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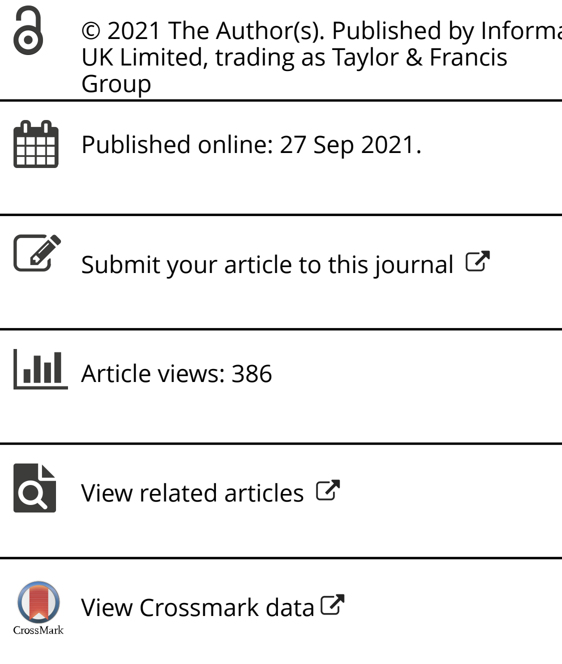

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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"If we want to have a good future, we need to do something about it". Youth, security and imagined horizons in the intercultural Arctic Norway

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ABSTRACT

Security is an issue often raised when discussing the Arctic, a region where international relations and tensions between the great powers of the past and present often are taken-for-granted as the traditional scope of dialog. We have chosen to focus on youth in Arctic Norway, their perceived notion of security in their everyday lives, and how this influences their perceived possibilities for the future. We combine human security and ontological security perspectives with the concept of imagined horizons to grasp the discrepancy that we find between how the Arctic is defined from an international relations perspective, and the Arctic that youth in northern Norway understand in their everyday lives. We base the analysis on qualitative interviews with youth of various ethnic backgrounds in the Arctic town Alta in Norway, where we have interviewed them about security, cultural differences, climate change and environmental issues in the Arctic.

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Arctic Norway; imagined horizons; security; human security; youth; intercultural

Introduction

Here we explore how youth in the Arctic imagine their future, and how this is influenced by their experiences of security in their everyday lives. We understand security in a broader sense, as security threats in people's everyday life (Mitzen 2006; Hossain 2013, 2016; Terminski 2013). We base this article on a qualitative study of youth in Alta, a town in Troms and Finnmark County in northern Norway, where we have done qualitative interviews with youth between 16 and 25. In the study, we have explored how the youth understand security and sustainable development, and how they link this to their own everyday life experiences.[1] In this perspective, security is also linked to human and ontological security, where having a stable social and cognitive environment is important for the overall experience of security in peoples' everyday life. While young people's experiences of opportunities have often been left out of research on the Arctic, youth research has also been criticized for an unacknowledged "metrocentricity", marginalizing the voices of young people in the Arctic (Paulgaard 2017).

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We have chosen to combine this perspective on human security and ontological security with the concept *imagined horizons* (Crapanzano 2004), to analyze how young people in the Arctic understand their perceived future possibilities. The way we imagine our futures is also affected by how we experience our lives today, our history, and how we interpret these experiences. The future of young people is often presented in a negative light, where their chances of achieving the same living conditions as those of their parents and grandparents are relatively low. Since the economic crisis in 2008, young people in many European countries have been referred to as "the lost generation" (Davies 2012; Franceschelli and Keating 2018; Holleran 2019). The universal welfare regime in Norway and the relatively low impact of the financial crisis in 2008 (Belmonte-Martín and Tufte 2017) might explain why the experience of risk and prosperity is different among our participants in northern Norway compared to those from other countries. However, there has been an identified increase in social inequality in Norway in the last decades (Povlsen et al. 2018).

The imaginaries of the Arctic have often been influenced by outsiders and their almost mythical image of life in the north, *terra nullius* with snow, ice, and winter storms, mixed up with the taken-for-granted colonialist notions of resource access, with little or no acknowledgement of the people living in the Arctic. As many researchers have pointed out (Möller and Pehkonen 2003; Steinberg, Tasch, and Gerhardt 2015; Jensen and Huggan 2016; Lehtinen 2019), these imaginaries of the Arctic still influence how the region is seen from the outside, in contrast to the lives of the ordinary people who live there – like the youth that we have interviewed in this project. For them, the Arctic is not a mythical landscape, but the place in which they live, have their friends and family, take their education, and work for a living. It is the place where they can fish, hunt, harvest, hike or drive snowmobiles, or just make a bonfire and spend time with friends.

The Arctic is a contested area that can be related to resource conflicts, cultural disputes, geopolitics, historic colonization and to the images of the Arctic. In the last few years, we have seen an increasing tension in the Arctic, especially related to the relationship between the USA, China, and Russia. It has also been suggested that there is a "new" cold war emerging, which is of great concern for politicians and researchers alike (Wilhelmsen and Gjerde 2018). The Norwegian Arctic is particularly exposed to these international tensions. The Arctic is still the home of rich cultures and people who continue their efforts to reclaim control over their homeland (Coates and Holroyd 2019). This includes indigenous peoples gradually reasserting their presence across the circumpolar area (Coates and Broderstad 2019), where there has been a gradual shift from colonization to collaborative northern governance. This shift towards a more collaborative northern governance has also led to a transformation of the Arctic from being either a northern "frontier" or "homeland", to a fusion of the two (Zellen 2019).

Both historically and to this day, people in the Arctic have experiences of being left out of decision-making processes that have impacted their lives. In northern Norway, this has led to a traditional refrain about the *søringan* – the people in the south – lamenting everything from the government to the posh, big city people in cities such as Oslo and Bergen. This can be connected to the discursive construction of northern Norway as backwards and peripheral in contrast to the presumably morally and socially superior people in the national centres, with the representations of certain people as "unproductive" and

"drawing on resources". The situation is connected to economic restructuring, the decline of work possibilities in traditional industries in the north, such as fisheries, farming and reindeer herding, population decline and the reduction of services in the region (Paulgaard 2012; Eriksson, Nielsen, and Paulgaard 2015).

The town in which our interviews were conducted, as with many communities in the north, is also characterized by its history as a meeting place between different people. This contrasts with the common impression that Norway has until recently been a relatively culturally homogenous country (Frønes and Kjølsrud 2019). The town lies in an area traditionally inhabited by the Sámi people[2] – the indigenous peoples of the northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula and much of the Kola Peninsula in Russia – but the area has been a multicultural region for a long time. Contemporary inhabitants represent Norwegian, Finnish/Kven[3] and Russian descent, in addition to later-arrived immigrants from both European and non-European countries. Sámi (Eidheim 1971; Olsen 2007) and Kven ethnicities (Eriksen and Niemi 1981; Lane 2010) have been stigmatized for generations, and the colonial idea of "one nation – one language" was a key element in the assimilation process – also known as the Norwegianization policy – for minorities in the north (Minde 2003). The forced assimilation policy began with the establishment of *Finnefondet* (the Lapp fund) in 1851, but has gradually weakened since the 1960s, although it can still be said to influence people's everyday life even today. The majority Norwegian culture, even after decades of fighting for indigenous Sámi and Kven rights, is the dominant culture for interaction in the public sphere (Olsen 2007). This means that while several of our participants have mixed ethnic background, their everyday life is characterized by norms of interaction dominated by mainstream Norwegian culture and language, even though it is quite common to focus on the intercultural influence of people and their everyday life in the region.

Theoretical perspectives

Crapanzano (2004) uses the concept *imaginative horizons* to analyze the creative process and imaginations about the future. According to him, imaginative horizons are the blurry boundaries between us in the here and now, and what lies ahead of us in the future, both in time and space. Imagination always occurs in a specific time and place. Imagination is often assumed to be an individual, inner process, however, it can also be said to be a semiotic process, enabled by the culture that we live in (Zittoun and Gillespie 2016, 56). We use this concept to analyze how our young participants think about their possibilities for the future, and how this is linked to their understanding of security in their everyday life. Research on Arctic international relations and security has often focused on Russia, and the potential for a new cold war. Imagined horizons can, in this context, also be a way to analyze the new threats "from the east" that include worries about security concerns on an international level as well. However, we also noted at the start of this project a possibility that youth in northern Norway potentially had a different perspective on Russia compared to their counterparts in the south, as their experiences interacting with Russian neighbours, friends, and even family members may alter how they perceive these potential threats.

This different perspective also stems from the fact that the north since time immemorial has been a multicultural society, where people of different ethnic background have

interacted daily. While the ethnic background of study participants varies, we base our theoretical understanding of ethnicity and culture on the idea that individuals may exist on an intercultural continuum, rather than as representatives of different, distinct ethnic groups. Like Britt Kramvig (2005), we understand this northern community as a complex intercultural place, where human security and sustainable development must be understood in relation to the cultural complexity of these young people's everyday life. This means that the imaginative horizons articulated by the young participants are also influenced by these experiences, where they refer to society as multicultural and their own lives as influenced by many different cultures.

Security can be broadly defined as "pursuit of freedom from threats" (Buzan 1991, 18). While security can mean different things in different contexts, it has long been defined in a narrow way, such as connected to security of the state through military security means or global security, where terrorism, nuclear war or pandemics were in focus. Here, however, we focus on what is often referred to as human security, a concept emphasizing the concerns of ordinary people in their everyday lives (Mitzen 2006), including well-being, social relations, or even regarding climate change (Watkins 2007). Human security may include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security aspects (United Nations Development Programme 1994). It is therefore a relevant concept to apply when focusing on human well-being from an individual level, taking a bottom-up approach, in contrast to a more top-down state-centred and conventional international security perspective (Hossain 2013).

It is also relevant in this context to discuss what is often referred to as ontological security, i.e. the need to experience oneself as a whole person and feel secure in who oneself is in terms of identities and stable relationships with other people. This is linked to security in that it is important for actors to have a stable social and cognitive environment, where they have an idea of what to expect in their daily life. Daily routines, a stable cognitive environment and stable relations with other people are ways of managing the lurking chaos that may be a threat to individuals if basic trust, attachment, and recognition of others are not present (Giddens 1991, 44–47; Mitzen 2006). For indigenous people and minority groups in the Arctic, an example of this is how the states have, directly or indirectly, sought to erase people's languages and identities through forced assimilation policies and disregarded central characteristics of these groups. Also, present-day threats to the very existence of these groups, such as conflicts over land and water, may be linked to a kind of ontological insecurity in the present in addition to the more state-centred and conventional international security perspective (Hossain 2013, 2016). However, it can also be said that states engage in ontological security, since the need for individuals to feel secure in who they are and how they relate to others is important to create a stable society (Mitzen 2006).

We base our understanding of cultures in the north on an intercultural perspective inspired by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), where we see the different cultures as a continuum, in an everyday life characterized by hybridity. Rather than describing Sámi and Kven cultures as "incomplete" and "damaged", and Norwegian culture as "pure" and "authentic", we understand all cultures as emergent from contact between people and hybridity. This is a way of destabilizing the taken-for-granted privileged position of the Norwegian culture (Dankertsen 2016). For us, this is a way of broadening the understanding of

project participants' everyday lives, rather than placing them in absolute categories with clear-cut boundaries. As Britt Kramvig states:

> These processes have created a complex ethnic situation where distinct homogenous ethnic origins in many of the northern communities are hard to come by. On the contrary, in some of these border zones of Sápmi, the land of the Saami, ethnicity as a pure and homogenous category, as implemented by political institutions, has not become part of the local discourse of identity or ethnicity. (Kramvig 2005, 46)

This perspective on ethnic relations in people's everyday life is useful for our study, as the town where interviews took place has many similarities with the complex ethnic situations of the communities where Kramvig (2005) did her work. However, it is still the Norwegian culture that dominates public interaction. As Kjell Olsen points out from a study in the same region: "Local social interaction is regarded as a pragmatic matter where everyone has mastered the local culture that is defined as Norwegian" (Olsen 2007, 75–76). This is something that we find relevant to our study as well.

While being Sámi or Kven is not stigmatized in the same way that it used to be, there is still a social expectation in everyday life that people uphold what Gullestad (2002, 47) calls the establishment of *imagined sameness*. In this region, this is paradoxically often combined with what Kramvig describes as "local, collective self-perception that transcends ethnic boundaries" (Kramvig 2005, 45). We can therefore say that this region is characterized by a complex ethnic situation where many people have an ethnically mixed background, while everyday life is still strongly influenced by the cultural norm of downplaying differences in social interaction.

Methods

This article is based on qualitative material from the project *Is a Secure Future Possible?*, which is part of a broader study: *Sustainable Transboundary Challenges and Local Adjustment*.[4] Our part of the project focuses on youth perspectives on security, sustainability, and climate change in Alta, Norway, which were collected February 10–14, 2020. Because of the complexity of the themes that we were interested in, we utilized qualitative methods which gave us an in-depth understanding and detailed answers regarding the participants' meanings. We are inspired by a previous study by Holm and Elisabeth (2018) on youth and their perspective on security. Qualitative approaches contribute to more in-depth and detailed information from the participants, and ensure that their understandings and interpretations have more place in the analysis (Rubin and Rubin 2011; Silverman 2013). Interviewing is an interpretive process and it is essential to take into consideration that empirical data collected through interviews is produced and mediated by the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015).

Our research adopted a definition of youth and young adults used by the Ministry of Children and Equality in Norway that reflects the economic and social role of individuals and views young people as in an age of transition from adolescence to adulthood. In this period of life, students move from high school to universities or the labour market. Thus youth in a Norwegian context are young people between 12 and 29 years (Wolf et al.

2005). This phase of life plays an important role because it shapes a person's decisions concerning their future life and how they relate to different security-related issues, for example, income and job security (Walther 2006). With these considerations in mind, the youth who volunteered for interviews ranged from 16 to 24 years of age. Out of the 18 interviewees there were 6 males and 12 females participating.

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews in small groups or individually. Some participants were high school attendees or students studying at the university in Alta. Others had graduated from high school and had entered working life. University participants were recruited through invitations at the university campus or at local restaurants and local "hang-outs". High school participants were recruited through political and social organizations or in cafes and popular youth "hang-outs". Participants in this study were, in general, ordinary youth in Alta that found this study interesting and were willing to answer our questions.

Our method of recruitment was relatively randomized in that we interviewed youth that differed in age, gender, and ethnicity. High school and university students are overly represented, but at the same time they represent a general population of youth in Norway because most young people in Norway take higher education. The interview process consisted of sections of semi-structured questions based on a semi-structured interview guide. This enabled us to engage with the participants more deeply regarding their understanding of questions related to the themes we were interested in. At the same time, we gave them time to reflect on their own definitions and values.

All our interviews were recorded on audio files, transcribed by us, and anonymized. The audio files were deleted immediately after transcription. Participants were assigned names to provide anonymity. We have followed the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) guidelines and registered with NSD. All interviews were conducted by one or two of the authors, either individually or in small groups. There is of course a general concern regarding potential influences on the interview process when a young person and researcher meet. It could potentially be uncomfortable or unbalancing given the impact of differences in age, education, or gender which may influence the interviewer/interviewee relationship and therefore the results of the study (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2015). Therefore, we used the first stage of the interview process to "acclimatize" the interviewee to the settings and procedures. We explained the motivation and value of researching youth perspectives and encouraged them to ask questions or bring up any other concerns they might be having at the time.

The advantage of individual interviews is that the participants can elaborate and communicate their own understanding and that the participants have the researcher to themselves. They can freely ask questions if there is something they do not fully understand, and they do not have to worry about someone overhearing their responses (Dalen 2004).

In our group interviews, we interviewed between two and four people. An advantage of group interviews is that the participants can play on each other's answers (Malterud 2011). We discovered that in the group interviews the participants were inspired by each other and talked more freely.

Security in everyday life

In our interviews with youth in the Arctic, we see that most of them claim that they feel lucky to live in a safe and peaceful part of the world, and that living in the Arctic, far away

from high-level politics, can be an advantage. Two other young high school students – Chris and Simon – talked about Alta in this way:

Interviewer:	What about Alta as a place in northern Norway, how do you think about that? Is it a good place to live?
Chris (16):	Yes, it is a good place to live, not a lot of people and things like that, a quiet place.

In this interview, we see how Chris describes living in a town in the Arctic as a good life because it is small and quiet. Here we see how Chris understands security in relation to what we analyze as ontological security, where the social stability of his quiet everyday life makes him feel safe. While Chris says that he thinks about moving to a bigger city when he gets older, at least for a short while, the good life for him is the life he lives in Alta. The contrast between the mythical image of the Arctic, and the safe and quiet small-town life that Chris describes from his everyday life, is important to reflect upon. Especially since this mythical image of the Arctic often, consciously or unconsciously, influences decision-makers, often located in the south. Another aspect of the good life for Chris and his friend Simon is access to nature and the outdoors. They are both active in sports and outdoor activities, and there are many opportunities for these types of activities in the Alta region:

Interviewer:	But is it important for you to be out in nature, drive a snowmobile or use …
Chris (16):	Driving snowmobiles is important, I think.
Simon (16):	One gets inner peace in a way when one is out in nature, in the cabin and things like that.

Driving snowmobiles is an activity that is popular among young people in Alta, especially young men. It is an easy and fast way to get out in nature and up in the mountains. Here, we also see how ontological security understood as stability and everyday routines is expressed through getting "inner peace" in nature for Simon. We see in the interviews that security is often linked to the opportunity to live a good life by young participants. Since most of them feel that there are no immediate threats for them personally, security for them means the opportunity to live the life that they want. Several of the participants mentioned welfare when we ask them about security:

Arne (22):	I am proud to be Norwegian. Norway is a nice country; it is safe here. We have safety in the welfare, and yes, we are … I read a place that we are one of the best in the world, and we are, I think. We are lucky to live here. We have most [of what we need] and good system if something should happen to us.

We see here how Arne connects security to welfare and to be safe in his everyday life. If something happened to him or his family, if he became ill or lost his job, he knows that there will be sick leave or unemployment benefits that will secure his income. The pride of Arne in this statement is clearly linked to Norway's welfare society. The welfare society is also linked to security for Emma:

Interviewer:	What makes you feel secure?
Emma (19):	Yes, it is the family and that we can, yes, that there are systems that … when we become ill, we will not be without money. And then it is the armed forces, the armed forces and the police and things like that. That makes me feel secure. I don't think about that really, but when you ask, that is what I am

> thinking about. It is secure here in Alta. You know where to go, and what you should stay away from (…) In bigger cities, there is more insecurity. You don't really know the situation.

We see here that while Emma clearly associates security with traditional security institutions, she also talks about the worries of everyday life, like having money, feeling safe, knowing your neighbours, and having the freedom to pursue the career you want. However, we see that for Emma, like several of the other interviewed young people, the ontological security of the routines of everyday life, expressed by Emma as "know the situation", contributes to her experience of security. In the interview, Emma continues with this focus on security, where feeling safe in her everyday life is central to her notion of security:

> Emma (19): There was a family that came from Romania, I believe, and they said that it was so wonderful to just let the kids out, that they did not need to worry about them. I think we are fortunate in that way. We don't have to worry about the kids and that something might happen to them. We live in a small community. You know who to watch out for. I think all of Finnmark is safe really.

In this quote, Emma talks about security in everyday life, and how living in a small community in the Arctic can be an advantage compared to bigger cities in the south or other parts of Europe. This is an overall tendency that we see in the empirical material, that the participants appreciate living in a small community with a low crime rate, a welfare state, and where you often know your neighbours and community well enough to know what to watch out for. We see how Emma describes a form of security that can be analyzed as human security, where security in everyday life, including well-being, is important. However, Emma also talks about the advantages of living in a small community with stable relations, with basic trust, attachment, and recognition of others, something that can be interpreted as a form of ontological security (Giddens 1991; Mitzen 2006).

Geopolitical security and its influence on perceived security in everyday life

While security for many of the participants is perceived in direct connection to their everyday life, we see that they also understand security in a more geopolitical sense. Finnmark, as a region, has often been a key centre of attention when talking about state security in the Norwegian Arctic, with the Russian border in the east in focus. This also influences how security in the Norwegian Arctic is perceived. In an interview with three young students, one of them said that:

> Kristin: I am quite afraid. One sees and reads everywhere about conflicts … and Russia. It is nice that Norway has strengthened their armed forces, or that they focus on the military.

In this quote, we see how issues related to international security are something that makes Kristin afraid. While she herself lives in a relatively secure and stable society, the risk of armed conflicts is something that is always present, and something that several of the young participants talk about in the interviews. Another interviewee, when we asked her about how she would define the security concept, stated that:

Berit: That we are safe. And this … we are doing super. There are no wars or other things that are unsafe.

We see here that Berit clearly refers to safety as something that is related to absence of war. In another interview, we asked Monika, a young woman of eastern European background, what she worried about:

Interviewer: What about security threats?
Monika (21): Trouble in the world, IS and things like that, and that Russia can attack and things like that, I have read about that in VG [the largest national newspaper in Norway].

In the quote above, we see how Monika is aware of contemporary security issues in a global sense. However, when she talks about Russia she defines the threats in relation to the newspaper from the capital, rather than threats in her own region. Rather than focusing on the fact that Alta is relatively close to the border with Russia as a security threat for her everyday life, she focuses on the security threat at a national level – as it is defined from the south. We see that the answers of Ermias and Hamid, two young refugee men, are quite like this, where they focus on local issues rather than international affairs when we ask about what they care about in their everyday life, and if they are active in politics or organizations:

Ermias (23): No, I am not member of any [organizations], but I follow what happens in the newspapers and things like that.
Interviewer: Do you care mostly about news from northern Norway, Norway, or the world?
Hamid (22): I care mostly about the issues that happen here, when there is news from northern Norway, I go in and check it out and read it. I live here, so that is important. Mostly local.
Ermias (23): Yes, me too.

In these quotes, we see how Ermias and Hamid, even though they come from a different continent, are remarkably like other youth that we have interviewed in this project. Rather than focusing on high level, international security, they care mostly about local issues and those things that have a direct impact on their own everyday life. In the interview, we get the impression they feel that Alta is generally a safe and good place to live. In an insecure world, we see that young people find security in experienced social stability and everyday routines that can be interpreted as a form of ontological security.

When Giddens (1991, 44–47) describes ontological security, he points out that what makes us safe in our surroundings and enables us to meet various challenges in an appropriate way is fundamentally linked to our immediate social and cognitive environment. In the quote, we see how Ermias and Hamid focus on local aspects of security in their everyday life. This could, of course, be linked to the fact that most of the young interviewees feel safe in their local environment and that security problems on the international level are so far away, and thus perceived as a problem that must be dealt with by stakeholders on a national and international level rather than by ordinary people in their everyday life.

Another interesting aspect of this research that is both empirically and theoretically relevant is the fact that the Norwegian language does not distinguish between different forms of security as distinctly as in English. For example, there are similar meanings

connected to the words *trygghet* and *sikkerhet*. The former, *trygghet*, means safety both in a more specific and general way, such as being in a "comfort zone"; there is a blurry line between these two concepts and they are often used synonymously in everyday life. This means that the Norwegian word for security – *sikkerhet* – can mean both security and safety. In the interviews, we find that the participants understand safety and security as aspects of the same social phenomenon. It is therefore easier to see the connection between higher-level security on the national and international level and security in their everyday life, as they use the same word for both.

Security in the intercultural space

As mentioned earlier, we interviewed participants with different ethnic backgrounds. Several of the participants report that they have ethnic backgrounds other than Norwegian or that they have mixed ethnicities. However, none of the participants suggested that this is something they experienced as a problem in their everyday life, and several of them say that they have friends and family with different ethnic backgrounds. We therefore find it useful to talk about Alta as an intercultural place, even though we find that they report that everyday life is dominated by Norwegian language and norms for interaction. Not surprisingly, several of the participants reported that they have Sámi background, however there was some variation in how much this meant to them. One of the participants who reported that her Sámi background was important to her, was Berit:

> Interviewer: What is your ethnic or cultural background?
> Berit: I am Sámi, and I think that is fine.
> Interviewer: Yes, good, how do you experience being that here in Alta?
> Berit: Well, it is totally okay, no difference really, but I think it [gákti – Sámi traditional dress] is nice to wear for example, I feel really good then.

In this quote, we see how Berit experiences being Sámi in Alta as not "different" from being Norwegian. We interpret this as an expression of an intercultural everyday life where it is "normal" to be something else than "just" Norwegian. We also get the impression that Berit and other participants feel that it is safe to be who they are, and that this does not make them feel different from other people in town. This is in line with what Kramvig (2005) describes as resistance against a social reality where people are defined in terms of pure and homogenous categories implemented by (central) political institutions. It is an expression of a social reality where cultural complexity is paradoxically what makes them feel safe, where everybody is perceived as "the same" because being different is the "normal" thing to be. This can be interpreted as a form of ontological security, where the experience of security is connected to an experience of continuity, order and meaning in everyday life, in contrast to the often taken-for-granted assumption that an intercultural society is in itself a security threat. Rather than making her feel unsafe, the intercultural everyday life of Alta is something that enables strong social and community ties, through an understanding of "being in the same boat" despite their ethnic differences.

Our data might have been different if we had only interviewed Sámi youth specifically and asked them in detail about how they experience being Sámi. However, the data do

not show that the youth that we have interviewed consider the presence of people with different cultural background in Alta as a security problem. While there has been a shift in both the acceptance and expression of both Sámi and Kven language and culture, in most areas – apart from certain Sámi dominated communities – the Norwegian culture and language still dominate social interaction. Arne, a young man, stated that:

> Arne (22): I am Norwegian, but mum is Kven, so in that way I am in several cultures really. But that does not matter for me, I feel completely Norwegian really.

We see here that while Arne has no problems articulating his minority background, he still feels that it is the Norwegian culture and language that dominates his everyday life, and because of this he considers himself to be Norwegian. This shows how the Norwegian culture, in line with what Olsen (2007) points out, is the dominant culture in the public sphere, even for those who have other ethnic backgrounds. Many of the participants are of mixed ethnic descent, and had no trouble articulating their belonging to Sámi, Kven, Russian or other ethnic groups apart from Norwegian. In addition, they are influenced by the communities in which they have lived and participated in, past and present. We see how Arne, rather than describing his mixed ethnic background as problematic, insists that this does not matter for him. He is "in several cultures" and feels "completely Norwegian" at the same time, two statements that seem quite paradoxical at first. However, when we interpret the statements of both Arne and Berit, we see that they both describe their everyday intercultural life as something "normal" for them. For an outsider, this might seem messy and confusing, but for them the intercultural everyday life is what constitutes the continuity and stability of their lives. It is a way of feeling connected to the past, while at the same time being able to choose one's future. This security and stability in the intercultural "mess" is something that we see in other interviews as well, such as those with Anita, Lars and Kristin:

> Anita (24): Yes, I am Norwegian, I have a lot of friends that are Sámi, and they are indigenous and have their right place here. Mum says that we are Gypsy.[5] She says that my great grandfather was Gypsy.
>
> Lars (21): I socialize with a lot of different cultures, Sámi, Norwegian, and yes, a friend is half Arab. I have friends that come from many different backgrounds. I have always had friends that have been a little bit different. Also, in my family, we have different backgrounds.
>
> Kristin (21): Sámi and Norwegian.

These quotes show how these youth live in an intercultural everyday life, where their interaction is deeply connected to an understanding of them living in an intercultural city in the north. People need to feel connected to each other and to the past in order to envision a secure future for themselves, and their deep connections to each other beyond ethnic boundaries is what for them represents the place where they live. The participants have a wide variety of cultural affiliations and this influences how they understand their everyday life. For youth with family background from other countries, living in a northern Norwegian community can involve both obstacles and opportunities. Alina, a young Russian-Norwegian woman, suggested that for her, living in Norway also involves being able to live the life that she wants, without the same restrictions on her as a woman:

Alina (22): And then it is all these cultural, or not cultural, but the view of women and gender roles. It is, I feel that it annoys me. I don't think it is right to have a … like … that women only should stick to the kitchen, and for example, when I tell my friends or someone in Russia that I want to work as a [occupation], and that I already work part time as this, then everyone says "but women shouldn't be in such dangerous occupations," and I said that "But I haven't, it isn't that dangerous here." I understand if I for example should be sent to Iraq or Iran or something like that. So, it has something to do with gender roles. So, it [the Russian culture] is to a certain degree important to me, and to a certain degree not.

In this quote, we see how Alina's imaginative horizons are influenced both by her Russian background and her everyday life in northern Norway. She sees that her family and friends in Russia have views on what she should do with her life, and this causes a kind of tension in her life; however, she is at the same time influenced by the cultural norms of living in Norway. For her, security is also linked to being able to live the life she wants as a young woman, without the control of her family in Russia. The intercultural space in her own life, with family, friends, and colleagues both in Russia and Norway, involves both constraints and opportunities for her.

In the interviews, we can see how most of the participants, whether they are, for example, Norwegian, Sámi, Kven, Russian, or a mix of different categories, talk about their everyday life as culturally complex. None of the participants suggested ethnicity as something problematic in their everyday life, and they downplay conflicts and differences. Hamid and Ermias, two young males that came to Norway as refugees, said something similar when we asked them what ethnic background means for them:

Hamid (22): That means identity, culture and traditional things that are important for us, so that means a lot. Yes, I feel that it is where I come from, the family, and yes, that is important.
Interviewer: Yes, great, what about religion?
Ermias (23): For me, it is a private thing.
Hamid (22): Yes, you inherit something from your family, and that means that it matters, but here, you can believe in what you want, and that is nice, it is private, what you believe in. So, religion has an impact.

We see here how these two also are influenced by Norwegian culture, where religion is more often considered a private matter. This is in line with what Gullestad (2002) defines as the Norwegian basic value of "peace and quiet" in social interaction. However, while Gullestad (2002) focuses on how people downplay cultural differences in social interaction, we see how these youth are constructing an image of a harmonious intercultural sphere where everyone is in a sense "the same" as a kind of hybrid. While we would have guessed that this was something negative for them, they focus on the positive side of this, that they can be who they are and believe in what they do privately.

The interviews that we have interpreted in this section show us how the youth that we have interviewed understand security also in relation to what we call human and ontological security. In these perspectives, security is not only linked to international politics and emergency response, but also to general well-being, the importance of having a stable social and cognitive environment, with daily routines and social relations that

secure basic trust, attachment, and recognition of who they are as individuals. We therefore argue that ontological security as a theoretical concept is useful for interpreting how young people in the Arctic conceptualize security in their everyday life. Being young in and of itself involves exploring and reflecting upon who they are and who they want to be. When we continue to interpret how these young people conceptualize their imaginative horizons, we must keep in mind that how they talk about their ideas concerning their future is very much linked to how they understand their everyday life and the social relations that they take part in today.

Several of the participants do mention security issues in line with the traditional security perspective with emphasis on state security, military security, or global security. This is not in the sense of threats that have influence or impact on their everyday life, as they see them as issues on the national and international level, and as something they read about in the papers happening far away from Alta. The participants' focus on security is more in line with the human security and everyday life perspective, as they see threats related to environmental issues, personal economy, housing, education, work, and health as more immediate security issues. However, we also see that the participants focus on the security that is connected to living in a small, safe place where people know and trust each other, and living in a socially stable environment where "You know who to watch out for". This can be interpreted as a form of ontological security, where the sense of continuity and stability in people's everyday life is an important part of individuals' experiences of security. These everyday security perspectives are fruitful for the analysis of all participants' perceived notions of security. The further question is to what extent are intercultural perspectives relevant to understanding the participants' notions of security.

Horizons for the future

We will now assess how the youths' perception of security and sustainable development affects their view of the future in light of the concept of imagined horizons. We have already seen how security for young people in northern Norway is connected to human security, and how they do not experience the intercultural social environment as a threat, but rather security. We will now investigate how they talk about security in their everyday life and how this affects the horizons of their future.

They all have hopes and dreams for themselves, their communities, and the world; however, some of the participants found it difficult to say something concrete about their futures. While some are more engaged in politics and issues related to sustainable development, climate change and environmental issues than others, they all talked about the need to act and make a better future for themselves and future generations. Jenny is of mixed descent with both Sámi and Norwegian descent, in addition to having a parent from another European country. She called for action regarding climate change and environmental issues, and talked about how this is important:

> Jenny (17): It is our future. If we want to have a good future, we need to do something about it.

We see in this quote how Jenny is influenced by Greta Thunberg and other youth activists' way of speaking about climate change and action from a youth perspective, where the future of the young generation is used actively as a way of raising awareness of the

urgent need for action. At the UN Climate Summit in New York in 2019 Greta Thunberg said: "The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say – we will never forgive you." (NPR 2019). Like Greta Thunberg, Jenny calls for action and uses young people like her and their future to show the need for a drastic change in the way we organize our societies. However, like the other young participants in the project, Jenny also linked security to her own everyday life and the opportunities in her own life:

Jenny (17): You said that security can be many different things, and I imagine that in the future, I will be in a secure position if I get a job and a home and things like that. I feel safe if I have friends around me, and not that safe if I do not get good grades.
Interviewer: Is there something about security that worries you?
Jenny (17): Yes, the climate a little bit, or if I get older and [talking about her imagined future family] if the father is not there, then I will struggle a lot.

While Jenny worried about how climate change will affect her security in the future, we can also see in the quote how she also understands security in relation to problems in her immediate future, like grades and family life. This does not mean that bigger issues, like climate change, war, and severe accidents are not a concern for her. It is rather a reflection of the fact that these issues often seem too abstract to her everyday life. This is something that we see in several of the interviews. While most of the participants worried about climate change and disasters, it was the local and concrete problems, like pollution and waste, that worry them the most regarding environmental issues. When we asked them about how they are engaged in environmental issues, most of them mentioned waste sorting as something that they do, and something they feel is important to do better.

Interviewer: What do you think about the future regarding the environment and the climate and things like that, are you worried?
Chris (16): I am stressed about the future, I am afraid of what that, what kind of catastrophes that will happen ahead of us. It seems like we do not do anything about it really.
Simon (16): Yes, that we can live like we do now, that it does not get any worse
Interviewer: Yes, in what way? Is it something special that you think about or worry about?
Chris (16): Yes, that we have access to clean drinking water, that is something.
Simon (16): And then there will be a lot of natural catastrophes too because of the pollution. They have proven that the environment has gotten worse.

We see here in the quote above how Chris and Simon worry about the future, but at the same time feel frustrated about the fact that society does not do enough about the problems that we face regarding environmental issues. While they themselves do a lot of small things in their everyday life, like waste sorting, the larger, and often global, issues worry them more, especially since they feel that these issues are not dealt with to the extent that is needed. This ambivalence is something that we saw in several interviews, including the interview with Jenny below.

Interviewer:
Is there anything that worries you about the future?Jenny (17):

Yes, there is.Interviewer. What about globalization? The world is getting smaller and smaller, we travel more and more, and we move around more. You yourself have background from several parts of the world.
Jenny (17):
Yes, it is the plane ticket prices then. When you are not a student, you want to … it costs a lot to travel and visit your family, and then you spend a lot of money. Especially with family abroad, then you spend several thousand just to fly. I think MDG [The Green Party] should think about us that do not have that much money.
Interviewer:
Yes, regarding airplanes, what do you think about MDG and that they say that we should fly less?
Jenny (17):
Yes, they think that we should take trains more, but we up here do not have trains. So, if we want to go anywhere, we must fly. That isn't … we either must drive or fly.

While Jenny is very engaged in environmental issues, both through organizations and in her everyday life, issues that are raised on a national and international level, like climate change and travelling, are sometimes in conflict with the fact that they live in an Arctic town with poor infrastructure and often no alternatives to cars and aeroplanes. As she says in the interview, if she wants to visit her family she must travel by aeroplane. Her engagement in environmental issues therefore comes into conflict with her personal means and how this also restricts her possibilities to keep in touch with her family. We see here how different aspects of security, like climate change, personal economy, identity, and family ties, come into conflict with each other. The social and economic aspects of security are something that Lars, a young man, talks a lot about in the interview. For him, the most important issues regarding security are economic security. He talked about his future and how this is an important aspect of how he sees his prospects:

Interviewer:	How do you understand security?
Lars (21):	A lot, personal security, economic security, physical security regarding criminality and things like that. Economic security is most important for me, I need a job, that I can pay for myself, live by it, so that means a great deal.
Interviewer:	Do you think about social security as well?
Lars (21):	Yes, of course it means that you have family and friends and things like that, and that there are schemes that support people if they do not have a job.

We see here how Lars clearly links security to his everyday life. While criminality is also something that he mentions, it is still his prospects regarding job security that mean the most. However, he also links security to having friends and family, and a fulfilling social life. Security for him is to be able to live a happy and fulfilling life in a socially stable environment. The threats that he describes represent threats not only because of their immediate physical threat, but because they represent a threat to his sense of self and the ties to his family and friends. We see that different forms of security are articulated as an almost symbiotic fusion, where both geopolitical security, welfare and social stability in everyday life constitute what makes people feel safe.

As we have shown in the analysis, security is linked to many different issues, from the grand, global challenges to the everyday issues of ordinary people. While all the participants discuss grand challenges, like climate change, war, and natural disasters, it is still the challenges of their everyday lives, like waste sorting, safety in their neighbourhood, friends, and family ties that they discuss to the greatest extent. The connection

between the larger global and national challenges, and the everyday life challenges, from small to big issues in their lives, is something that also is present when we ask them about the future.

The insecurity that they articulate in the interviews can also be linked to insecurity about what lies ahead of them in their lives. In this project we have interviewed young people, and a lot of their worries are naturally linked to concerns about what they should do in their lives regarding education, work, and family life. While their worries about security in the present are influenced by the smaller worries of everyday life, like having friends, staying healthy, and getting an education and job, their concerns about the future are much more influenced by the grand challenges like climate change, pollution, welfare, peace, and conflicts. While several of the participants show in the interviews that they are quite knowledgeable about the major crises in society today, their worries are influenced by the fact that the solutions are quite complex, and sometimes, in their opinion, not dealt with to the extent that they feel is necessary.

This shows us, to paraphrase Crapanzano (2004), the blurry boundaries between the here and now, and the future that lies ahead of us. The youths' imaginaries of the future are clearly influenced by their worries in their everyday life. However, while the smaller things like exams, what they want to eat for dinner, waste sorting, and travel costs are the things that worry them the most regarding security in their everyday life today, the imaginaries for the future are more influenced by their worries about the grand challenges and how these are to be solved. These worries are often mixed with frustration about other stakeholders failing to do enough; however, it is still the worries of their everyday life, their career choices, personal economy, health, friends, and family that remain the easiest to conceptualize from their own point of view.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper, we asked how young people in the Norwegian Arctic understand their perceived future possibilities and how this is related to their understanding of security in their intercultural everyday life. We used the concept of imaginative horizons to assess how these youths see their future and how this can be interpreted as a reflection of both the past and the present, mixed with their hopes and fears for the future. In the data, we find that that security and safety first and foremost are related to their daily life, even when their daily life takes place in an area where the focus on international tension and rivalry has been an important part of the national and international debate for a long time.

The everyday life and human security perspective give us a broader understanding of how young people perceive security, and what they think is important. Everyday life relations of ordinary people are just as important to consider when interpreting the imagined horizons of youth in the Arctic. Our study shows that, in addition to having friends and family, and having the right to be who they are, regardless of their ethnic background, gender or sexual orientation, welfare-related issues, such as getting an education, a job and a nice place to stay, are important to them. This is something that they worry about and link to security in their everyday life, in line with the concept of human security. As we mentioned in the introduction, there has been increasing social inequality in

Norway in the last few decades (Povlsen et al. 2018), something that might explain their uncertainties regarding their economic future.

While Norwegian society is often defined as relatively homogenous from a southern perspective, everyday life in the north is very much an intercultural life, where people for generations have interacted with people from different cultures. For the youth that we have interviewed, this is something that characterizes their everyday life. For them, the intercultural everyday life, and maybe even their own mixed heritage, is not a problem; it is rather the life that they are used to and feel connected to (Kramvig 2005; Dankertsen 2016). Paradoxically, this is also in line with what Gullestad (2002, 47) calls the establishment of imagined sameness. However, this imagined sameness is defined as intercultural, because we find a tendency of youth to define themselves and others as intercultural rather than as pure and homogenous ethnic categories. The intercultural everyday life represents what makes them feel safe. It is a social environment that represents both continuity and change, and is stable not despite the heterogeneity, but because of it.

In the interviews with youth in the Arctic, we find that what we understand as ontological security (Giddens 1991; Mitzen 2006) is useful for analyzing both how they relate to other people in their everyday life, and how they conceptualize their future possibilities. We find that the way these young people talk about security is very much linked to having a stable social and cognitive environment, where they have the possibility of creating a future for themselves that gives them the freedom to be who they want to be, regardless of ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, and lifestyle choices. Even though the youth were mostly concerned about local issues and security from an everyday life perspective, they still show an understanding of conflicts and threats on an international level. Several of them mentioned pandemics, terrorism, war and conflicts between USA and NATO on one side, and Russia on the other. However, the youth we have interviewed do not list these issues as their most important concerns when discussing what makes them feel safe.

In an intercultural life, where many people have family backgrounds, friends, and neighbours with different ethnic makeups, Russia is not only a "scary enemy" in the east, it is just as much something that they associate with friends, neighbours, or family. Instead, security issues are perceived and linked to individual and societal welfare and well-being. This study indicates that while being aware of international tensions at play in the Arctic, these issues present only a minor role in our interviewees' understandings of security. And as such, security and their imagined horizons and future possibilities are better understood through the lenses of their everyday life and local relations, in addition to their personal hopes and dreams for the future.

Notes

1. The interviews were done in the beginning of February in 2020, before the corona crisis hit Norway. While some of the participants mentioned the corona virus as a security issue, this was not something that they talked a lot about in the interviews, and we can therefore assume that they did not consider this to be a threat to them personally at that time. Some of the participants mentioned the corona virus as a health threat but did not connect this to economic security at that time. We can assume that the data would have been somewhat different if we had done the interviews only three months later.

2. The Sámi are an indigenous Finno-Ugric speaking people inhabiting Sápmi, which today encompasses large parts of middle and northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Most Sámi nowadays are bilingual, but many do not speak their original Sámi language because of assimilation policies in the past. Historically they have been known as "Lapps" or "Laplanders", terms that now often are regarded as offensive. Traditionally they have pursued livelihoods such as hunting, gathering, fishing, sheep herding and reindeer herding, of which the latter is the most known.
3. The Kvens are a national ethnic minority in Norway. The Kven language is a Finnic language. It is unknown when the oldest Kven settlements in Norway occurred, but Danish/Norwegian tax records report Kvens living in northern Norway from the sixteenth century
4. The manager for the overall project was Berit Skorstad, while the project manager for our component was Elisabeth Pettersen.
5. We have used the "politically incorrect" version "Gypsy" rather than Romani here since this is more in line with the Norwegian concept *sigøyner* that she uses in the interview.

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