at the school during school hours, and it is possible that some interviewees agreed to participate due to an implicit, more or less subtle pressure on the students to participate, since the schools had already given their consent to the study (Kvale 2008). However, it is not my impression that the youth felt pressured to participate. Rather the interviews seemed to be perceived as a much welcome 'interruption' or break during regular classes. Given the interviewees' relatively young age, it was considered important that they felt comfortable and confident in the interview setting (Hendry, Kloep, and Wood 2002; Hopkins 2010), and therefore the interviews

involved two participants at a time⁵. Their teachers introduced me as a researcher from the university, which affected how I was perceived by the youth. Although I can only speculate about the content of these evaluations (Cassell 2005), I would argue that this professional qualification – a university researcher – symbolises a powerful representative of ‘knowledge’ resulting in an implicit power asymmetry between me and the young interviewees. I found that the youth, maybe as a result of this power asymmetry, were slightly nervous and attempted to relate their opinions in moderate ways and often provided only brief answers. Often, however, they found comfort in each other, speaking more to one another than directly to me, and they generally loosened up as the interview progressed.

As discussed in section 4.3.2, an insider position does not necessarily produce the best research. The same can be said about shared characteristics between the researcher and the researched. Nairn, Munro, and Smith (2005) argue that ‘even when the identities of interviewer and interviewees seem most closely aligned, a successful interview is not guaranteed’ (p. 236), as it might cause the researcher to overlook other significant, dissimilar characteristics relevant in the interaction (Bloksgaard, Kennedy-Macfoy, and Nielsen 2012; Nairn, Munro, and Smith 2005). There has also been vivid debate about the effect of gender between the researcher and the researched, that is, whether it is an advantage if the researcher and the researched are of the same gender. In her discussion of this topic Archer expresses how the woman-to-woman interview has often been regarded as ‘providing an ideal forum for disclosure and discussion within a pleasant/supportive environment by drawing on notions of “common ground” and shared social rules of interaction between women’ (Archer 2002 p. 118). However, Archer argues that identification between female researchers and interviewees is contextual and not a general phenomenon. While I actually found that the interviews that worked best with regard to facilitating candid talks were the single-sex interviews, where interviewer and interviewee matched on gender, as most of the young female interviewees truly opted into the research and shared their often quite personal stories, I do acknowledge that other markers such as age, race, ethnicity, education, class or sexual orientation are also highly relevant and may influence the research interaction. For instance, I noticed that quite a few of the young male interviewees seemed to feel rather uneasy and edgy speaking to me, putting me in a seemingly superior position, which I ascribe to a combination of gender and the difference in age between me and the young men, as this was not nearly as pronounced when interviewing more mature men. Hence, researcher/researched sameness is neither automatically beneficial nor disadvantageous, but what is important is ‘to be reflexive and alert to the effects that researcher/researched similarity or dissimilarity will have on the research’ (Bloksgaard, Kennedy-Macfoy, and Nielsen 2012 p. 72).

⁵ THREE INTERVIEWS INVOLVED THREE OR FOUR PARTICIPANTS, AS THE SCHOOL SCHEDULED THE INTERVIEWS THIS WAY.

Doing research and studying other people's lives calls for reflection on ethical considerations related to the power dynamics inherent in the interview situation. While researchers often take steps to assure their participants' anonymity and confidentiality by changing their names and biographical information, as I have also done in this study, researchers are often perceived to be in a comparatively more powerful position than the researched by virtue of having the scientific competence to set the agenda and pose questions that serve the researcher's ends and by having the 'monopoly of interpretation over the subjects' statements' (Brinkmann 2007 p. 129). Hence, being a researcher gives me the power not only to determine what constitutes data and how to interpret it, but also to write about and publish these conversations (Krumer-Nevo 2002 p. 305). During some interviews I noticed that some of the interviewees were somewhat careful with their wording possibly because of this. In particular, one female interviewee who worked at the municipality in one of the research settings seemed to be choosing her words very carefully, most likely out of fear of saying something she might later regret in relation to her job. However, as the interview progressed, and I ensured her full anonymity several times and clarified that I am working independently of the municipality, she opened up, and it soon became evident that she was very negative towards the place, which was most likely the reason why she had been very cautious about what she said to begin with. This interview proved the importance of creating trust and being on good terms with my interviewees, as the foundation of my work depends on the interviewees wanting to spend time and share their experiences with me. This is interesting with regard to power relations, since it places me in a less powerful position, as I am highly vulnerable to rejection from my participants, placing them in a position of control. Hence, I have sometimes had to please my interviewees to facilitate deep conversation. This was particularly true during an interview with a male return migrant, who expressed a form of counter-power, as he challenged both my position as a PhD fellow and my research. This male interviewee, an engineer working for a large international cooperation, had trouble understanding how the interview questions could be of any use, and subtly he questioned the rightfulness of my research. He was somewhat condescending towards me, and his way of challenging me can be analysed as an expression of counter-power, as it was clear that he positioned his own academic background as an engineer higher than mine in terms of class. This experience made me reflect on the power dynamics present in the research process and not least in the interview situation, and it led me to question why I had remained more or less passive and not challenged his understandings and the indirect superior position he arguably occupied. I found the interview to be quite uncomfortable, because I on the one hand wanted to defend my research methods, but at the same time and perhaps also because I did not have the courage to challenge him, I wanted to ensure that the dialogue continued. Hence, I tried to please him, knowingly or unknowingly, by placing myself in an inferior position, simply trying to downplay the whole 'what is true knowledge discussion', while at the same time struggling to keep up an appearance as an intelligent and competent researcher.

In another interview with a male and a female student attending upper secondary school I also experienced strong power dynamics, both between the two interviewees and between me and the male interviewee. Today, I still have vivid memories of this interview, and I wrote the following memo after the interview, demonstrating my reflections on the power dynamics in the interview interaction:

I felt that the male interviewee was very occupied with positioning himself in the social hierarchy. For instance, early in the interview he, unsolicited, explained that his father is the CEO of a large company, and that everyone knows his family in his local place. He also explained very explicitly that studying International Business at Copenhagen Business School [programme with one of the highest grade point average requirements in Denmark] was the only proper education for him, and in general he was much occupied with prestige. I almost felt inferior compared to him, as did the female interviewee clearly, although she tried to articulate and value the more homely and local aspects of their local place from time to time. However, such aspects were often denounced by the male interviewee, which made me sympathise with the female interviewee.

I found these two interview situations rather unpleasant, as the interactions made me somewhat uncomfortable and made me feel antipathy against the male interviewees. However, the experiences highlighted the subtle form of power at play in the interview situation and demonstrated how power positions are nuanced and ongoing between researcher/researched and intersect with many different markers like gender, age, education, class etc. Hence, such markers all provide different inroads as well as power dynamics to interview situations that are important to bear in mind.

4.3.4. EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS

As discussed, I acknowledge that the research process is imbued with power dynamics and power relations between the researcher and the research participants. However, this project also revealed another type of power relation, as having external stakeholders implies that the thesis has multiple goals relative to the perspectives of the different stakeholders. Besides the academic outcome, there are expectations of more tangible outputs from the study, which the external stakeholders can incorporate into their future work. The main interests of Dania Academy in engaging in this project are connecting scientific research with their development activities and strengthening their bonds to municipal collaborators. The two municipalities that serve as the empirical backdrop for the research are mainly interested in understanding and getting practical 'hands on' suggestions for how to retain and attract highly qualified labour to live and work in the area as well as in facilitating economic

development. Finally, the university that provides academic guidance seeks to make contributions to the research field and to educate me as a researcher. My role in this PhD journey has therefore been to reconcile these interests under one umbrella, and I must admit that I have at times found this to be a difficult process. I have learned that it is a balancing act of delivering tangible results to the municipal partners, while at the same time producing high-level academic research. Reflecting on my research, it is clear that the activities I have engaged in during this PhD to a large extent are a juxtaposition of these interests on some of the points where they converge.

To meet the external stakeholders' expectations of providing a tangible outcome and meeting their requests for more practical advice, I have done several presentations focussing specifically on what the participants say about their rural place of origin, what they believe the municipalities can do to accommodate their wishes and longings and general reflections on perceptions about the places and their thoughts on future migration intentions. I have thus provided suggestions for how to make the municipalities more attractive to the group of academically oriented people in focus in this study. Another way of satisfying the external stakeholders has been to engage in the public debate through articles in regional and local newspapers and to participate in and showcase my research at the Danish Science Festival. This means that I have presented my research *to* and not least discussed it *with* a broad range of people: politicians, municipal officials, community volunteers, mayors, young students, managers and rural inhabitants at large. This has been an interesting, rewarding and at times nerve-racking process, but above all listening to the rural inhabitants' points of view and discussing strategic plans with mayors and politicians has confirmed to me the importance of conducting this research. At times, I have had difficulties neatly outlining and arguing convincingly for the need for research in this academic field, but when I am in the field, the research gap is clear to be, as no one questions the need for this type of qualitative, location-specific research, and that has been very reassuring.

Being an industrial PhD fellow also means that I have had several supervisors, since it is a requirement that, in addition to academic university supervisors, company supervisors must also be affiliated with the project. Therefore, I have had five supervisors (two at the university and three in the collaborating institutions) affiliated with the project at all times. However, since the municipalities have experienced a rather high staff turnover, I have had a total of nine supervisors during the entire PhD journey. This has made it quite difficult to anchor the project in the municipalities, and I have continuously had to explain the purpose, the preliminary results, the research design etc. as well as to negotiate the primary purpose and aim of the research. However, these conversations have also helped me to describe what I research, how I do it and why I am doing it the way I am.

4.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In studies of rural migration, gender is a relatively well-studied topic, and research has revealed a gendered correlation between education and out-migration, as women have a greater tendency to move for education purposes than men, resulting in a disproportionate gender distribution in rural areas (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Dahlström 1996; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015). Places also hold different meanings for men and women, since places in different ways are related to gender and affect women and men differently (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Dahlström 1996; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hansen 2014; Wiborg 2004). Furthermore, research demonstrates that women often find the closeness of small, rural communities to be claustrophobic (Stockdale 2002; Wiborg 2001), and that they experience limitations associated with their gender in rural areas, since the types of jobs, lifestyles and recreational offers here tend to be more male-oriented, making them want to leave their rural places to break free from such restrictions and traditional gender roles that constrain their identities (Corbett 2007; Dahlström 1996; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Waara 1996). Gender is thus an important theme in studies of rurality. Accordingly, I have paid close attention to the role of gender throughout the coding process, yet I did not find the theme to be significant in the empirical data, and gender issues are therefore not central to the findings of this work. However, when deemed relevant I make a comment on gender from time to time.

The qualitative work, which constitutes the empirical foundation of my thesis, does not claim to present in full the experiences, identities and migration intentions of people with a Danish rural place of origin at large, and it was neither the intention nor possible via this research design to identify generalisable differences between genders, classes or dwelling areas. Yet, when I have presented the data and my preliminary results at conferences, meetings and seminars or have given talks or had conversations with different people, many have wanted to discuss their own experiences with rural places and their personal migration trajectories, often expressing similar perceptions as those found in my interview study. So, although the conclusions drawn in this thesis should be recognised with the provision in mind that the data is not generalisable, the findings by and large seem to demonstrate more general patterns regarding return migration, possibly allowing useful conclusions to be drawn on a broader level.

Furthermore, the interviewees' expressed residential preferences are mainly indicators of their present orientation and not valid indications of their actual future migration practices. Hence, only time will tell if the participants will in fact act out their migratory aspirations. Likewise, the narratives might suffer from interview participants' general tendencies toward social desirability in the sense that what people say in interview situations do not necessarily 'have a stable relationship to how they behave in naturally occurring situations. In this sense, interview responses may be artefactual' (Silverman 2014 p. 15). This means that the interviewees might answer

in ways, which they feel present themselves in a desirable way, which might make them behave and answer less naturally than if it had not been an interview. In the analysis, I will point out instances where I found this likely to have occurred.

CHAPTER 5. PAPERS

In the following, I will briefly present the three papers, outlining the overall aims, methods and findings. The compilation of papers includes two papers that have been published as journal articles and one that has been published as a chapter in an anthology. Declarations of co-authorships are enclosed in appendix C.

5.1. PAPER I

Title: ‘The brainy ones are leaving’: The subtlety of (un)cool places through the eyes of rural youth

Publication status: Co-authored with Malene Gram and published in *Journal of Youth Studies*. 2018. 21(5). Pp. 620-635. DOI: 10.1080/13676261.2017.1406071

Abstract: The aim of this paper has been to explore place dynamics among academically oriented young people and their rural place of origin, and how they produce and maintain identities and visions of their future based on such place dynamics. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 49 students in their final year of upper secondary school who live in one of the rural municipalities in focus. In 23 joint interviews with 25 female students and 24 male students aged 18-20 years old, the topics of ‘coolness’, identity construction and migration were discussed, and analysis focussed on the interviewees’ perceptions of motives for moving to the city in the context of increased pressure from the education and mobility imperative. The paper argues that the rural idyll and the rural dull are not mutually exclusive, as they reflect various dimensions of life in the countryside. On the one hand, the youth associated freedom to roam, feelings of solidarity as well as dense social ties with their local place, along with associations of gossip, boredom, aversion, lack of coolness and stigmatisation of those who stayed behind. While education caused them to leave and signified an opportunity to find freedom, conflicting place-based perceptions reflected on identity construction and influenced migration intentions.

5.2. PAPER II

Title: Is out of sight, out of mind? Place attachment among rural youth out-migrants

Publication status: Accepted in *Sociologia Ruralis*. 2018. DOI: 10.1111/soru.12214

Abstract: The paper examines how rural childhood places shape young out-migrants' everyday lives in the city, and how place attachment is grounded in the everyday and influences future migration aspirations. 13 individual or joint in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven male and seven female out-migrants, who have moved to one of Denmark's largest cities, Copenhagen, Aalborg or Aarhus, to pursue higher education. I asked the interviewees to bring four photos to the interview, two photos of something they associated positively with the rural place of origin and two of something they associated negatively with the place. This was meant to open up for reflection on the unspoken and the implicit meaning behind the photographs. Applying theories on out-migration, rural-urban power dynamics and place attachment, findings revealed that out-migrants retain continuity with their home-based social networks, and through these processes they bridge their new life situation with the old one. Furthermore, the out-migrants were found to have an ambiguous and contradictory relationship with their childhood place, which demonstrated a double-edged rurality associated both with strong pride in place and with rejection of the idea of a future in the place, since return migration was portrayed and perceived as a step backwards – downwards social mobility – which created perceived barriers for return migration.

5.3. PAPER III

Title: 'Like a pair of worn-out slippers': Place attraction factors among return migrants to peripheral places

Publication status: Co-authored with Anette Therkelsen and published in *Handbook on Place Marketing and Branding*, edited by Adriana Campelo. 2017, pp. 84-104. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Abstract: The paper analyses the reasons why highly educated individuals return to their rural place of origin, and it offers insights into which place attraction factors are at play in this decision. Based on 16 individual and joint in-depth, semi-structured interviews with seven male and 12 female return migrants, who have moved back to their childhood place after years of living in one of Denmark's largest cities, the paper adds to the literature on return migration, human capital and place attractiveness. Its findings reveal that social factors outscore cultural and economic factors in importance, when knowledge workers decide to return to their rural childhood place. Return migrants have ambiguous feelings towards their rural place of residence resulting from the different identities they have as parents and well-educated professionals and because of the lack of leisure-related opportunities in the rural settings, which altogether make them prone to leaving when their life situation change in the future, for instance when their children fly the nest. Hence, findings suggest that return migration is not static, but involves a degree of temporariness.

CHAPTER 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

At first, I also thought of it as kind of a defeat. You know, to return home to the secure and known surroundings. Was that really all I achieved? I know that if I wanted to do a PhD or pursue a career, I would have to live in one of the big cities, you know, stay in Aalborg or Aarhus. For me, it was quite a big thing to swallow – to think in a different way, because I know that this is not the place to pursue a career. [...] But now, I can visit the family whenever I want. My friends are here, and they are all having kids at the moment, and so are we. I'm pregnant, and then it's quite nice to be close to them. But there's probably still a small part of me that's a bit annoyed that it [returning] had to be right now, because I really would've liked to try out and realise some things before we returned. [...] I'm one of those straight-A kind of students, so it was quite a big step for me to move back – not least when some of my girlfriends kind of look down on it. And honestly, I also agree with them, because this place really isn't the greatest place in the world. (Charlotte, 30, return migrant)

The opening quote of this chapter encapsulates a particular presentation of rural Denmark, and it reflects a cornerstone of this thesis: the external stigmatisation that is related to rural places and the internal ambiguity felt by most interviewees and how this translates into particular feelings of inferiority in a rural-urban perspective. The quote also points to the attractiveness of having kinship and social networks nearby when life situations change, and this ambivalence between place attractiveness related to the life course and external stigmatisation by peers epitomises the key contributions and foci of my work, as it has forced me to question the characteristics that make some places appear more (un)attractive than others to live in at certain stages in life and to certain people, and how this (un)attractiveness reflects upon identity construction, life choices and migration trajectories. These are all elements that I will discuss in depth in this chapter, where I combine all my empirical data in an overarching analysis and discussion of the dynamics at play in the perceptions affecting the interviewees' relationships with places in the context of migration, focussing specifically on life course changes.

In the three papers, emphasis has been on the practices and perceptions of the interviewees with the objective of capturing the complexity of young people's multiple and intersecting relationships and identifications with places. The interviewees' narratives have helped to demonstrate the processes of constructing a sense of attachment both to their rural childhood place and the city, incorporating experiences and emotions related to both their place of origin and the urban

environment. In this chapter, figure 1 (p. 43) will act as a framework when I discuss each of the three themes of identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness with specific attention to life course perspectives in the context of migration. Hence, this chapter focusses on how places are integral to individuals' identity construction and sense of attachment, and on which grounds they are assessed as attractive or not, as the individuals' life situations change. Specifically, I discuss how temporal issues in the form of past, present and future are linked, as time and change represent shifting meanings and affiliation with places. This yields a rich understanding of our temporal relationships with places, demonstrating how time and change symbolically bind people to places through reminders of childhood idyll, facilitating frames of reference for visions of future places of residence, and thus provide continuity in times of change. Also, I seek to demonstrate how individuals are attached to places in more diverse ways than simply through positive feelings and experiences, and how these mixed feelings and experiences are equally valuable to place attachment and reflect people's evolving identity. First, I discuss how identity and place intersect in the context of migration and life course changes. Next, I turn to the construction and maintenance of place attachment in a society characterised by increased mobility, and finally, I look at the elements which, according to the interviewees, make up the attractiveness of places. Throughout the chapter I will interweave the empirical data and along the way highlight specificities and commonalities across and between the youth, the out-migrants and the return migrants. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

6.1. IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

As demonstrated in the three papers, migration in and out of rural places is not straightforward, as complex, messy and contradictory emotions characterise the interviewees' feelings towards both their rural place of origin and familiar as well as unfamiliar urban places. Often, attachment to one place includes an inherent and simultaneous longing for somewhere else or to become someone else, which highlights the changeability in people's relationships with places and demonstrates part of the processes of identity construction, as places are sites for something and someone. Here the question is which identities and lives belong to particular places (in place) and which do not (out of place) (Cresswell 1984) and how such categorisations become part of people's identity constructions and migration aspirations. These themes will be in focus in the following sections, when I turn to stigmatisation, place hierarchies and 'us' and 'them' constructions.

6.1.1. PROCESSES OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND STIGMATISATION

Dichotomies of urban and rural were important to most of the interviewees in their value orientations and identity constructions, and they adopted different strategies for explicitly articulating how they differed from undesirable groups and undesirable places through such rural-urban discourses. Similar to the discussions on how to achieve coolness in paper I, a young female, Anna (student), made an effort not to be grouped with the uncool, provincial type of person associated with her local, rural place.

People from where I live are regarded as kind of losers. [...] We've had something called 'the moped gang' – no 'the moped club' it was. And they wrote 'the moped club' on a garage and then they met there. And you know, they are just really... You know, kind of losers. And then they met and tinkered with their mopeds. *True* province! And you really do understand why people think that way about people from out here. [...] I just don't want to be part of that. [...] I wouldn't like to be associated with 'the moped club'. (Anna, 19, student)

Anna is highly aware of how place labels are ascribed to people, and the fact that her place is stigmatised by others as a place of backwardness and inferiority gives way to ambivalence, as the place labels associated with this place do not correspond with her own understanding of self. This demonstrates the sometimes undesirable mapping of place on to identity (Wiborg 2004). In other words, the external image of the rural place is incongruent with Anna's image of herself, and her use of 'othering' techniques (cf. section 2.2.1) – explicitly saying that she does not want to be associated with the moped club – indicates that it is important to her that people do not mistake her for what she perceives as an uncool, provincial type of person. Anna sees herself as clearly distinct from groups which she considers undesirable, and her comment on not wanting to be part of the 'true province' describes a separation or alienation from the kind of inhabitants she identifies with the place, pointing to her experience of 'outsiderness' (Relph 1976), as she obviously feels a separation between herself and the place. She also emphasises that when finishing upper secondary school she intends to move to the city, and by distancing herself from the provincial characteristics and highlighting her future out-migration plans, she positions herself as more modern and urban than the local 'moped types'. Similarly, Jane (student) regards herself as part of a refined in-group which, contrary to the 'untrendy farmers' from her local place, belongs in places that are more sophisticated. 'In my class in [basic schooling in the rural village], we were quite divided, because some of the boys came from those true "farm families", and then the rest of us were more trendy, or more... [...] You kind of feel you belong somewhere else' (Jane, 19, student). This pattern of other labelling was reflected in much of the data across the three groups of interviewees, and it shows the ways in which youth and young adults use othering

techniques based on geographical settings to form a social hierarchy reliant on perceived status within the broader peer population. Here, social structures produce unspecified but desirable norms against which people perceive and categorise self and others (cf. section 2.2.1), which in this context contributes to negative stereotyping of people from the countryside and people who stay in their local place of origin as underachievers. These negative representations serve as important markers of the social dimension of identity formation, and given the increasing perception that being ‘cool’ is fundamental to young people (O’Donnell and Wardlow 2000; Pedrozo 2011), meanings of and preferences for different places may also depend on whether or not the place is associated with undesirable labels that do not correspond with one’s own understanding of self.

Groups reflect broader peer norms in communities, and while the groups may not always be ‘known through direct face-to-face contact, they are visible within the local “scene” by the establishment of “reputations”’ (Hendry, Kloep, and Wood 2002 p. 358). The data also proves that stereotyping and categorisation of others in labelled groups serve as a way to differentiate groupings by dwelling place, which leads to territorial rivalry. ‘[Town] is where the snobs live. [Rural village] has the junkies. [Another rural village] is okay, and [a third rural village] is best’ (Frederikke, 20, student). Frederikke identifies with a particular place (her local village), while describing other places and their inhabitants in negative terms, which indicates that place-based social comparison in terms of territorial labelling serves as a reference point for her in defining her identity.

Findings also demonstrate that the interviewees associate places with particular behaviour, revealing that belonging to a particular place involves subtle, but characteristic markers and that ‘us’ and ‘them’ distinctions are territorially delimited (Crang 1998), for instance through the kinds of clothes worn in a given place, when to use makeup and what constitutes the ‘correct’ behaviour.

Anna: Well, we have something we call [rural village] girls. They all have bleached hair that is about this long, and then they have...

Sabina: Lots of makeup on.

Anna: Lots and lots of makeup on, tight jeans...

Sabina: And in general, they just aren’t very nice. [Rural village] girls are a bit mean. [...] They feel superior to the rest of us. (Anna, 19 and Sabina, 18, students)

This excerpt provides an example of how the interviewees perceive places to direct behaviour, and it illustrates the relationship between place and sociocultural power and accentuates ‘the complex interplay of identity and socio-physical environment’

(Prince 2014 p. 708). Cresswell (1984) argues that geography and ideology intersect, in the sense that ‘the effect of place is not simply a geographical matter. It always intersects with sociocultural expectations’ (p. 8). Society hereby influences and determines where people do and do not belong, reliant on unwritten expectations about how to behave in different settings. While many interviewees tried to distinguish themselves from undesirable peer groups, many simultaneously explained that they felt that they were expected to behave according to certain norms (cf. Haugen and Villa 2006) and not least to look more or less alike in the rural community. Accordingly, acceptance in a peer group was based on judgements about the individual based on clothing and style, linking appearance to ‘us’ and ‘them’ constructions. The relationship between clothing and identity is by no means a new phenomenon, as ‘clothes have long been used as a marker of distance and distinction between social groupings’ (Archer, Hollingworth, and Halsall 2007 p. 222). In Thilde’s (student) narrative the connections between place and particular practices, meanings and ways of dressing lead to normative constructions of how to be either ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ (Cresswell 1984).

I had a period where I had black hair and looked a bit funny. Looking like that, people don’t really want to talk with you. They look at you as if you’re a freak, and that’s it. They really don’t want to hang out with you – in some way, you’re not popular or pretty enough. [...] In Berlin, in contrast to small places like this, there are some really strange types, but there are room for them. (Thilde, 18, student)

Dyeing her hair black and dressing in a somewhat gothic style, Thilde clearly transgressed invisible boundaries of what was appropriate in her rural place and broke with the commonly accepted norm. Dressing differently, she became very visible in her rural community, which gave her peers something to talk about, but did not give her someone to talk with. This made her feel that the place was too small and claustrophobic, and she longed for larger places to fit in and to feel ‘in place’. Places hereby foster a sense of belonging or non-belonging through social connections with others or the lack hereof, and this is closely linked to the individual’s social identity (cf. section 2.2.1). Thilde here expressed a strong preference for Berlin and the sense of community and ‘kind of people’ she believed she could find there. This illustrates the effect of other people on individuals’ evaluations and experience of places (Manzo 2005), as Thilde did not feel free to express and be herself in her place of origin. This mirrors the discussion in paper I on the cultural and social construction of coolness, where knowing and not least following what is regarded as cool is central in transferring cool status to one’s identity. Thilde apparently did not fit into the normative constructions of how to behave in the rural place, just as she did not perform this behaviour correctly, which made her liable to the charge of being ‘out of place’. Overstepping the social boundaries leads to exclusion, and to overcome this Thilde expressed a preference for larger cities like Berlin, as she believed such to create room for variety and diversity. A study trip to Berlin hereby expanded Thilde’s outlook and

provided her with a greater perspective, providing the grounds for a reflective evaluation of her rural place of residence, for better or worse, just as it gave her knowledge of a place where she believed she would fit in.

6.1.2. CONSTRUCTIONS OF STAYERS, LEAVERS AND RETURNEES

The dominant ‘good life’ narrative of young individuals is spatially bound to the city (Sørensen and Pless 2017), which divides rural youth into two separate groups: those who leave and those who stay. While dull, prying rurality to some extent is internalised into the young people’s identities through the symbolic qualities of place and acts as a push factor away from the rural community, education seems to be the primary motivation for leaving the countryside, as pursuing higher education is taken for granted and considered an expectation when young people finish academic upper secondary school. Narratives of staying in the rural community are therefore also infused with imagery of backwardness, stagnation and deprivation, and staying behind is accordingly equated with an undesirable, stigmatised identity (cf. paper II). While the interviewees seldom had a clear or straightforward idea of who they wanted to become, they had a clear idea of who they did *not* want to become: one of those who stayed behind. This division between ‘stayers’ and ‘leavers’ (Corbett 2007) contained contrasting perceptions of ‘us’ who leave and ‘them’ who stay, where the latter held at lower position in the social hierarchy. Staying behind in some ways symbolises a simple life associated with stagnation and few career-oriented ambitions: ‘My friends back in [place of origin] have never really moved on. They are the types that are kind of stuck’ (Morten, 26, out-migrant). The young people, to a great extent, regard out-migration to the city not only as a means of getting a higher education, but also as an opportunity for self-realisation and building an identity. This demonstrates Twigger-Ross and Uzzel’s (1996) point that ‘place is used in the active construction of identity [...] as opposed to its function as backdrop to experience’ (p. 218), since moving to and living in the city facilitates professional and personal development, which apparently cannot be achieved to the same extent in the rural place of origin.

Camilla (return migrant) expressed that she almost felt sorry for those who had stayed behind for not having experienced life outside the rural place. A similar sentiment was articulated by Maria (out-migrant), who also associated staying behind with narrow-mindedness; yet, she somehow sympathised with the stayers, as ‘they’, according to her, do not know any better. ‘There’s probably also a bit of narrowmindedness among people, because they [the local people from her place of origin] have not experienced the world. They have some prejudices upon which they build their knowledge. They don’t know better. I feel, I have a completely different perspective’ (Maria, 24, out-migrant). Maria equals staying in the countryside with not having experienced the world and, accordingly, not knowing or having the same kind of outlook as she believes she has. Hereby, she also implicitly ranks her position as a ‘leaver’ higher in the social hierarchy, as her way of talking about ‘stayers’ demonstrates the distinction

between ‘us’ who leave to move on in life and gain greater outlooks and perspectives on life in contrast to ‘them’ who stay behind, do not know any better and will never really get anywhere. ‘Rural-urban’ and ‘stayers-leavers’ are in this sense effective ‘us’ and ‘them’ constructions distinguishing between favourable in-groups and unfavourable out-groups. Perceiving rural-to-urban migration as a necessity and constructing and positioning themselves as ‘leavers’ with an urban mindset and orientation hereby provides the out-migrants with positive intergroup distinctiveness and a feeling of worth and social value (cf. section 2.2.1), and it effectively demonstrates the place hierarchy that is embedded in the dominant narrative about youth, referring to how youthfulness is positioned as an ‘urban subjectivity’ (Farrugia 2016 p. 844).

While I noted in paper III that the rural place of origin was not related to career-oriented disadvantages as such by the return migrants at large, most of the youth and out-migrants found it highly unlikely that the rural place of origin could meet their career goals, when asked to reflect on the possibility of returning, as they did not believe they would be able to ‘make it’ there. Today, many people expect their work to be meaningful and regard it as an essential source of personal development and self-realisation, not just a source of material welfare (Bæck 2004; Paulgaard 2000), which implies that work must hold qualities over and above its material characteristics in order to be attractive. In the youth and out-migrants’ perception, those who want a good education and a professional career do not fit into the rural setting, and they find that jobs for well-educated individuals are difficult to find in rural communities, which for one female return migrant was also confirmed by the job centre, which had told her that they did not know ‘the academic type’ and therefore could not help her (paper III). Due to the rural childhood place’s perceived inability to meet the youth and out-migrants’ expectations concerning career opportunities, the interviewees expressed that they would have to tolerate longer commutes in return for moving back, as commuting seemed a taken-for-granted necessity if returning. This was, however, not necessarily a factor mitigating return migration as such, and Robert (out-migrant), for instance, emphasised that the place of living was more important to him than living in close proximity to work. Most of the interviewees agreed on this, and it was further illustrated by the fact that more than two thirds of the return migrants, or their partners, actually worked outside their rural home municipality. This is important, as the attractiveness of places and urban-to-rural moves in this study are generally motivated by perceived community attributes associated with ease and quality of life rather than by career-related concerns, suggesting that for a place to become attractive it is not enough to provide employment and hereby satisfy individual financial aspirations (cf. paper III). In fact, the importance of satisfying favourable community attributes seems to be decisive, as the individuals have a variety of places to choose from. To some extent, this finding contrasts that of earlier Danish research on migration by highly educated individuals to rural places, which has highlighted employment opportunities as the primary driver in migration decisions (Aner and Hansen 2014). The reason for this difference is probably to be found in the particular group in focus in this study, as

I tune into return migration in particular and hence focus on individuals who already have a connection with the rural place in question. To these, the importance of social relations over financial aspirations is decisive in motivating them to move back. However, this is not to suggest that career-related aspirations are not important to the interviewees, as lack of career opportunities and not least stigmatisation from peers related to this affect their motivation to return as well as how they perceive themselves if they choose to return, as expressed by Charlotte in the opening quote of this chapter. She explained how moving back equalled putting her career on hold before it had even begun, which evoked feelings of sadness and ambivalence in her perception of life in the rural place. It made her sad not to be able to pursue the career she wanted, but she legitimised the return by now leading a more family-oriented life. While few interviewees described returning as being related to career-oriented disadvantages, as explicitly as Charlotte did, it was clear that the return migrants neither perceived returning in successful ways in terms of using their acquired work experience, skills and human capital to help develop the region (Argent, Rolley, and Walmsley 2008; Cuervo and Wyn 2012; Dahlström 1996), as suggested as some of the benefits of attracting return migrants (cf. section 2.5.1). Instead, many were concerned about how return migration was perceived by their peers, which was also something the out-migrants reflected on in their considerations about returning. Henry (out-migrant), for instance, commented that while he personally would not think of returning as an indication of failure, he would consider the opinions of others, and whether they would perceive him as a failure for returning. This points to the complexity inherent in considerations about returning, as the interviewees' individual perceptions as well as those of their peers regarding limited rural progress and lack of career opportunities within rural communities act as constraints in perceptions of possible futures in the rural place of origin, while social networks and safe communities work as draws.

As discussed in paper III, explanations of return migration often referred to the stigmatised 'other', those who had never left, and the return migrants often felt they had to defend their choice of returning, which made them feel somewhat inferior to their peers in the city. To counter this stigmatisation, some of the interviewees, females in particular, made sure not to be associated with those who had never left by stressing that they had lived elsewhere, and many also felt a need to excuse and defend their choice of returning, as they felt a rural way of life ranked lower in the social hierarchy. Charlotte, for instance, elaborated on how her friends responded to their decision to return, and how her friends in many ways considered it almost shameful to return:

'Seriously, you're not going to do that. You're not going back to that place, now that you have finally gotten away from there'. [...] Well, they [her friends] really don't like that everyone knows everyone, and that everyone talks with and about everyone. In many ways, they regarded it as a defeat for us that we moved back. (Charlotte, 30, return migrant)

Some of the interviewees dealt with the stigmatisation related to the countryside and maintained an attractive identity by constructing themselves in positively as 'returnees' in different ways. While many expressed discontent with the lack of opportunities and the narrow-minded mentality of the rural community, they often chose to present their return migration as an intentional relocation to a nice and quiet life in close proximity to everything a family with children desires: grandparents, good institutions, safe neighbourhoods etc. Hereby, they use the narrative of the countryside as a good place for raising children as an explanatory tool for legitimising their return migration (cf. Ní Laoire 2007). Another way of countering the potential stigmatisation was to reproduce an urban narrative about themselves in an attempt to stand out from those who had remained in the rural place. Via this narrative they often highlighted that they were well-educated, had broader perspectives and were more tolerant compared to the locals. Doing so, they tried to distance themselves from provincial characteristics and, at the same time, produce what in their own eyes constituted an attractive identity and image of themselves. 'But sometimes I feel it's too small and too narrow-minded. They [the local inhabitants in the place of origin] have enough in themselves, and I don't really like to be part of that. [...] Then, I feel I have moved to a tiny place too far out towards the west' (Camilla, 37, return migrant). Throughout the interview, Camilla made an effort to highlight the losses involved in urban-to-rural migration by implicitly and explicitly stressing that her tastes and lifestyle are more urban and sophisticated than those generally found in the rural community. For instance, she was a bit concerned that her children would not get a true understanding of the diversity of people and ways of living due to what she perceives as the conservative and narrow-minded mentality flourishing in her rural community. There is no doubt that Camilla longs for the urban vibe, and highlighting that she 'is not done with the city' and that she and her family often visit their friends in Copenhagen to make use of the city's amenities and attractions, she maintains a connection to the urban setting she has left. Although she acknowledges that urban life has less to do with actually visiting museums, cafés, concerts, cinemas, bars etc., but more with the sheer availability hereof, the frequency with which Camilla underlines such urban losses following her return migration demonstrates how she constructs an identity and self-image through rural-urban dichotomies. Similar to the out-migrants in paper II who brought parts of the rural with them to the city, Camilla has also brought parts of her urban life and urban orientations with her to the rural community in order to maintain an urban identity despite living in the countryside.

Other interviewees highlighted that they had returned for an unspecified period of time (more on this in section 6.2.2) or emphasised that they had lived in the city for years and had merely returned to the place of origin to live a good and secure family life in close proximity to kinship networks (paper III). By intentionally distancing themselves from the narrow-mindedness of the rural community and emphasising their urban orientation and prior migration trajectories, the return migrants in general constructed themselves as 'urban-oriented returnees' through narratives of returning to rurality for the sake of the family, but still kept an urban outlook. This bears

resemblance to the rural-urban complementarity (Villa 2000), as the interviewees both physically and mentally relate to and move between rural and urban living throughout their life course.

6.1.3. PLACE HIERARCHIES

To all the interviewees, differences between urban and rural were important in their value orientations and their migration trajectories and plans, and often these were presented as dichotomies. Though focus was sometimes on the positive aspects of rural living, at other times it was on the negative. The same was true of urban qualities. The boundaries between what was positive and what was negative about a particular place were hence dynamic, oftentimes depending on life course changes and family situation. This demonstrates the fluidity of the emotional bond between people and places as well as the individual's ability to ascribe meaning to place (Relph 1976). While the rural community in many ways was perceived as a great place to live as a child, a common denominator among the interviewees was that it was not a place for everyone; in particular, it was not suited for young people. Embedded in this was a strong mobility imperative, and as discussed in section 2.4.2 and highlighted in the empirical data, education was regarded as a ticket out of the rural community into a world with more opportunities of becoming something and someone. Moving away to pursue further studies was, hence, considered a recognised, instinctive stage in the life course of the young individuals, requiring no further discussion or consideration. 'In general, I was actually quite pleased with [place of origin]. It was only because of education... Then you move – like all the others do' (Henry, 25, out-migrant). Henry's line of reasoning with regard to moving away demonstrates the strong mobility imperative embedded in the lives of rural youth, because if rural young people wish to get ahead in life they must be mobile – both imaginatively by planning to moving away after completing upper secondary school, and through actual migration.

Indeed, motivations for leaving often drew on well-accepted narratives about educational opportunities, yet motivations were also tied to a range of personal desires for anonymity, adventure and personal development, among others. Evident in the interviewees' narratives was the multi-layered nature of societal, parental and personal expectations regarding leaving, staying or returning, and although none of the interviewees had ever lived in a large city prior to their educational out-migration, they had clear ideas of what city life would be like and how it would compare to their rural way of living. Often such perceptions drew on visits to large cities, older siblings who had moved to urban places or media representations of urban life.

My cousins are true 'Copenhageners' in the sense that they were raised and have always lived in Copenhagen. I've always thought of them as the cool ones. That's what we talked about. They were cool

because they lived in the city, right in ‘Kartoffelrækkerne’ [one of Copenhagen’s historical city parts located by the lakes]. They walked to and from school and in the lunch breaks, they could go home or something else. We on the other hand had to travel by bus or train. [...] They had all that we didn’t have; the school is not 10 hours away. (Claudia, 26, out-migrant)

Claudia’s description of her childhood place includes explicit references to urbanity, as she describes her place of origin by virtue of a lack of the characteristics she attributes to living in the city. When asked to describe life in the rural place, most of the interviewees used words associated with ‘emptiness’ and ‘lack’, nothing to do and nowhere to go, while the city was described as full of opportunities, versatility and diversity. Camilla (return migrant), for instance, recalled how she enjoyed returning to the city, when she had been a graduate student and had summer jobs in her place of origin. ‘I was really pleased that I didn’t live there anymore; that I could return to my life in the city, where I had a much larger circle of friends, where there were more and wilder places to go out. Everything was just bigger, greater, better...’ (Camilla, 37, return migrant). To Camilla, the city in her youth marked a much welcome separation from her rural place of origin, and describing the city through ‘metrocentric hierarchies of prestige and cool’ (Farrugia 2016 p. 844) she to some extent alienated herself from the rural place, as she associated rurality with the unsophisticated and a lack of opportunities to truly articulate youthfulness. This supports Twigger-Ross and Uzzell’s (1996) notion that discontinuity is an important element in the relationship between identity and place, as out-migration for Camilla was also a flight from rurality which she did not believe held any interesting prospects for her. Moving to the city marked a new stage in life and represented an emerging identity through ‘conscious discontinuity’, as Camilla separated herself from her former environment and moved to a new one, which she felt was more congruent with her conception of self.

The interviewees’ emphasis on the benefits of the city and the downsides of rurality points to the symbolic place hierarchy between rural and urban settings (cf. section 2.4.2). However, as discussed in paper II, attachment to a rural place of origin not only had negative connotations; it also served as an important source of legitimisation and identity construction for some of the interviewees, who used their rural background to differentiate themselves from individuals with an urban background. Most interviewees stressed that they considered their rural upbringing essentially different from an urban upbringing in a positive way, and hereby they implicitly questioned the dominant narrative of urban places as hierarchically superior to rural places – at least during childhood.

Marie (student) also noted that she thought it was cool to come from a small village: ‘Well, I would almost say that when you are our age, then it’s really quite cool to say “no I’m not from [main town], I’m from [rural village]”. You are proud of your little village’ (Marie, 19, student). Place, in this case, acts as an identifier and serves a

distinctiveness function, where Marie dissociates herself from who she is not location-wise. In addition, she likes to be associated with the ‘coolness’ of a small village, and place thus conveys a specific and positive social meaning for her, illustrating how interactions with places allow these to become part of individuals’ conceptions of self (cf. section 2.2.2). By distinguishing between her local village and the main town in her municipality, she subtly reveals that place hierarchies are not only found between rurality and urbanity, but also on a more local level between different rural places within the municipality, where a high rank is not necessarily related to the size of the place or the number of opportunities there. In general, findings showed that interviewees who came from smaller rural villages were often prouder of and more positive towards their place of origin than interviewees from larger rural towns, and, like Marie, it seemed important for them to highlight that they came from this or that small village and not the main town in the municipality, revealing internal place hierarchies between rural places.

Literature about place attachment shows that some out-migrants have strong nostalgic bonds with their birthplace, but that only a minority of them wish to return later in life (Giuliani, Ferrara, and Barabotti 2000; Hay 1998). As discussed in papers I and II, findings in this research confirm this, as most of the youth and out-migrants were reluctant to return to their place of origin later in life, yet they expressed an aspiration for rural living in general. Similar was the case with the return migrants as about half of these had returned, not to the exact place of their childhood, but to a place in close proximity to that place (see appendix A). Annie (return migrant) for instance had moved to a rural village some kilometres from her place of origin, and not returning to the exact place where she had lived as a child was a very deliberate decision.

It’s really awful to say, but I think I would perceive it as a failure to move back home. And I can’t say why, I just feel that way. It’s completely irrational, and I don’t really know what it’s about. It’s really strange. But that town is really up against some strong, strong emotions in me. (Annie, 33, return migrant)

Annie refers to her place of origin as ‘back home’, but has a strong aversion to returning to this ‘home’, even though she had a happy childhood there. Along with similar expressions by many other interviewees, Annie’s strong reluctance to return to the exact place where she lived as a child suggests that there is also a hierarchy between one’s exact rural place of origin and rural places in general. Returning to one’s exact rural place of origin involves subtle stigmatisation associated with stagnancy, lowliness and insignificance, whereas moving to another rural setting draws on ideas of the rural idyll. This reveals that the rural place of origin is assigned a lower position in the place hierarchy than other, similar rural places, and this assessment is a very emotional and personal one that the interviewees have difficulty explaining.

To sum up, youth, out-migrants and return migrants all assess places in relation to perceived place hierarchies. These hierarchies are by no means static or clear-cut, as the interviewees' perceptions of them change across the life course. In youth, urbanity is assigned a high position as a place to articulate youthfulness (Farrugia 2016). However, this changes when the individuals move to the life stage of family formation, in which urbanity is given lower priority, as leading a less stressful life outside the big cities takes precedence. Urbanity is still highly valued, though, and used by the return migrants to build a favourable identity as 'urban-oriented returnees' with a wide outlook and orientation.

6.2. PLACE ATTACHMENT AND MIGRATION

The bond or link between people and places is in focus in this section, where I examine how the youth and young adults construct a sense of continuity in their attachment to places and how such attachment is complex and multidimensional. First, I examine the role of childhood memories in developing lasting bonds with places, and how such bonds influence preferences for future living. Next, I demonstrate that the nature of place attachment is ambivalent for most of the participants, and that they accordingly make strategies for reconciling the combination of both positive and negative feelings and experiences that equally contribute to their place attachment.

6.2.1. NOSTALGIC CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Following Leyshon's (2015) emphasis on memory and place, the empirical data underscores that possible futures and expectations of places are embedded in memories of particular places, demonstrating the dynamics of people's relationships with places over the life course. Findings indicate that the interviewees' experiences and memories of their childhood places have influenced their preferences for future residence. The interviewees' retrospective and nostalgic memories of rural life during childhood often resulted in positive evaluations and perceptions of the place as a great place to raise and live as a child. Here, rural childhoods were presented through romantic images of rural life as less stressful, more safe and with reliable and caring networks of friends and neighbours. Such narratives drew upon memories and wider discourses of rural childhood idyll (cf. section 2.4.1), and they not only provided a picture of how the interviewees regarded their own childhood, but also created a frame of reference for visions of a future place of residence. Jon (out-migrant), for instance, had quite a romantic idea of what it would be like to return to his place of origin, as he imagined how he and his friends could recreate the 'good old days'. 'Then, those of us who grew up together could come back and be together. We know the place. [...] And our kids could be in the same class and all that and go to the same school

and so on' (Jon, 25, out-migrant). Jon has a nostalgic and positive idea of a future in his place of origin, drawing both on ideas of rural idyll and on memories of his own childhood there. This nostalgic idea conforms to notions of the importance of place, as it illustrates that the forces of increased mobility have not caused bonds to the childhood place to weaken (cf. section 2.2). To Jon, his childhood place is a social symbol of shared relationships, values and norms, and in a modern, globalised world such a strong sense of attachment and belonging still matters very much to him. Hereby, attachment transcends time and place, as Jon's essential attachment is not to the place, but to his nostalgic memories of his childhood there, which have more meaning and power than the geographical setting in itself.

Most interviewees had positive memories of their childhood and had difficulties imagining raising children in the city. 'I had such a great childhood. And the place where I lived truly was in the far-out countryside. And I kind of feel that if I could give my own children the same, I really want to do so' (Sarah, 25, out-migrant). Memories of an idyllic rural upbringing provide an anchor point for Sarah's ideas of how she will raise her own children. Her narrative draws on classic discourses on raising children in the countryside, and her romantic memories of a rural childhood demonstrate that her place of origin is emotionally important to her and provides her with 'place-referent continuity' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996) from which she can maintain an identity supported by the meanings and emotions she associates with the place. However, Sarah also clearly remembers why she left; she recalls the monotony and narrow-mindedness of life in the countryside, which makes her reluctant to return. This demonstrates the complexity of her evaluations of place; having experienced life in the city and gained broader perspectives has made her realise that while she still values and appreciates rurality, she is not likely to return to her place of origin, as it no longer seems to be congruent with her perception of self, pointing to 'conscious discontinuity' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Reflecting further on this, Sarah, however, notes that she would like to move to a similar place to that of her childhood, as she is not the urban type, 'I'm not a city person. I need space and silence around me. [...] I feel most comfortable in the countryside; in the fields where there are lots of room and it's quiet, and there's nature' (Sarah, 25, out-migrant). While Sarah does not want to return to the exact place of her childhood, she expresses 'place congruent continuity' (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996), in that she prefers the rural 'type' of place she knows from her childhood, as she perceives herself to be more of a rural kind of person. This indicates the complexity inherent in evaluations of place over the life course, and instead of regarding continuity and discontinuity as absolutes, it might be beneficial to think of them as a continuum that varies throughout life, as place preferences change relative to one's life situation.

As discussed in paper II, social networks played a main role when the young people had to decide where to move to pursue higher education, as many of the participants valued their social networks from back home, and their narratives showed how a sense of belonging was realised by maintaining close bonds with old friends. Mauro (2016)

and Hixon (2013) have demonstrated that the sporting field is not only a site for leisure and sports performances, but also for socialisation and negotiation of belonging to a local community. For some of the male interviewees, football played an important role both in settling into a new place and in maintaining continuity and connections with people back home. Johan, for instance, brought the sport with him to Aarhus: ‘When we moved to Aarhus, we formed our own football club aimed specifically at people from [childhood area]’ (Johan, 25, out-migrant). Forming a football club to maintain connections with his circle of friends from back home, Johan to some extent carves out or reproduces a place of social familiarity in his current urban residence, where he feels a sense of attachment and ‘insideness’ (cf. Relph 1976). Likewise, Morten explains how football acts as a glue connecting him to his childhood place, as he still plays football in his childhood club. So do a number of his childhood friends, who have also moved away, and in this way football is an everyday practice in these young men’s lives that helps them maintain their attachment to their childhood place despite living elsewhere. While football in this context is gender-specific in the sense that it only applied to the male interviewees, both genders strived to maintain and meet with their old circle of friends, revealing how relationships with an array of different and ‘meaningful places creates a larger web of meaning in one’s life’ (Manzo 2005 p. 83) and add to multiple place attachments (cf. paper II) by creating places of belonging.

6.2.2. AMBIVALENT PLACE ATTACHMENTS AND FEELINGS OF DUALITY

All the interviewees seemed to have a relatively strong attachment to their rural childhood place, yet, for most, the nature of this attachment was somewhat ambivalent, and many had difficulties explaining their emotional relationship with the rural place, as their feelings were by no means clear-cut or definitive. The return migrants’ settlement patterns also reflected this ambivalence, as several of the return migrants explained that they had simply bought an inexpensive house, so that they were able to move away if they wanted to and did not have to wait until they had sold the house. ‘I don’t think we’ll stay here for good. I really can’t imagine that. But the house was so cheap, so we’ll just use it as a holiday home [if relocating]’ (Sasha, 27, return migrant). This intention to relocate at a later point, despite having bought a house, confirms Windsong’s (2010) claim that place attachment is not synonymous with home ownership, as many of the interviewees made strategies for their return migration in order not to risk being tied to the place for good. While migration decreases significantly with age and in Denmark is relatively low for people over the age of 30 (Andersen 2017), the temporality expressed by quite a few of the interviewees could indicate that this migration pattern might change in the future, as return migration might not be an end stage; in some cases, it is simply something that just happens. ‘I’m not going to stay here for long, maybe a year or two. Well, I’ve

decided to give it a year from now, and I have actually already started thinking about how to get resettled in Copenhagen with an apartment or whatever I'm going to do' (Kristine, 40, return migrant). Kristine has no partner or children, which is a contributing factor to her reluctance to remain in the rural setting, as she finds the rural place boring, deserted and with no 'good looking guys'. She considered her return migration a temporary stay, a 'refuge' and an opportunity to 'find herself' some distance away from urban life, as she found her rural place of origin to be a site for introspection and self-reflection, enabling her to sort out her thoughts, feelings and identity. At several times during the interview it seemed as if Kristine had already packed her bags and was ready to leave for the city, and the fact that she kept in touch with friends in Copenhagen and thought about how and when to return, while at the same time cherishing her current life in her rural place of origin for fostering self-understanding and living in close proximity to her family, demonstrates her multiple place attachment (cf. paper II), as she to some extent lived in-between two places. Together, the rural and urban shape and contribute to the 'gestalt' of who she is (Manzo 2005).

It is important to note that the interviewees might have expressed reluctance to remain in the rural place simply to present themselves to me as 'urban-oriented returnees' (cf. section 6.1.2) for whom it is important to have an urban outlook and perspective, which in their eyes does not necessarily correspond to settling down in a rural place. However, it might also relate to Ryan and Mulholland's (2014) view of settlement and mobility as a continuum of emplacement, where people gradually extend their stay and become more emplaced, while keeping other options open (cf. section 2.5). As a female interviewee noted when explaining that they had bought an inexpensive house to be free of restricting ties if they wanted to move away, 'That's what I say right now, and at the same time, I want to see it in practice. [...] If you were to interview me in 30 years' time or so, I would be quite surprised, if we were not still living in this house and in these surroundings' (Tove, 35, return migrant). This demonstrates similar findings as those presented in paper III as to how social relations often extend beyond prior social ties, as connections with places grow stronger the more experience with the place one has, for instance as children further social ties through the institutions and sports activities they are part of. Nevertheless, it seemed as if the temporality and maintenance of a mental escape route made life in the countryside easier for Tove, as she somehow regarded their move back as a temporary stay, which could be evaluated and contemplated continuously, while she still acknowledged that it was unlikely to happen. However, further research into the retention of return migrants is called for to examine whether they will move into urban areas later in life, or if they become emplaced to such an extent that they will remain in the rural place for good.

The interviewees' narratives also pointed to how feelings for the place of origin were multifaceted and demonstrated that the young individuals had difficulties reconciling themselves with undesirable place identifications and place loyalties. These contradictory emotions were evident from the stories the interviewees told as well as

from the photos the out-migrants brought to the interviews, and these highlighted the substantial number of meanings the places had to the individuals and how one element could contain both positive and negative connotations. However, these intersecting emotions and meanings were not necessarily inconsistent with one other, but instead overlapped, demonstrating the complexities and dynamics of people's relationships with places. Narratives and photos depicting community feeling and the socio-cultural mentality of the place, for instance, contained both positive associations of 'unity' and 'cohesiveness' and negative associations of 'lack of privacy' and 'feelings of claustrophobia'. Mikkel encapsulated such mixed sentiments when elaborating on what he (dis)liked about rural life by reference to his current life in the city.

In the city, there are not so many wailing sirens and people who are fighting and making noise. It [rurality] is easier and a bit calmer. There's a more relaxed atmosphere. And just the issue of sleeping – it's dark, there are no trucks driving past all the time. I like that. [...] You know the people at the register in the super market and the people who work in the cinema and stuff like that. That's nice. [...] I actually think this place [place of origin] is nice; not nice business-like or store-like, but it's beautiful. There's water, woods and... Well, basically everything one needs: a library, a super market and such. [...] But I don't like the mentality. That's not me. It's a bit too narrow-minded. It's not so much about choosing the right kind of book or watching the right kind of movie. It's more politically – voting for Danish People's Party (right-wing party) and being afraid of such and such kinds of people. I get sick of that. In the city, it's easier to find people, who knows how to behave. (Mikkel, 22, out-migrant)

From this narrative, it is clear that no matter how positive feelings Mikkel has about his rural place of origin, he cannot help be aware of what he perceives as a narrow-minded mentality characterising the mundane aspects of daily rural life. He dislikes and distances himself from the local community, as he disagrees with the inhabitants' political stance and would not like to be associated with these local people whom he perceives to be somewhat bigoted, simple-minded and intolerant. While the interview was carried out some months prior to the Danish general election of 2015, Mikkel's perceptions of the local community bear strong resemblances to the media discourse in the wake of the election, where the Danish People's Party increased its share of the votes from 12 per cent in the previous general election four years earlier to 21 per cent in this election. The Danish media portrayed the typical Danish People's Party voter as an individual based in a rural area, and encouraged by the media, caricatures of voters were constructed based on this rural-urban divide with urban, self-righteous idealists, on the one hand, and rural narrow-minded and bigoted nationalists, on the other. This resembles the perceptions held by Mikkel, who regards himself as somewhat superior to the local inhabitants in his rural place of origin, and by stating that it is 'easier to find people who knows how to behave' in the city, he emphasises

his distance towards and perceptions of the local inhabitants. This aversion to the local inhabitants also becomes evident later in the interview when he talks about a local festival. To many in the local community, this festival represents the ultimate get-together, but to Mikkel, it represents the socio-cultural mentality he does not like. He feels 'above' the event, more sophisticated, and the festival becomes a symbol of what he tried to escape from, which adds to his feeling of disembedding. The place of origin is without a doubt significant to Mikkel; yet, it is also a place where he experiences interpersonal conflict, and which has a powerful impact on him, as it both represents a strong and valued familiarity and reminds him in a negative way of why he does not want to return.

Conversely, the interviewees who held the most negative views of their rural place of origin and who distanced themselves from any possibility of returning simultaneously expressed a strong pride in place, demonstrating the multidimensionality of people's attachment to places (cf. section 2.3.2). The rural place of origin is part of the interviewees' background, and to avoid devalorising the rural 'as a class position within hierarchies of prestige that privilege the city' (Farrugia 2016 p. 844), most interviewees did not allow others to patronise their childhood setting without arguing against it. 'You defend the place in some way. It's ok to make fun of and joke about the place with a friend from back home, but others shouldn't talk bad about it' (Mikkel, 22). In my interview with Line and Mette (out-migrants), both expressed strong concern for their place of origin, and while none of them could imagine moving back, they really hoped the negative development would turn, not only because they cared for the place, but also because of the people who live there. Furthermore, several out-migrants brought pictures symbolising community feeling, while explaining that they felt a responsibility to give something back, pointing to a sense of social solidarity and collective conscientiousness. This relates to what Relph (1976) argues about care for places and attachment (cf. section 2.2.2), and it demonstrates that while the young individuals might not see a future for themselves in the place, they still express strong attachment to and care for the place. These contradictory emotions were usually quite complex, and it made the interviewees' own relationships with places contradictory and confusing. Coping with these diverging feelings resulted in tension and ambivalence in the interviewees' attachment to place, which Jens (return migrant) expressed well:

In general, I'm quite ambivalent about [place of origin]. On the one hand, I think there's a lot of cool stuff going on around here. I was actually quite positively surprised to return, and I always try to highlight that. I think this place has a great potential, which I would really like to see taken advantage of. [...] On the other hand, there's this mentality. I really think... There are so many mean-spirited people around here. My family are all true [pronoun for people from the place] and they know lots of people from around here. And that has indeed confirmed my opinion about this. That's also why I tell my kids that they need to leave

this place. Because those people who have lived around here all their lives become... They are just really narrow-minded and have a very limited perspective on life. And, I think that characterise this place. Unfortunately, the core in this place are those people who have lived here their entire lives, and it's just... across the board, they are just little people. (Jens, 40, return migrant)

The contradictions in Jens' narrative paint a more complete picture of the complexity of the individuals' processing of their relationships with place and reveal how negative and positive elements are equally significant in constructing a sense of attachment and connection with place. Often, the interviewees desire elements from both the city and the countryside, and their ambivalence concerns how to combine these desires, 'I don't want to live in the middle of the town hall square, but I do like that there are plenty of cars and noise. I also really like the nature. It's quite complex. [...] I want to have it all' (Claudia, 26, out-migrant). The vibe of the city, the urban mentality and the many opportunities are attractive to them while young; yet, the interviewees also assign high value to the calmness, security and beautiful nature in their rural childhood place. This demonstrates how places constitute different 'opportunity structures' (Bæck 2016), in the sense that different places provide different opportunities and barriers, and it points to how the interviewees form new relationships with and attachment to the urban environment, while maintaining strong attachments to the rural place of origin.

6.3. PLACE ATTRACTIVENESS

The factors that make a place attractive or unattractive are difficult to define, as there is no universal acceptance of place attractiveness. Evaluations of the push and pull factors related to different places vary from person to person, as people have widely differing and conflicting perceptions of what makes a place attractive or not. In the following, I will tune into how the youth and young adults in this study perceive and evaluate the attractiveness of places in the here and now and how evaluations change over the life course. I focus specifically on how notions of anonymity and pressures of social conformity affect the individuals' evaluations of place, and how they change across the life cycle. Furthermore, attention is paid to the influence of social networks and kinship ties in these evaluations.

6.3.1. ANONYMITY VS. PRESSURE OF SOCIAL CONFORMITY

Research on place attachment often regards security as a predictor of place attachment that develops from positively valued memories of the place (Lewicka 2011; Mesch

and Manor 1998). The interviewees often constructed the rural in opposition to the urban, where ‘secure and calm’ were found to represent the rural and ‘diversity and anonymity’ described the urban. The feeling of security was primarily related to the idea that ‘everyone knows everyone’, as most interviewees had happy memories of their childhood and remembered how they could roam freely and safely, because everyone kept an eye out for each other. This close-knit community and the fact that everyone knows and keeps an eye on everyone give associations to a ‘Big Brother’ community (Haugen and Villa 2006), which, however, should not be understood as a necessarily negative aspect of rurality, as it meant that many felt secure and nurtured during childhood.

This is truly... you know really the best place to grow up. I’m certain of that. I really don’t believe you could find a better place. You know, it’s really... It’s so free and it’s just really... free. Your parents weren’t afraid to let you go anywhere, because first of all everyone knows each other, and second everybody keeps an eye on each other’s children. (Frida, 18, student)

Frida here reproduces the narrative of a rural childhood as idyllic, pointing to a sense of freedom that relies on the idea of safety and visibility – that ‘everyone knows everyone’ in rural communities. However, as the young people grew older, this idea of visibility facilitated an informal type of social control through gossip and lack of privacy, which put limitations and restrictions upon rural life. Most interviewees were concerned about the close-knit atmosphere and the narrow-minded mentality many felt characterised the local, rural communities, and the young people found the small town gossip of their rural communities to be more constraining than gossiping in urban areas. In line with Haugen and Villa’s (2006) results, this, however, does not necessarily suggest that there is more gossip in rural areas than in urban areas, because what the young people associate with gossip also to some extent includes simple everyday conversations among the locals as well as the notion that ‘everyone knows everyone and everything’. Hence, the line between harmless everyday talk, small town tittle-tattle and outright gossip is vague and blurred. Furthermore, the common discourses of rural communities as portrayed in mainstream media are primarily associated with close-knit communities in which gossip is a part of everyday life. This might also lead the young people to automatically reproduce this discourse on rurality, and doing so they actively contribute to the co-production and reproduction of what is understood as rural. The social control which the young people associated with rurality once again gives associations to a ‘Big Brother’ community, but this time in a less favourable way than the one experienced in childhood. The interviewees found that it was difficult to do anything without everyone knowing, and departing from the informal, socially accepted norms was frowned upon by the locals. These different perceptions of visibility demonstrate how perceptions of community life change throughout the life course and provide an example of the ongoing struggle by the

interviewees to reconcile themselves with the pros and cons of living in the countryside.

The city, in contrast, was generally described as the locus of diversity and variety. Urbanity was attractive to the interviewees because it offered anonymity and greater acceptance of differences and was linked to independence and not being constantly confronted with pressures of social conformity and people who know who you are (or who know your parents, sister, cousin etc.). Giuliani, Ferrara and Barabotti (2000) suggest that our relationships with places become more explicit and clear when we move, which Robert's (out-migrant) narrative below also demonstrates. Here he explains that he became more annoyed with the close-knit atmosphere, the gossiping and the tittle-tattle of his childhood place after he moved away than when he actually lived there, and that he began to appreciate the anonymity of the city even more because of this.

When I'm back home and go out, it really annoys me that everyone knows everyone, and if you do something, you know that that person knows your sister or knows someone else. If we go out in [place of origin] then there is a good chance that everyone knows what you have done. It'll leak. It's different in 'Gaden' [party street in Aalborg]. I think that's what annoys me the most. You can't really misbehave or act out in the same way. That's what really annoys me, when I'm back home. You're not anonymous back home. And that gets even worse the further out in the countryside you get. On the other hand, that's also what makes it nice and homely to come back home – that everyone knows everyone. At some point, however, enough is enough. I like the anonymity I get in Aalborg. While there are people everywhere, no one knows me. That's what I like about Aalborg – walking down the street without people knowing who I am. (Robert, 25, out-migrant)

'Knowing everyone' was a premise for experiencing the rural childhood place as secure and calm, but this visibility at the same time led to lack of privacy and informal social control in youth. Robert valued the closeness of the community when he was a child, and he also found it to contribute to a sense of homeliness. However, moving away transformed the meaning of this visibility and made him look at the place with new eyes, which made him discover new perspectives and priorities within himself. What Robert and the interviewees in general disliked about the close-knit rural communities was that their lives were visible not only to the people they chose to be around (close friends, peers, parents etc.), but also to everyone else (teachers, friends' parents, mother's colleagues etc.). In the city, young people can choose who they want to share their lives with, for example their old circle of friends, instead of being trapped in a close-knit community where everyone knows everything. So, even though the opportunity to mix with like-minded people from the childhood place was a high

priority for most out-migrants, and an important part of their everyday lives in the city, they by and large preferred to be away from the eyes of other members of the rural community. The city was hereby presented as a place of freedom, providing them with the opportunity and anonymity to shape their lives independently, while pressures of conformity and social control in terms of recognising others and not least being recognised by others were associated with rural communities. This reflects the ways in which place attractiveness is influenced and shaped by a constantly changing set of values and perceptions, which evolves over time and situations.

6.3.2. THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

While the perception that ‘everyone knows everyone’ in general was more often listed as a negative feature of the rural community than as a positive one, close social networks and kinship relations nevertheless had a particular impact on decisions to return when entering the life stage of parenthood (cf. paper III). This phenomenon was quite representative of the return migrants in general, as the close-knit rural communities with strong social bonds often turned from being a negative aspect in the life stage of youth to something positive in the life stage of parenthood. Many, for instance, explained that when they left the rural community they would have sworn that they would never return. However, as their life situations changed, so did their preferences with regard to place of residence. Camilla (return migrant), for instance, explained that she almost mocked people who asked her whether she wanted to return, as she could not understand how they could even think that.

And many people think that’s not going to happen: ‘No way in hell, am I going to return’. [...] And that was the story I told people, if they asked me whether I wanted to return. And honestly, it was kind of an insult to me, because how in the world could they even think that I wanted to return? (Camilla, 37, return migrant)

Nevertheless, when her life situation changed, and she and her husband considered having children, her perspective regarding place attractiveness changed. Suddenly, returning was not such a bad option, and the notion of ‘everyone knowing everyone’, in contrast to urban anonymity, became quite attractive, as knowing one’s neighbours and mutual caring in the community provided a sense of security when raising children. Hereby, Camilla’s perspective on the way of life in the rural place of origin changed from the position of ‘being controlled to being a controller’ (Haugen and Villa 2006 p. 215), as the close community and the negative social control she felt in youth turned to a positive security of ‘everyone looking after everyone’ when considering to have children herself. Relating this to Niedomysl’s (2010) framework for evaluating place attractiveness in a migration context (cf. section 2.4), changes in life situation clearly alter the interviewees’ needs, demands and preferences, as a

reversed priority of what constitutes these three elements seem to take effect when having or intending to have children. In youth, individual desires for cultural offers, opportunities for self-development and career prospects constituted primary place attraction factors, whereas the pull of the rural as a safe place to grow up becomes primary place attraction drivers when becoming a parent oneself. Andersen and Nørgaard (2012) argue that ‘family changes are not by itself a reason for migration, but can result in changes in needs and priorities that can provoke migration’ (p. 33). In this study, having or intending to have children seemed to permeate all decisions regarding a setting’s attractiveness as a place of residence, and individual desires no longer took priority in evaluating the appeal of different places.

Then suddenly, you are no longer the priority. That’s not what’s important anymore. Cafés, cultural offers and such no longer matter that much. It has become a bit more vague, and those offers are no longer so important. I think that’s very characteristic for the life situation we are in – that such things are no longer a priority. (Camilla, 37, return migrant)

In her study of return migration to rural Ireland, Ní Laoire (2007) found that narratives about returning drew on ideas of a rural idyll related to values of safety and family life in the countryside, but that ‘there is a risk of disappointment and unfulfilment as reality rarely lives up to expectations’ (p. 342). Only seldom did I find disappointment in the return migrants’ narratives. They did express negative attitudes towards the mentality of the community in particular, as discussed earlier, but this was not a surprise to them or an expression of unfulfilment, but merely a characteristic they expected to find. Instead, most were positively surprised with returning, which primarily related to the fact that everyday doings and practices changed significantly when they became parents, and it altered their use of and relationship with place.

When I left, I really thought [place of origin] was a godforsaken place. [...] Here’s nothing. That was when I was 18. [...] This place was just a hole. To some extent it still is, but now there are other advantages. [...] Having kids, we realised that many of the things we needed and wanted to have in the local area, we could also find here. You don’t have the same need to go out in ‘Gaden’ when having two small children and so on. And all the theatre stuff, cafés and such have faded into the background and therefore Aalborg no longer has the same pull, as it had when we were young and free. (Jens, 40, return migrant)

While the return migrants to some extent use the narrative of the rural idyll to situate and justify their identity and return migration (cf. section 6.1.2), kinship and social networks were central to their narratives. According to Stockdale (2002), the affective power of kinship can either encourage or discourage migration, and Johnson (1990)

demonstrates how attachment to and contact with social networks can function as an important source of information, while also putting ‘a favourable gloss on their decision to move’ (Johnson 1990 p. 270). Social networks played a central role in decisions to return, and for many interviewees, having children resulted in a change of perspective regarding where to settle down, as family relationships and living close to especially parents (and their children’s grandparents) worked as a strong motivation for returning, and it seemed a main priority in migratory decisions. Jens explained how he and his wife’s decision to return was primarily based on the line of reasoning that if they moved closer to their children’s grandparents, they would get more free time themselves, as it would ease the logistics of child minding.

That’s what made us consider if we should return. For us, being close to the grandparents was 95 per cent of the reason why we returned. That we didn’t have to call several months ahead to arrange babysitting and such. We could get more spare time. Get a bit of life again. (Jens, 40, return migrant)

As discussed in section 6.2.2, some return migrants kept their future settlement options open by renting instead of buying a house or buying a relatively inexpensive house, so it would not prevent them from moving away if they grew tired of living in the rural place. However, as discussed in paper III and in section 2.5, attachment to a place grows stronger over time and people become more emplaced when they get a career and family commitments. Accordingly, the kinship ties which motivated Jens and his wife to return in the first place might also be what prevents them from moving away later in life. The narratives, for instance, showed that family ties worked in different directions, as many of the return migrants felt responsible for caring for their parents in old age, as expressed by Mette.

Maybe we’ll feel some obligations to them [elderly parents] that means it’ll be difficult to move away. If they need our help in some way or the other, I think it will be difficult to legitimise that we moved back home and got their help in a lot of years, and then when they get old and need our help, we will just move. I think there will be some obligations in that sense. (Merete, 30, return migrant)

Care for elderly parents to some extent bound the return migrants to the place, and in this way family ties not only attracted the interviewees to their place of origin, as obligations and responsibilities associated with having elderly parents also served as possible hindrances to moving away later in life. However, when their children had grown up and left home and when their parents were no longer around, many interviewees expressed a wish to move back to the city to be close to their grown children and grandchildren, but also to be closer to city life and urban facilities with cafés, shops, theatres etc. At the child rearing life stage, such cultural offers do not outweigh the attractiveness of being close to kinship networks and leading a calmer

and less stressful rural life, but at later life stages the cultural vibe of the city, along with the chance of being close to grown children and grandchildren is likely to motivate the individuals to move away from the countryside. Hence, when taking into account future aspirations in the return migrants' migration decisions, returning to the childhood region may just be a temporary move, as also argued in section 6.2.2, which demonstrates the significance of kinship and social relations in place attractiveness in the context of life course-related migration. It also proves the interconnected relationship between people and places, and how closely life stage and location are linked. The interviewees' stories demonstrate the motivations and priorities behind their settlement aspirations, and how these depend on the qualities and opportunities the place and local community offer in relation to what is experienced as valuable at certain phases in the life course. In general, the city, on the one hand, attracts the interviewees with education, career opportunities and cultural offers, while the less progressive, traditional life in the countryside with fewer employment opportunities and a controlling social fabric pushes them to leave. Similarly, the beautiful surroundings and the homely comfort act as pull factors towards the rural place, while the unfamiliarity of the city both startles the interviewees, but also appeals to them. When entering the life stage of family formation, a security in raising children in the rural along with close proximity to social relations work as pull factors, while the rapid pace of the city to some extent pushes the individuals to leave. From this, it is evident that there is a strong interconnection between use of place, life situation and perception of preferable places.

6.4. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

That places take part in the construction of identities is evident, as all the interviewees were highly aware of place meanings and place-based reactions of others. By making 'us' and 'them' distinctions, the interviewees portrayed themselves in particular ways to define and situate their identity as well as to communicate their perceived social rank through the symbolic character of their relationship with place. Hereby, places were clearly laden with emotional and symbolic meanings, and experiences of attachment or aversion to the place contributed to the interviewees' identities.

Exploring relationships with places among individuals in different life stages has enabled me to examine how preferences and settlement patterns vary over time and are linked to social relations. Rural-urban orientations have proven to be closely related to changes in life situation over the life course, as people's life situations greatly affect their decisions about where to live and when. In youth, for instance, many participants associated a rural way of life with isolation, limitations and boredom, though many also presented their rural places as safe repositories of social relations and tranquil surroundings closely related to a less stressful way of life in close proximity to kinship networks and a sense of security in raising children.

While most participants were attracted by the pull of the rural idyll, many youth and out-migrants, however, said that they did not want to return to the specific place of their childhood. It was difficult for them to explain why they felt this way, but subtle stigmatisation related to returning materialised as their narratives unfolded, which related to feelings of stagnation, lowliness and insignificance. Basically, moving back was perceived as a step in the wrong direction, which highlights how return migration involves not only a geographical move, but also a less prestigious, downward social move, making rural places not simply geographical peripheries, but also cultural peripheries (Fosso 2004) due to the lack of opportunities and activities, strict social control, less tolerance and social expectations and conventions of equality and sameness – restrictions which could apparently be overcome by moving to the city, which was associated with freedom and less social control. Out-migration, hence, constituted and allowed the becoming of desirable identities. What then motivated some to return after all was the pull of kinship networks, as their life situations changed, often linked to when they had or considered having children. This underscores the importance of social networks in evaluations of place throughout the life course, as the place of origin for these individuals became significant due to the social opportunities available there, just as migration to one specific city was important for the out-migrants when pursuing higher education, because of the deep-rooted, social network they found there. Hereby, the interviewees developed relationships with places through their connections to others in these places, which demonstrates how interpersonal social networks not only act as pull factors and impact on migration trajectories and evaluations of place throughout the life course, but also open doors to places and facilitate a sense of place attachment.

The interviewees' orientations towards rural or urban living are hereby related to the perceived qualities of either setting in contrast to the other, and similar to the findings of Villa (2000), returning to one's rural place of origin seems to be part of a life course strategy, as a rural way of life is preferred and experienced as qualitatively better, safer and more relaxing at certain life stages in contrast to an urban way of life. However, returning was not uncomplicated or easy for the participants. Some found the close-knit, 'everyone knows everyone' communities restraining and missed the anonymity of the city, while others expressed great aversion to the narrow-minded mentality of the locals and, accordingly, made an effort to maintain a broad perspective and worldview. Such examples serve as reminders that relationships with places consist of both positive and negative feelings and experiences, and that these form part of our sense of attachment and our continuous evaluation of the place for better or worse.

While return migration is often presented as a potential solution to the problems related to rural youth out-migration, returning was not an exclusive or definitive life choice for the participants. While their reluctance to remain may just be an act of staging or presenting themselves to me in a particular light (cf. section 6.2.2), it may just as well highlight the continuous rural-urban evaluation of place throughout the

life course. Here, rural and urban are not opposites, but complementarities (Villa 2000), as changes in people's reflections on and evaluations of rural and urban ways of living and personal experiences and priorities related to these vary throughout life. Hence, there seems to be a difference in how they assess rural and urban places and how they evaluate them as places of residence here and now. What attracts or repels people varies between types of places and life stages, as limitations and opportunities are perceived differently throughout the life course.

The meanings of and preferences for different places expressed by the interviewees were affected by changes in life situations and often situated in the relationship between place attractiveness, place attachment and identity construction, rather than simply belonging to one of these dimensions. Comprehending the dynamic relationship between the three provides us with an understanding of the interweaving and complex set of processes individuals go through over the life course and which affect their relationships with and evaluations of different places in the context of migration. The ongoing evaluation and negotiation of the three dimensions affect place perceptions and migratory decisions and indicate when the interviewees have a preference for living in a specific place. What is perceived and experienced as attractive in one place at one stage in life may be unattractive in another and vice versa. This pluralism within the interviewees' relationships with and evaluations of places demonstrates how place attachment, identity construction and place attractiveness are negotiated across the life course through dualities of complementary rather than exclusive processes.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The point of departure for the thesis was the observation that on international, national, regional and local levels, policymakers, interest groups, academics, mainstream media and the public in general are occupied with an uneven rural-urban development, where urban places become increasingly more prosperous and dynamic and rural places grow steadily more redundant. Such developments not only affect rural places in terms of massive out-migration, economic hardship and ageing communities, but also in less explicit ways. Accordingly, these developments have led me to reflect both on what rurality actually implies, how it is understood, as well as in which ways people with a rural background form relationships and bonds with rurality in the context of these developments and how such contribute to identity construction and shape perceived place attractiveness. Throughout the thesis I have therefore asked how rural-urban dynamics affect academically oriented Danish youth and young adults with a rural background, and how identity construction takes place within perceived place hierarchies between rural and urban. I have also been occupied with understanding the influence of childhood memories of rural pasts and visions for future lives on migration behaviour, the role of social relations in the process of developing ties to places and migration decisions as well as how people's relationships with places change over the life course. The aim of this thesis has therefore been to understand the subtleties of rural migration dynamics through an exploration of the processes through which people shape and sustain relationships with places across time and place, and by scrutinising how evaluations of places change over the life course and affect identity construction. I have investigated these migration dynamics by applying perspectives on identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness through the following research question:

How are identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness shaped in the everyday, negotiated across the life course and anchored in time and place? And how do these processes contribute to the formation of relationships with places and shape current lives and future migratory aspirations among youth and young adults with a background in a rural place?

This research question emphasises the need to consider the intertwining and dynamic set of processes and the full range of meanings related to place over the life course, which affect youth and young adults' relationships with and evaluation of different places in the context of migration. Applying a life course perspective has facilitated an understanding of the variety of processes and rural-urban dynamics at play across time and place, providing an intricate and rich perspective on migration and rurality. It has enabled me to better comprehend the subtleties of rural migration dynamics, as it has allowed me to identify the processes through which people shape and sustain

relationships with places over time and how evaluations of places change across the life course.

In this final chapter, I will return to the research question to conclude on the academic and practical contributions emerging from the study as well as provide directions for further research. Since findings show that identity construction, place attractiveness and place attachment are closely connected to specific life situations, I will first conclude on each of the three life stages, before concluding on the contribution of the life course perspective on migration to the research field. Finally, I will turn to the practical implications of the study and provide directions for further research.

7.1. RURAL YOUTH

Findings reveal that the symbolic qualities of places are transferred to young people's identities, and that the young people's feelings towards and experiences of places affect their migration aspirations. Coolness or the lack thereof was an important element in understanding the young people's emotional relationships with places, as achieving coolness was deeply engrained in their interactions with the social and physical environment, and achieving coolness called for a 'savoir fair' of how to 'do cool' in different places in terms of how to express themselves and develop their identity. The young people navigated in and engaged with the rural environment through positioning themselves and others in relation to perceived coolness, which made some feel 'in place' and others 'out of place' in the rural setting.

To a great extent, the young people were proud of their rural places, and reflecting on their childhood they often communicated their relationship with the place through the narrative of rural idyll, where feelings of solidarity, freedom to roam, security and dense social ties are highlighted. The small communities, where everyone knows everyone and, accordingly, keeps an eye out for each other, give associations to a 'Big Brother' community (Haugen and Villa 2006), which during childhood was associated with secure and nurturing environments with freedom for children to roam. However, this perspective on the 'Big Brother' society seemed to change in youth and, for some young people, almost evaporated relative to changes in life situation, which not only affected the individuals' evaluations and perceptions of place, but also their identities, place attachments and migration intentions, as it led to a process of alienation, where the young people gradually outgrew the rural community due to the informal social control exercised here. Hence, when the youth were asked to consider the idea of remaining in the rural place of their childhood, a negative image of rurality associated with gossip, social control, lack of opportunities and 'losers' emerged in their narratives, motivating them to use the opportunities offered by rural-to-urban migration. This demonstrates that perceptions of the close social bonds are not static,

as they at one point facilitate a sense of security, only to encourage migration at a later point.

7.2. OUT-MIGRANTS

Findings revealed that place attachment was multifaceted and involved a high degree of continuity for out-migrants, as maintenance of old social networks served a bonding function for the young people in developing attachment to the city as well as in maintaining attachment to the place of origin. By creating their own communities in the city, keeping and cherishing social networks from back home, the out-migrants experienced a sense of insiderness (Relph 1976), an emotional integration and a feeling of belonging to and identifying with the city. Hereby, social relations based on childhood roots eased their transition to the urban environment and opened doors to the city and provided significant stability in their lives. The place of origin also acted as a social construction in identity building, as some of the out-migrants actively used their background to situate and position their identity in relation to their peers in the city. When they moved to the city the young people therefore not only brought and used their old circle of friends to maintain continuity and to bridge their new life situation with their old one, they also brought their rural values and identities, making them stand out as essentially different from people with an urban upbringing.

Gradually becoming ‘emplaced’ (Ryan and Mulholland 2014) in the city while maintaining strong bonds to the place of origin demonstrated how relating current urban experiences to an earlier rural life constituted an important element in the out-migrants’ identities and multiple place attachments. Memories of their childhood in the rural place along with everyday practices of seeing old friends in the city enabled the out-migrants to develop attachments to multiple places through processes of continuity. However, while the out-migrants had nostalgic memories of rural childhoods and described how growing up in the countryside was associated with security and a feeling of freedom in being able to roam freely without adult supervision, their migration in many ways also reinforced the perception of the rural as socially restrictive and boring. Living in the city and gaining broader perspectives on life intensified the out-migrants’ awareness of the close-knit rural community and the ‘rural mentality’, which seemingly did not allow room for diversity, anonymity and self-development. These negative associations are as much part of the out-migrants’ place attachment as their positive experiences of the rural place, revealing the multidimensionality of people’s place attachments (Chawla 1992; Manzo 2014). Due to experiences of stigma and prejudice from others, a potential return was experienced as a less prestigious, downwards social move, which ultimately affected the out-migrants’ visions of future migration in terms of either not wanting to return or having concerns about it. Rural-to-urban migration is hence not only a geographical journey, but just as much a social journey, where the young people are educated into

a new culture and social hierarchy from which it can be difficult to return. Urban places are hereby constructed as good places for young people; they serve a function of social status and allow young people to articulate ‘youthfulness’ (Farrugia 2016). The out-migrants’ relationships with the rural are thus characterised by feelings of ambivalence, where attachment co-exists with longing, and the ‘rural idyll’ and the ‘rural dull’ are not mutually exclusive, but address different, concurrent elements of rurality. Motivation for rural-to-urban migration among young people is hence a combination of the pull of the ‘bright lights, big city’ rationale facilitating self-development and the push to escape the social constraints and the boring, prying rural way of life.

7.3. RETURN MIGRANTS

Employment opportunities are often highlighted as a strong motivation in migration decisions, in particular when it comes to attracting highly educated individuals (Scott 2006; Storper and Scott 2009). This research, however, has questioned the assumption that jobs constitute a first-order influence in migration decisions, as it has demonstrated the complex nature underlying the processes at work in return migration. Analysing return migrants’ arguments for moving back to their place of origin has revealed that life course changes and social relations are determining factors in place attractiveness. Return migrants highlighted social networks and kinship ties as primary place attraction factors in decisions to return, as the rural place of origin, especially for return migrants in the child-rearing stages of life, was experienced as qualitatively better, safer and less stressful in contrast to the city. Here, rural life was described through a series of positively valued positions, which provided the framework for attachment to the rural area, and the significance of social networks, particularly parents and close friends, emerged as a strong priority and was an important factor in determining where the interviewees settled down. Small, rural places constituted good places to raise a family with close social networks and freedom for children to roam. Return migration can hence be argued to be part of a life course strategy, as the place of origin became significant due to the interpersonal social networks and sense of security available there, and while it did not mean that individuals necessarily had purely positive and idealised notions and memories of their rural place of origin, this narrative operated as an explanatory tool for legitimising the return migration.

Returning, however, was not uncomplicated. It involved a somewhat difficult process of adjustment, as the stereotypical image of rural Danish places as in decline as well as prejudices from peers and the interviewees’ personal experiences of rural life did not leave much room for leading a career-oriented life in the countryside, and reconciling their different identities as parents and well-educated professionals was hence difficult. Some found the close-knit communities restraining and longed for the

anonymity of the city, while others disliked the narrow-minded mentality of the local inhabitants. Feeling troubled by this, some described their return as temporary, while others chose to represent it as a 'nice quiet life fit for families with children' and made an effort to combine rural and urban living over the life course by maintaining an urban outlook through regular visits to the city and by demonstrating non-association with the local attitudes and mentality. The extent to which the return migrants expressed urban perspectives and kept justifying their return by referring to notions of the rural idyll revealed that maintaining an attachment and bridging rural and urban orientations across time and place constituted an important aspect of their identities and sense of multiple place attachments. To some extent this made their relationship with the rural place ambiguous, and it made them continuously reflect on and negotiate their rural settlement. Returning was hence a complex process of reconstructing the rural and switching between rural and urban modes and moods, and it demonstrated the fluidity of relationships and bonds, where dualities of attachment and aversion coexist within places, and identities are maintained and remembered across places.

7.4. CONTRIBUTIONS OF APPLYING A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION

Focussing on three separate, but highly related life stages has allowed me to gain a thorough understanding of the complexities and influences evident in processes of forming relationships with places across the life course, and it has contributed to existing research with insights into how individuals in their late teens, twenties and thirties build bridges between both rural and urban and past and present and in this process grow roots in different places through social relations, everyday activities, memories and favourable and less favourable experiences. Each life stage has revealed how individuals in the here and now construct and uphold relationships with places throughout life, and how a variety of rural-urban dynamics provide an intricate and rich perspective on migration. The life course perspective has enabled a better comprehension of the subtleties of rural-urban migration dynamics, as it has facilitated an understanding of the processes through which people shape and sustain relationships with places across time and place, and of how evaluations of places vary across the life course. While this thesis has demonstrated how people attribute meanings to and maintain an attachment to their place of origin through social connections, memories, rural identities and values, while simultaneously becoming part of a new setting, findings show that preferences for and evaluations of places are closely connected to different life stages, as place attractiveness and when one would want to live in a given place are contingent on priorities and changes in life situation. The attractiveness of places is hence related to the perceived qualities of different settings relative to changes in life situation over the life course, as what attracts or repels people varies between types of places and life stages, because limitations and

opportunities are perceived differently over the life course. Hence, rural and urban ways of living each belong to or are preferred at certain life phases, as neither rural nor urban lifestyles seem to satisfy the interviewees' needs throughout their life course, and migration in and out of the rural community can therefore be understood within 'the rural-urban complementarity' (Villa 2000) as life phase strategies rather than as definitive migration decisions.

My research relies on narratives of individuals who unfold their experiences and feelings related to their rural place of origin, their rural or urban everyday lives, and the experiences and practices that give places meaning. A central contribution of this work is that of duality and ambivalence, as the findings reveal strong ambiguities in people's relationships with rural places, which are described as both nurturing and isolating, safe and restricting. The interviewees' continuous weaving back and forth between idealising and criticising their rural place of origin points to a double-edged rurality from which paradoxical feelings emerge. These mixed feelings and ambivalent experiences, which are equally meaningful to place attachment, reflect the dynamic tensions, contradictions and diversities affecting the interviewees' relationships with places. Hereby, the thesis contributes to the less researched field of studies on place attachment that focus on the ways in which a range of both positive and negative feelings and experiences affect our relationships with places and are equally meaningful to place attachment.

The ambiguities also provide insights into the specific nature of place-related hierarchies and stigmatisation. Rural return was described as a step backwards and situated low in the place hierarchy, which established barriers for returning, as the interviewees worried about the perceived stigma and prejudice from others if they chose to move back. Attempting to counter this stigmatisation, return migrants constructed themselves as 'urban-oriented returnees' when rationalising their choice to return, bringing parts of the urban with them, for example keeping an urban outlook and broad perspective, and drawing on notions of the rural idyll and narratives of a 'peaceful family life in the countryside', which allowed them to link their return to desirable identities. Much the same was the case with out-migrants, who rationalised their out-migration through narratives of self-development, while bringing parts of the rural with them when moving to the city in the form of old friends and rural values and identities. An important contribution to the research field of migration is therefore that places serve as bridges between life situations and provide continuity over the life course, as migration trajectories and aspirations are interwoven with place, social relations and life course changes. Framing migration through particular narratives of urbanity and rurality is an important mechanism through which individuals frame and construct desirable identities relative to their life situation.

Another significant contribution of this research is that of place hierarchies. Traditionally, urban places mainly take a superior position in relation to rural places, as discourses present the rural through limitations and restrictions and the urban

through freedom and multiple opportunities. While such a place hierarchy was also present in this research, as the interviewees most often positioned urban places as superior to rural places by way of the opportunities for self-development and the diversity they found in the former, other place hierarchies also surfaced. As discussed, the rural is difficult to define both in terms of scale and meaning, and listening to the interviewees' stories it became evident that the 'rural' encompasses a wide range of different and contradicting understandings. Smaller rural communities were often perceived as more likable and attractive than larger rural communities, and many interviewees found it important to highlight that they came from a specific small village and not the main town in the municipality, pointing to internal rural place hierarchies. Similarly, most interviewees were reluctant to return to their place of origin, but expressed an aspiration for rural living in general, hereby indicating that place of origin is assigned a lower position in the place hierarchy than other rural places. Place hierarchies were thus not only found between rurality and urbanity, but also between different rural places and were not necessarily related to size or number of opportunities, but also to more emotional factors.

7.5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The political emphasis on ensuring a stable Denmark for instance through initiatives that spread public sector activities across the country and encourage higher educational institutions to provide educational offers outside the traditional university cities (cf. section 3.1) may add to what makes places attractive, as it can challenge the existing image of the rural. However, while it is possibly less spectacular and likely more strenuous, it is important to remember that the debate over out-migration and rural degeneration is not only about attracting newcomers; it is also about motivating return migration. Most of the interviewees expressed having had a happy and secure childhood along with a boring and prying youth in the rural place, which means that they have few positive associations with the rural in the final years before they leave, making them less likely to return. To change this, it is important to enhance the internal quality of life, so the young people who leave the place for educational purposes do so with a feeling of wanting to return. Creating a lively, open and empowering youth environment in rural places, where young people can explore and develop their interests and passions and which encourages youth involvement, might make the young people feel listened to and acknowledged. Keeping a connection with the young people after they have left might also be central in increasing their motivation to return, as out-migrants need to be continually reminded of the benefits and opportunities of rural living and the significance of caring social networks. This might be facilitated through internships and summer jobs for students in local companies, reunion parties held either in the local place or in the city, bus tours or young, local ambassadors at higher educational institutions promoting the

recreational, living and employment opportunities in the rural place. Initiatives that create a good youth environment in the rural place along with initiatives that maintain and nurture the young people's bonds with their place of origin might provide the young people with positive feelings and experiences of the rural place, which can have an inherent positive effect on their relationship with the place and make them feel like valued members of the rural community, both while living in the place and after they have left. Research examining the effects of initiatives engaging youth and out-migrants is called for, since the empirical data in this research, albeit insufficiently discussed in the thesis, suggest that such initiatives might ultimately act as drivers motivating return migration, as the young people, through involvement and engagement, feel a sense of obligation for the place's development. However, further research into this is required to substantiate this.

While acknowledging that provision of access to jobs is generally considered to be important for people in migration decisions, the participants in this research expressed a willingness to commute considerable distances to work, highlighting that the attractiveness of places is not primarily a result of employment-related factors, but a mixture of various needs and preferences. Many of the interviewees, for instance, chose to commute some distance to work to be able to live close to their children's grandparents in the rural place of origin, which proves the importance of adopting a wider geographical perspective when trying to understand the attractiveness of places in a migration context. Hence, social reasons are found to be primary motivators for why young people move back to their childhood place, and accordingly, migration decisions are not motivated primarily by financial elements for this group of migrants. For a place to be attractive to potential return migrants, it is thus not enough to be able to provide jobs, as employment opportunities in the local area are secondary to social relations when the participants make actual decisions about returning. Hence, I argue that for these individuals rurality and its connotations of a calm and secure life in close proximity to social relations are the most important elements in decisions to return, and instead of spending limited resources on being the trendiest or coolest place to live, rural settings therefore need to carefully address and recognise the migration motivations of potential return migrants. In the introduction, I hypothesised that since research has demonstrated that belonging to and history with a place can influence future settlement (Andersen 2017; Haartsen and Thissen 2014; Nedomysl and Amcoff 2011), focussing on getting out-migrants back might be more valuable for rural areas than focussing on reaching out to potential newcomers. As mentioned, findings reveal that returning, however, is not uncomplicated and while it is important to emphasise the bright sides of rurality in a marketing context by highlighting the good stories as well as tapping into specific arguments about the positive aspects of rurality such as personal relations, secure childhoods, community feeling, cheaper housing and how employment demands and cultural opportunities can be matched in a wider geographical context, it is important to also recognise potential return migrants' negative and ambivalent feelings towards the place. This is so because the elements which disappoint, confine and contradict might add important nuances to our

understanding of the plurality of people's relationships with the rural, and failing to recognise these, we run the risk of presenting an untrustworthy image of the rural that does not match the image potential return migrants have of the place. I suggest that involving return migrants in place branding efforts may inform outwardly oriented marketing campaigns and motivate policymakers and regional planners to think afresh about how to enhance the attractiveness of the area for this particular target group.

In the thesis, I have focused specifically on two somewhat in-between places that hold qualities of both rurality and urbanity and that are not truly peripheral regions, nor truly central regions (cf. section 1.2). Tuning into such in-between places has demonstrated that these regions struggle with similar challenges as the 'extreme geographical outskirts in Denmark' (Høst 2016) regarding youth out-migration, lack of economic growth and image problems. While there are variations, I did, however, not find significant gendered differences in the interviewees' narratives similar to those found in other studies on rurality (e.g. Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Dahlström 1996; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015; Hansen 2014; Stockdale 2002; Wiborg 2001, 2004). For instance, places did not seem to hold significantly different meanings for men and women, and neither did the closeness of small, rural communities seem to negatively affect women more often than it negatively affected men. In the research settings, there appeared to be relatively equal opportunities (or lack thereof) for men and women, and for all interviewees, regardless of gender, the mobility imperative was significant in their expected migration trajectories. Hence, the young women were not more likely than the young men to anticipate leaving their place of origin, as it is traditionally reported in rural migration studies (cf. Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006; Faber, Nielsen, and Bennike 2015). The lack of such gendered findings might be related to the places in focus, since the types of jobs, lifestyles and recreational offers here are not specifically male-oriented, or call for traditional male dominated professions within e.g. fishing, mining and forest industries. The youth neither expressed that there were narrow, traditional gender roles as such that limited their identities or employment opportunities; instead they felt limited especially by the informal social control exercised through gossip and small town tittle-tattle. While there is a considerable amount of studies that have examined how places in different ways are gendered, further research into such gendered differences in in-between places is called for to further substantiate the hypothesis I make about these places being less gendered than 'classic' rural places.

It would be wrong to assume that just because return migrants move back, they will also remain in the place for good, because, as pointed out earlier, return migration involves a degree of temporariness, in the sense that the return migrants had multiple place attachments and envisioned following their children to the city later in life, making them prone to leaving the rural place when their life situation changes. Hence, enhancing internal quality of life that will make return migrants want to remain in the area beyond the life stages of family formation is vital. From a practical perspective and based on the findings of this study, important elements pertaining to this include

providing jobs for spouses and facilitating career development programmes to support self-development. Increasing the ratio of knowledge workers in the place will ensure that migrants have like-minded peers to spar with and make it more attractive for them to remain in the area. Furthermore, ensuring good opportunities for keeping a sound work-life balance by optimising the infrastructure, making it easy for people to work through flexible working hours and telecommuting, and by involving inhabitants in local development issues in order to generate a feeling of excitement and responsibility about the place's future might also make it more attractive for these individuals to remain in the area. Since this research has focussed on the late stages of youth and early stages of adulthood, the thesis cannot make any conclusions about how to retain return migrants over time, and therefore further research into the retention of return migrants is called for to substantiate whether they will realise their ideas of moving to urban areas later in life or not. Longitudinal studies on the retention of return migrants could add to the findings of this research and help expand our knowledge of how motivation for rural or urban ways of living increases and fades over the life course. Hence, in future research it would be valuable to examine whether return migrants will engage in rural-to-urban migration when their children fly the nest, and what might shape, influence and possibly hinder such aspirations.

Most of the participants in this study have a preference for family life in a rural place, and their narratives also demonstrated strong pride in the place of origin. Yet, findings revealed that the interviewees were reluctant to return to their own rural place of origin, and so while the attraction of the rural idyll was a significant motivation for considering moving to a rural area in general, especially in the life stage of family formation, choosing the specific place of one's childhood was associated with a sense of stigmatisation. I find this continuous shifting between stigmatisation and shame of the place, on the one hand, and feeling highly patriotic and proud of the place, on the other hand, deeply interesting, as the ways in which people hold what appear to be paradoxical feelings about rural living are significant in both migration decisions and in how 'stayers' and 'leavers' are constructed. This study has focussed exclusively on individuals who are expected to or who have left their rural place of origin (and some returned), but focussing on individuals who have stayed in the local area would also be highly interesting, in terms of understanding how they perceive rurality and the potential stigmatisation by others they might experience. In mobility studies research has primarily focussed on moving rather than on staying, and the decision to stay is often treated as a non-decision (Clark, Duque-Calvache, and Palomares-Linares 2017). However, based on the strong mobility and education imperative affecting contemporary youth, young people must make the decision to stay just as consciously as they make the decision to leave, and I thus call for further research that takes place-related pride and shame into account when examining non-migration motivation as well as constructions of rurality among stayers. Further investigation on this issue will add important insights to the study of the relationship between people and places and provide practitioners with valuable knowledge about what makes some youth want to stay while others want to leave.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this thesis has contributed to our current understanding of the ways in which individuals grapple with processing and interpreting their relationships with places in the context of migration. It has provided academic analyses of people's relationships with places, suggested practical implications about how to proceed from here as well as pinpointed gaps where additional research is needed to understand the full range of feelings and experiences which factor into the relationships between people and places in the context of migration. The thesis has discussed how rural-urban dynamics affect the identities of individuals with a rural background, and how they construct and position themselves and others through various place hierarchies. It has also demonstrated that people hold multiple place attachments, and that these are made up of both positive and negative feelings and experiences. Finally, the study has pointed to how people evaluate the attractiveness of places through processes that both push them away and draw them in, contingent on priorities and changes in life situations. The relationships between people and places hence hold various connotations over and above geographical ones, and to finish where I started, people are not simply 'touched by place'; they are touched by multiple places in ways that are multifaceted and complex.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A. Overview of interviewees

The table below provides an overview of the interviewees, including their gender, age, number of children, civil status, childhood and current place of residence, occupation and the setting of the interview. With regard to place of residence, I distinguish between ‘city’, which refers to Aalborg, Aarhus or Copenhagen, ‘main town’, which refers to Hobro or Skive, respectively (the municipalities’ main towns), and ‘village’, which refers to smaller towns and villages in the rural municipalities. A circle (°) marks that the village is a different village than the one, the interviewee lived in as a child. A question mark (?) indicates that I do not know the age or civil status of the interviewee, while a star (*) indicates that the interviewee (or his wife) is expecting a child.

	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Children	Civil status	Childhood place	Current place	Occupation	Interview setting
Out-migrants	Claudia	F	26	0	Single	Main town	City	Student	University
	Johan	M	25	0	Single	Main town	City	Student	Dania
	Mikkel	M	22	0	Relationship	Village	City	Student	Home
	Marcus	M	24	0	?	Village	City	Student	University
	Morten	M	26	0	Relationship	Main town	City	Graduated	Work
	Nanna	F	23	0	Relationship	Main town	City	Student	Skype
	Jon	M	25	0	Single	Main town	City	Graduated	Skype
	Henry	M	25	0	?	Village	City	Student	University
	Lise	F	23	0	Relationship	Main town	City	Student	University
	Maria	F	24	0	Relationship	Village	City	Student	University
	Merle	F	23	0	Relationship	Main town	City	Student	University
	Robert	M	25	0	Relationship	Village	City	Student	University
	Sarah	F	25	0	?	Village	City	Student	University
Sofia	F	24	0	Single	Main town	City	Student	Library	
Return migrants	Kristine	F	40	0	Single	Village	Village	Entrepreneur	Cafe
	Kenneth	M	33	2	Married	Main town	Main town	Engineer	Home
	Brian	M	34	2	Married	Main town	Main town	Dentist	My place
	Malene	F	35	3	Married	Village	Main town	Psychologist	Home

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	Merete	F	30	2	Married	Main town	Main town	Lawyer	Home
	Tina	F	27	0	Single	Main town	Main town	Journalist	Cafe
	Anders	M	33	2	Married	Village	Village ^o	Product dev.	Dania
	Martin	M	33	2*	Married	Village	Main town	Civil engineer	Home
	Sasha	F	27	0	Married	Village	Village ^o	Entrepreneur	Home
	Annie	F	33	2	Married	Main town	Village	Unassigned	Workplace
	Charlotte	F	30	*	Married	Village	Main town	Unemployed	Dania
	Camilla	F	37	2	Married	Main town	Main town	HR consultant	Workplace
	Carsten	M	39	2	Married	Main town	Main town	Financial sector	Home
	Stefan	M	39	1	Married	Village	Main town	Agronomist	Home
	Stine	F	27	0	Single	Main town	Main town	Marketing	Home
	Jens	M	40	2	Married	Village	Village ^o	Engineer	Workplace
	Lars	M	40	2	Married	Main town	Main town	Engineer	Workplace
	Josefine	F	34	2	Married	Village	Village ^o	Vetererian	Home
	Tove	F	35	2	Married	Village	Main town	Regional leader	Home
Students	Stig	M	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Melina	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Anna	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Sabina	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Liv	F	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
	Christina	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Magne	M	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
	Nicklas	M	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
	Esther	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Victor	M	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Jonas	M	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Johanne	F	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
	Tobias	M	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
	Karl	M	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Benjamin	M	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Kasper	M	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
	Thomas	M	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Martin	M	20	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School	

TOUCHED BY PLACE

Mette	F	20	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Per	M	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Mads	M	?	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Anne-Sofie	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Emma	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Alberte	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Magnus	M	?	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Thea	F	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Oliver	M	?	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Frederikke	F	20	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Laura	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
William	M	20	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Ida	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Frida	F	18	0	?	Island	Island	Pupil	School
Malene	F	19	0	?	Island	Island	Pupil	School
Anna	F	19	0	Relationship	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Marie	F	19	0	Relationship	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Louise	F	18	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Christian	M	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Ditte	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Henriette	F	20	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Valdemar	M	?	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Anton	M	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Malthe	M	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Alexander	M	20	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Jane	F	19	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
August	M	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Lærke	F	18	0	?	Village	Village	Pupil	School
Tine	F	19	0	?	Island	Island	Pupil	School
Helena	F	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School
Thilde	F	19	0	?	Main town	Main town	Pupil	School

Appendix B. Interview guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE: STUDENTS

Overordnet spørgsmål	Supplerende spørgsmål
Baggrundsinformation	
I må gerne fortælle lidt om jer selv.	Alder, uddannelse, år. Bopæl og hvor længe har I boet der. Søskendeforhold (hvis ældre søskende - hvor bor disse og hvad laver de?)
Definition og opfattelse af stedet	
Hvordan definerer I jeres sted? Hvad er <i>jeres</i> sted for jer?	Hvor føler I jer hjemme, og hvad får jer til at føle jer hjemme? Hvad er det for et sted, I føler jer hjemme? Hvilke kvaliteter og faciliteter skal stedet have?
Hvad gør et sted til et godt sted?	
Kan I prøve at beskrive det lokalområde, hvor I bor?	Var det et godt sted at vokse op som barn/ung? Ville I have ønsket at noget havde været anderledes? Hvis I møder nogle som ikke kender til <u>egnen</u> , hvordan vil I så beskrive den?
Hvor længe har jeres familie boet her?	Mor, far, bedsteforældre, fætre og kusiner
Hvordan har stedet forandret sig over tid, mens I har boet her?	
Når I tænker på Skive/Mariagerfjord Kommune, hvad er så det første, der falder jer ind?	
Er I glade for at bo i kommunen? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?	Nævn to gode ting og to mindre gode ting (det kan være alt: bygninger, fritidsinteresser, skoler, personer, events)
Oplevelsen af ungdomslivet i kommunen/quality of place	
Når I får fri fra skole, hvad bruger I så tiden på? Og hvad med weekenderne?	Er der noget, som er særligt velegnet at lave eller gøre her i området?
Hvor dyrker I disse interesser?	Foreninger, privat, fællesskaber, geografisk lokalitet
Hvad betragter I som et godt ungdomsliv, og hvilke barrierer og muligheder oplever I i forhold til at realisere det?	
Hvordan er det at være ung her i kommunen?	Kan I se nogle muligheder for at gøre ungdomslivet bedre? Hvad er begrænsningerne?

Hvis I skal samles et sted, der ikke er hjemme, hvor er det så?	Hvor møder I venner/kærester? Hvor fester I?
Synes I, at I har noget tilfælles med andre her fra området?	
Fremtidstanker	
Hvad skal I lave efter ungdomsuddannelsen? Hvad er jeres drømmejob? Hvorfor? Hvor drømmer I om at bo? Hvorfor?	
Forventer I at blive boende her i kommunen, når I er færdige med ungdomsuddannelsen? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?	Tror I, at I kunne finde på at flytte tilbage til kommunen igen? Hvad skulle der til, for at I ville flytte tilbage?
Der er mange unge mennesker, som flytter væk fra kommunen, og ikke vender tilbage. Hvorfor tror I, det er sådan?	Hvad karakteriserer dem, som bliver boende? Dem som flytter væk?
Er der forskel på dem, der kommer fra Skive/Hobro, og dem der kommer fra oplandsbyerne? Dem fra STX/HTX/HHX?	Kan du komme med nogle eksempler? Har det altid været sådan? Synes du, at der skal gøres noget ved denne "os-og-dem distinktion"? Hvad kunne det være? Hvad kunne samle kommunen mere?
Tilknytning til kommunen	
Synes du, at du har noget tilfælles med andre fra Skive/Mariagerfjord-egnen? Nogle særkender?	
Føler du dig hjemme her?	Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? Hvad ligger der bag? Hvor er dette 'hjemme' - matriklen, byen, kommunen? Naturen, isbøden, skolen?
Hvad betragter I som 'et godt lokalområde', og hvilke barrierer og muligheder oplever I i forhold til at realisere dette her?	
Kan I nævne to ting, som får jer til at føle jer hjemme, samt to ting som får jer til at føle, at I ikke hører til.	
Hvis det i en samtale kommer frem, at I stammer fra Skive/Mariagerfjord kommune, hvordan beskriver I så jeres hjemstavn?	Er der nogle personer eller generelle ting, der har tilknytning til kommunen, som I er stolte af?
Hvis nogen roser eller kritiserer jeres sted (kommune/by) i en samtale eller medierne, hvordan reagerer I så?	Med stolthed, forståelse, afmagt, frustration, synes de lyver, forsvarer stedet eller lignende
Skive har fået 2. pladsen som Danmarks bedste ungdomskommune, hvad tænker I om det?	Ungdomskommuneprisen har til formål at belønne kommuner, der gør en særlig indsats for at forbedre unges deltagelse, udfoldelsesmuligheder og levevilkår
Jeg har taget lidt forskellige billeder med, som har en relation til kommunen. Kan I prøve at knytte et par ord til de her billeder, og fortælle om, hvordan jeres forhold er til det, I ser på billedet?	Er der nogle andre billeder I ville have trukket frem, som i forbinder med kommunen?

Det sidste billede jeg viste, var sloganet for kommunens brand. Den brandingindsats Mariagerfjord/Skive har kørt med "Noget for livet"/"Rent liv" har det påvirket jer på nogen måde?	Har I følt jer inddraget? Føler I, at det har gjort en forskel ift. sammenhængskraften i kommunen?
Er I på noget tidspunkt blevet inddraget i, hvordan kommunen skal udvikle sig fremadrettet? Eller blevet spurgt til om der er noget, at I som unge mennesker, synes kunne gøres bedre? Det kan både være på eget initiativ, eller at I decideret blevet spurgt om, hvad jeres mening er omkring kommunen?	Hvis ja, hvordan foregik det, og følte I, at I blev hørt af politikerne/de kommunale instanser? Hvad skete der efterfølgende? Hvis ja, hvordan oplevede I så dette? Var det positivt? Følte I jer værdsat og hørt? Hvis nej, var det noget I godt kunne tænke jer, og hvad ville I kunne bidrage med?
Fremtidspotentialer	
Hvis stedet skal kunne fastholde en relation til jer unge efter ungdomsuddannelsen, hvordan skal det så gøres? Hvilke midler eller metoder skal i brug? (Sociale medier, TV/Youtube, arrangementer)	

INTERVIEW GUIDE: OUT-MIGRANTS

Overordnet spørgsmål	Supplerende spørgsmål
Baggrundsinformation	
Vil du fortælle lidt om dig selv?	Alder Civilstatus (gift, børn) Uddannelse, hvor langt i studiet Nuværende bopæl samt hvor er du flyttet fra Søskendeforhold og forældre (hvor bor disse, hvad laver de)
Definition af stedet	
Hvordan definerer du dit sted? Hvad er <i>dit</i> sted for dig?	Hvad er det for et sted, du føler dig hjemme? Hvilke kvaliteter og faciliteter skal stedet have?
Kan du prøve at beskrive det lokalområde, hvor du voksede op?	Var det et godt sted at vokse op som barn/ung? Ville du have ønsket at noget havde været anderledes? Hvis du møder nogle som ikke kender til egnen, hvordan vil du så beskrive den?

Hvor længe har din familie boet her?	Mor, far, bedsteforældre, fætre og kusiner
Hvordan har stedet forandret sig over tid, mens du har boet her, og efter du er flyttet væk?	
Generel opfattelse af stedet/Quality of life	
Når du tænker på Skive/Mariagerfjord Kommune, hvad er så det første, der falder dig ind?	
Var du glad for at bo i kommunen? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?	Nævn to gode ting og to mindre gode ting
Hvordan var det at være ung i kommunen?	Skive har fået 2. pladsen i konkurrencen om Danmarks bedste ungdomsby - hvad tænker du om det? Kan du fortælle lidt om, hvad du lavede her i kommunen som ung? Kan du se nogle muligheder for at gøre ungdomslivet bedre? Begrænsninger?
Tror du, at dét, at du er vokset op i en mindre by, har påvirket dig på en bestemt måde? Hvordan?	
Er der forskel på dem, der kommer fra Skive/Hobro, og dem der kommer fra oplandsbyerne?	Kan du komme med nogle eksempler? Har det altid været sådan? Synes du, at der skal gøres noget ved denne "os-og-dem distinktion"? Hvad kunne det være? Hvad kunne samle kommunen mere?
Synes du, at du har noget tilfælles med andre fra Skive/Mariagerfjord-egnen? Nogle særkender?	
Føler du dig hjemme her?	Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? Hvad ligger der bag? Hvor er dette 'hjemme' - matriklen, byen, kommunen? Naturen, isboden, skolen?
Hvad betragter du som 'et godt lokalområde', og hvilke barrierer og muligheder oplever du i forhold til at realisere dette her?	
Tilknytning til kommunen	
Har du gjort dig tanker om at flytte tilbage til kommunen, når du har afsluttet din uddannelse?	Hvad skulle der til for, at du ville flytte tilbage - for at det var attraktivt at bo der? Kan du forestille dig, at du på et senere tidspunkt i livet, kunne finde på at flytte tilbage?
Der er mange unge mennesker, som flytter væk fra kommunen og ikke vender tilbage senere hen. Hvorfor tror du, det er sådan?	Hvad kan der gøres ved det? Kommune, sportsforeninger, mm.
Hvis det i en samtale kommer frem, at du stammer fra Skive/Mariagerfjord kommune, hvordan beskriver du så din hjemstavn?	Er der nogle personer eller generelle ting, der har tilknytning til kommunen, som du er stolt af? Og hvorfor?
Hvis nogen roser eller kritiserer dit sted (kommune/by) i en samtale eller medierne, hvordan reagere du og hvad føler du så?	Stolthed, forståelse, afmagt, frustration, synes de lyver, forsvare stedet eller lignende

Jeg har bedt dig om at tage nogle billeder med, som du forbinder med din opvækst i kommunen, og som har en særlig betydning for dig personligt. Kan du beskrive billederne og fortælle, hvorfor de har en særlig betydning for dig?	
Jeg har taget lidt forskellige billeder med, som har en relation til kommunen. Kan du prøve at knytte et par ord til de her billeder, og fortælle om dit forhold til det, du ser på billedet?	
Det sidste billede, jeg viste, var sloganet for kommunens brand. Har den brandingindsats Mariagerfjord/Skive har kørt med "noget for livet"/"Rent liv" påvirket dig på nogen måde?	Føler du, at det har gjort en forskel ift. sammenhængskraften i kommunen?
Har du stadig mange venner, der bor i kommunen?	Hvad karakteriserer dem, som er blevet boende? Dem som er flyttet?
Talent attraction	
Er du på nogen måde blevet inddraget i, hvordan kommunen skal udvikle sig fremadrettet? Eller om der er noget, du synes kunne gøres bedre? Det kan både være på eget initiativ, eller at du decideret er blevet spurgt om din mening omkring kommunen?	Hvis ja, hvordan foregik det, og følte du, at du blev hørt af politikerne/de kommunale instanser? Hvad skete der efterfølgende? Hvis nej, var det noget, du godt kunne tænke dig, og hvad ville du kunne bidrage med?
Føler du stadig, at du har en tilknytning til kommunen/dit lokalområde? Har kommunen på nogen måde været "synlig" for dig? F.eks. Gennem Alumne, sportsforening, feriejob, familie, venner. Gør kommunen eller andre noget aktivt for at fastholde en kontakt til dig?	Eksilaftener Lolland-Falster. Synes du, at det ville være en god ide, hvis Skive/Mariagerfjord Kommune holdte sådanne arrangementer? Andre tiltag der kunne have medvirket til at fastholde en tilknytning til dig?
Hvis stedet skal kunne fastholde en relation til jer unge, mens I er ude for at studere, hvordan skal det så gøres? Hvilke midler eller metoder skal i brug? (Sociale medier, TV/Youtube, arrangementer, andet)	
Har du hørt noget om det nye KiS-hus virksomheder i Skive har bygget til nye medarbejdere og studerende/praktikanter?	Hvad synes du om det? Kunne det få dig til at søge en praktikplads i Skive?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: RETURN MIGRANTS

Overordnet spørgsmål	Supplerende spørgsmål
Baggrundsinformation	

Vil du fortælle lidt om dig selv?	Alder Civilstatus (gift, børn) Uddannelse og job (OBS på hvor jobbet er - flere stedsrelationer) Bopæl (nuværende, studerende, barn-/ungdom) Søskendeforhold og forældre (hvor bor disse og hvor længe har de boet her)
Hvad fik dig til at flytte tilbage til kommunen? Hvordan blev du taget imod i kommunen som tilbagevender? Var alt ved det gamle? Hvad blev du mest overrasket over ved at vende tilbage?	Har du hele tiden haft planer om at vende tilbage til kommunen? Hvordan blev beslutningen taget imod i din omgangskreds (barndomsvenner, studievenner, familie) Er du glad for, at du valgte at flytte tilbage? Hvis ja, har du været det hele tiden? Er der noget du har fortrudt eller gerne ville have gjort anderledes i forbindelse med tilbageflytningen?
Definition af stedet	
Hvordan definerer du dit sted? Hvad er <i>dit</i> sted for dig?	Hvor føler du dig hjemme, og hvad får dig til at føle dig hjemme? Hvilke kvaliteter og faciliteter skal stedet have? Hvorfor?
Kan du prøve at beskrive det lokalområde, hvor du voksede op?	Var det et godt sted at vokse op som barn/ung? Ville du have ønsket at noget havde været anderledes? Hvis du møder nogle som ikke kender til egnen, hvordan vil du så beskrive den?
Når du tænker på Skive/Mariagerfjord Kommune som et sted, hvad er så det første, der falder dig ind?	
Er du glad for at bo her (sted)? Hvorfor?	Hvad er særligt godt, og hvad kunne forbedres? Forestiller du dig, at du bliver boende her? Hvad taler for/imod?
Kan du nævne to gode ting og to mindre gode ting ved dit sted?	
Hvis nogen roser eller kritiserer dit sted (kommune/by) i en samtale eller medierne, hvordan reagerer du så?	Med stolthed, forståelse, afmagt, frustration, synes de lyver, forsvare stedet eller lignende
Er kommunen et godt sted at bo med børn?	Kan du give nogle eksempler (godt/skidt)?
Hvordan har kommunen forandret sig over tid?	
Er der forskel på dem, der kommer fra Skive/Hobro, og dem der kommer fra oplandsbyerne?	Kan du komme med nogle eksempler?
Generel opfattelse af kommunen/Quality of place	

I din fritid, hvad bruger du/I som familie så tiden på?	Hvor dyrker du/I disse interesser? (foreninger, privat, fællesskaber, geografisk lokalitet) Er der noget, som er særligt velegnet at lave eller gøre her i området? Formår kommunen og foreninger at udnytte de kvaliteter, kommunen har at byde på?
Synes du at du har noget tilfælles med andre her fra området?	
Tror du, at det, at du er vokset op i en mindre by, har påvirket dig på en bestemt måde?	
Hvad betragter du som 'et godt lokalområde', og hvilke barrierer og muligheder oplever du/I som familie i forhold til at realisere dette i jeres lokalområde?	
Føler du dig hjemme her?	Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke? Hvad ligger der bag? Hvor er dette hjemme - matriklen, byen, kommunen?
Tilknytning til kommunen	
Mens du studerede, bevarede du da en tilknytning til kommunen? Hvordan?	Var kommunen på nogen måde "synlig" i din studietid? Kunne kommunen eller andre have gjort mere for at fastholde en kontakt til dig?
Hvis det i en samtale kommer frem, at du bor i Skive/Mariagerfjord kommune, hvordan beskriver du så kommunen?	Er der nogle personer eller ting, du især fremhæver eller lægger vægt på?
Jeg har taget lidt forskellige billeder med, som har en relation til kommunen. Kan du prøve at knytte et par ord til de her billeder, og fortælle om dit forhold til det, du ser på billedet?	
Er der nogle andre billeder, du ville have trukket frem, som du forbinder med kommunen?	
Det sidste billede jeg viste, var sloganet for kommunens brand. Den brandingindsats Mariagerfjord/Skive har kørt med "noget for livet"/"Rent liv" har det påvirket dig på nogen måde?	Har du følt dig inddraget? Føler du, at det har gjort en forskel ift. sammenhængskraften i kommunen?
Har du på noget tidspunkt oplevet at have medindflydelse på, hvordan kommunen skal udvikle sig fremadrettet? Eller om der er noget, at du synes kunne gøres bedre? Det kan både være på eget initiativ, eller at du decideret er blevet spurgt, om hvad din mening er omkring kommunen.	<u>Hvis ja</u> , hvordan foregik det, og følte du, at du blev hørt af politikerne/de kommunale instanser? Hvad skete der efterfølgende? <u>Hvis nej</u> , var det noget du godt kunne tænke dig, og hvad føler du, at du kunne bidrage med?
Tilbageflytning	

Er der mange fra din vennekreds, tilbage fra gymnasietiden, som fortsat bor i kommunen?	Hvad karakteriserer dem som fortsat bor her, og dem som er flyttet væk? (uddannelse, job, familieliv)
Der er mange unge mennesker, som flytter væk fra kommunen og ikke vender tilbage senere hen. Hvorfor tror du, det er sådan?	Hvad kan der gøres ved det? Kommune, sportsforeninger, mm. Hvad tror du, der skal til for at vende denne udvikling?
Hvad synes du, Skive kommune kan gøre for at tiltrække dels flere tilbageflyttere som dig selv og dels helt nye tilflyttere?	Hvad kan kommunen gøre, for at blive mere attraktiv over for højtuddannede?

Appendix C. Declarations of co-authorships



Declaration of co-authorship

Full name of PhD student: Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen

This declaration concerns the following article/manuscript:

Title: 'Like a pair of worn-out slippers': place attraction factors among return migrants to peripheral places

Authors: Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen and Anette Therkelsen

The article/manuscript is: Published Accepted Submitted In preparation

Place of publication (if published, give full reference): Handbook on Place Marketing and Branding. Adriana Campelo. Edward Elgar Publishing, Incorporated, 2017. s. 56-69.

The PhD student has contributed to the elements of the article/manuscript as follows:

- 1) No or little contribution
- 2) Has contributed (10-30%)
- 3) Has contributed considerably (40-60%)
- 4) Has done most of the work (70-90%)
- 5) Has essentially done all the work

Short description of all authors' contribution to the article:

The PhD student has prepared data collection, and collected the empirical data, while brainstorming over presentation, interpretation and discussion of the data has been a joint process. The PhD student has provided the first drafts to theoretical contributions and analysis, and this text has been worked through and supplemented by the other author.

Date and Signatures

PhD student

Helle D. Pedersen 6/2-2018

Co-author(s)

Anette Therkelsen

Declaration of co-authorship

Full name of PhD student: Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen

This declaration concerns the following article/manuscript:

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Authors: Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen and Malene Gram

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Place of publication (if published, give full reference): Journal of Youth Studies

The PhD student has contributed to the elements of the article/manuscript as follows:

- 1) No or little contribution
- 2) Has contributed (10-30%)
- 3) Has contributed considerably (40-60%)
- 4) Has done most of the work (70-90%)
- 5) Has essentially done all the work

Short description of all authors' contribution to the article:

The PhD student has prepared data collection, collected the data and produced drafts throughout the process of writing the paper. Brainstorming over data, theory and analysis has been a joint process; the text has been worked through and supplemented by the other author.

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Malene Gram

Co-author(s)

14th of November 2017

Malene Gram

SUMMARY

Increased urban centralisation within public services, education and workplaces has altered the living conditions in areas outside the large cities, which has led to increased youth out-migration from these areas. From a life course perspective, this thesis investigates the subtleties of rural migration dynamics in late adolescence to early adulthood by paying attention to the processes through which youth and young adults shape and sustain relationships with places, and by scrutinising how evaluations of places vary across the life course. Through qualitative analysis and by applying literature on identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness to the study of how individuals process and interpret rural-urban dynamics and construct and position themselves and others through place hierarchies, the thesis provides insights that can help us to understand the full range of feelings and experiences which factor into the relationship between people and places in the context of migration.

Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen is part of the Department of Culture and Global Studies at Aalborg University. 'Touched by Place: Identity construction, place attachment and place attractiveness from a life course perspective in the context of migration' is her PhD thesis.

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