

Conditioned receptiveness:

Nordic rural elite perceptions of immigrant contributions to local resilience

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1. Introduction

They are coming from all over the world. And it really doesn't matter where they come from as long as they do the job.

(CEO, rural Denmark)

What happens to rural places in the Nordic countries when immigrants from the entire world settle in rural communities? Since the early 2000s, immigration to Western Europe has increased. Immigration to urban areas has largely overshadowed rural immigration, but in the Nordic region – Norway in particular – more immigrants have been settling in rural areas compared to other European countries (Søholt et al., 2015; Tronstad & Joona, 2013). Rural places have experienced international in-migration for many years, but immigrant settlement patterns have recently assumed new rural dimensions (Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014; Jentsch & Simard, 2009; Ordemann, 2017; Søholt et al., 2014).

Change caused by immigration can have both positive and negative impacts. Negative impacts may include increased municipal expenses, tensions between the established population and the newcomers because of fear of competition for housing and/or jobs, or concerns that immigration may challenge the local culture. Positive impacts may be that immigration contributes to the local labour market, and helping stabilize or increase local population figures. In this article, we examine the impact of international in-migration to rural areas through the perspectives of rural elites: individuals with local powers in economic, political, administrative, managerial, civic and traditional institutions in the community (Burnham, 1960; Putnam, 1977). Unlike Mills' (1956, 2000) theory on overlapping power

groups, we define rural elites by their individual power position, not from being part of closed power networks. Although rural elites are not necessarily formal representatives of the community, they are expected to act on behalf of collective interests, and are thus influential as regards local development (Steen, 2009).

We ask:

How do Nordic rural elites link immigration to rural resilience, and what characterizes their perspectives across the Nordic countries?

What roles do they ascribe to immigrants in co-producing rural resilience?

We examine how rural elites address international in-migration in their place narratives, including aspects of promoting or restraining local development.

Applying elite perspectives risks concealing problematic power dynamics and issues of community representation (see Varley & Curtin 2006). However, such perceptions of what is a good rural (multi-ethnic) community, and how immigrants are perceived in becoming part of the community, are relevant because of the elites' influencing capacities and roles as decision-makers. A Norwegian study shows that municipal decision-makers emphasize instrumental benefits and municipal self-interests, downplaying emotional fears that immigration might disturb the traditional ethnos in the local discourse (Steen, 2009). A recent study confirms that small municipalities are motivated to settle refugees because they increase the population (Søholt et al., 2018).

1.1. Immigration and changes in demography: Norway, Sweden and Denmark

Immigration is closely linked with international and national regulations and policies.

Globalization of economy and politics, like the UN Refugee Convention and the EU/ EEA Agreement, condition migration and thus affect rural destination-places. The significant rise in immigration to the Nordic countries and to rural areas since the early 2000s is due to increased immigration of refugees, to EU enlargement and the EEA Agreement guaranteeing equal rights and obligations within the Internal Market (Eurostat, 2016). Immigration has now become the major source of population increase in all Nordic countries (Heleniak, 2018).

The share of the immigrant population in the Nordic countries has mirrored national immigration policies and economic developments. The share was lowest in Denmark (13%) and highest in Sweden (23%), with Norway in-between (16%)¹. National and regional economic conditions, the need for labour and various recruiting strategies affect labour immigrants' residential patterns (Friberg, 2016; see also Røed & Schøne, 2012; Røed & Schøne, 2015). Favourable economic conditions help to explain why labour immigration to Norway, especially from the EU, was three times higher than to all the other Nordic countries together. However, with the fall in oil prices, net in-migration to Norway has dropped, from almost 50 000 in 2012 to about 25 000 in 2016.² The fact that EU requires internal immigrants to support themselves when abroad also contribute to explain their migration patterns.

In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, *refugees* with permission to stay are allocated across the whole country, but models for settlement of refugees differ (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015). In Sweden, refugees can obtain government assistance but are allowed to self-settle in any

¹ Percent immigrant population 2016: foreign born and born in Denmark, Sweden or Norway with two immigrant parents. Statistics Denmark, Statistics Sweden, Statistics Norway.

² <https://www.ssb.no/innvandring-og-innvandriere/faktaside/innvandring>

municipality. In Norway, the municipal councils decide whether they want settlement of refugees and how many, on request from the state. In Denmark, the state distributes refugees to the municipalities, but these may request more refugees than their ‘fair share’, as several rural municipalities have done. In all three countries, the intended dispersal of refugees builds on a policy of regional burden-sharing. In Norway, refugee settlement policy corresponds with national district policy: settlement of refugees contribute to preserve the main settlement pattern.

Recent immigration coincides with the demographic challenge of rural depopulation (Berlina et al., 2016). Especially in rural Norway, but also in Sweden and Denmark, immigrants from other Nordic countries, the EU and other parts of the world are contributing to younger population structures and to filling labour market vacancies: ‘a demographic refill’ (Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014; Røed & Schøne, 2012; Søholt et al., 2015).

Research has examined how immigrants navigate in their new destinations, their encounters with the labour market in general and in specific branches (Aasland & Tyldum, 2016; Andrzejewska & Rye, 2012; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017) but there is increasing focus on how diversity affects rural communities (Aure, 2008; Aure et al., 2018; Henningsen et al., 2015; Høgmo, 2000; Søholt et al., 2012). As noted by De Lima and Wright (2009), recognizing not only immigrants, but all active agents with varying power to influence rural integration, leads to a shift in focus, towards studying the processes and impacts of immigration. Closer examination of how rural elites address immigration in their place narratives can help to explain the forces involved in transforming rural places related to immigration and resilience.

2. The impact of immigration to rural areas – theoretical approaches

Analysis of how international migration is perceived within the rural elites' narratives requires a framework that draws on diverse theoretical approaches on rurality: what 'the rural' is or should be, the impact of immigration in relation to inclusion/exclusion of immigrants, and on rural resilience. This framework provides an understanding of how rural elites understand, enact, practise and envision rural places, and how these understandings affect trajectories of inclusion or exclusion in specific places.

2.1. The complicated 'rural place'

Discourse and the symbolic use of 'the rural' often see the rural as 'having persistent stabilities' (Bell & Osti, 2010, 202), in contrast to 'the urban' as dynamic and mobile. Linked to rural stability and traditionalism are rootedness and authenticity, and the homogeneous community or place is seen as the norm where diversity is acceptable only to the extent that it does not threaten social harmony as viewed by the majority (Blommart & Verschueren, 1998; Gullestad, 1992). In Western Europe, with its presumed 'white and homogeneous' countryside, this perspective links up with representations of rural areas as 'white spaces' (Agyeman & Spooner, 1997) where 'ethnicity' is something possessed by 'others', and is out of place in the countryside. People of colour are seen as representing the urban: the 'white' landscape of rurality is aligned with 'nativeness', rootedness and authenticity.

Migration encompasses various geographies and temporalities (Salamonska, 2017): there are short- and long-term labour immigrants, circular and seasonal workers, as well as refugees, and family immigrants. Diversifying mobility flows and multi-faceted immigration alter the demographic and ethnic profile, contributing to on-going transformations of rural and peripheral places (Hedberg et al., 2012; Stenbacka, 2012; Sørholt et al., 2015). Another strand

of research focuses on the rural as active in processes of globalization as a site for openness, mobilities and cosmopolitanism (Cheshire et al., 2014; Cheshire & Woods, 2013; Jansson & Andersson, 2012; Popke, 2011; Woods, 2007), viewing in-migration as a resource (Stenbacka, 2013). Massey (2005) has conceptualized this continuous and complex reconstruction of place as processes of ‘thrown togetherness’ which open for diverse trajectories, seen as formal and informal processes of inclusion and exclusion (see for example Sainsbury 2012). However, the increasing mobile nature of rural places may challenge social cohesion and undermine processes of community-making (Kitchen & Milbourne, 2014). This can be interpreted as a paradox as the local economy requires in-movers to remain economically sustainable, while the same mobilities may undermine the essence of the rural place as stable and homogeneous. How, then, are rural elites affected by such understandings of the rural? How are specific rural places discursively constructed in their narratives of how immigration affects rural place resilience?

2.2. Inclusion/ exclusion

Inclusion in rural places entails more than having a job. Honneth (2001) relates social inclusion to recognition and social esteem: human beings should be recognized as individuals even though they might challenge the perception of ‘local normality’. An earlier study of immigrants in a Norwegian rural locality (Søholt et al., 2012) found social esteem a main factor in getting immigrants to stay on.

Social exclusion, as a concept, moves focus away from the individual and individuals’ lack of resources and emphasizes the processes, which cause exclusion, the importance of the local context and relational issues (Shucksmith, 2003). According to Sibley (2006), one issue concerns how rural space may be represented as ethnically homogeneous and ‘to subscribe to the core values of the rural community’ (p.403). This problem points to exclusion of people

from rural areas if they are not perceived as representing the values of the nation, represented through core values of the rural. Another issue concerns how immigrants are seen in relation to community development and place-making, as such dimensions reflect processes of community empowerment and inclusion. Involving individuals with weak local status in processes of community development and decision-making might be a way of strengthening community engagement while also combating social exclusion (Varley & Curtin 2006).

Central issues are how rural elites recognize immigrants as co-constituents in the repositioning of rural places, whether they are seen as ‘representations of immigration’ or as individuals, if they are invisible and unnoticed or considered a factor influencing the development of the place (Alexander, 2007). Also important is the national level. Sainsbury (2012, p. 278) noted differences between the Swedish and the Danish welfare states regarding the inclusion of immigrants. Where the Danish approach implied framing newcomers as temporary workers, the Swedish framing characterized newcomers as potential settlers with equal rights. Our study contributes by examining how rural elites relate immigration to local resilience by exploring venues of inclusion and integration, rather than focusing on processes of exclusion.

2.3. Retention and receptiveness

Grillo (2000) has developed a framework for analysing the many potential trajectories for integration based on individual motifs, examining how immigrants navigate in the country of destination and how this affects their structural integration and inclusion or lack thereof.

Three main strategies are described: assimilation, integration and enclavement. Assimilation is about putting down roots and orienting oneself primarily towards the new place. Integration involves considerable assimilation in employment, housing, education, welfare systems etc., while retaining a private sphere. Enclavement concerns demands for recognition of cultural

differences in public spheres, perhaps with separate social life and ethnic communities. Such processes are relational: immigrants' navigation in their new communities is interrelated with how the majority population, institutions and local elites perceive and navigate as regards an evolving multi-ethnic community. We find that Grillo's framework can be turned around to describe the majority's inclinations to immigration. Where immigrants as well as natives tend to favour their own traditional practices and cultures, there may develop parallel lives and separate social communities. By contrast, where immigrants and natives, including elites, are inclined towards assimilation and interaction with people from different ethnic backgrounds, they open for integration, acculturation and cultural diversity.

According to Schöpflin (2000) modern multi-ethnic societies are marked by fundamental contrasts between a traditional sphere of identity that is challenged by immigration and reasoning about how to govern integration challenges. Rural elites are affected by and must tackle the contrasts stemming from instrumental and pragmatic views on immigration (reason), community development based on local culture and traditions (identity) and place re-constitution. From these considerations, and our empirical material, we hold that the concepts of receptiveness and retention can contribute in analysing the perspectives that characterize how rural elites link immigration to local place resilience. *Receptiveness* would correspond to people being open-minded, able to receive new signals, interested in new people, curious and willing to accept new ideas – much in correspondence with the rural as part of globalization. Conversely, *retention* corresponds to people prioritizing local traditions and culture in order to maintain local resilience. Rather than being mutually exclusive, these two approaches should be seen as part of a wider scale where variations of how retention and receptiveness are differently emphasized and paralleled.

2.4. Resilience

All societies need to handle challenges and transformation. *Resilience* concerns the capacity of individuals/communities to deal with economic and social transformation, the ability to adapt to but also challenge the prevailing circumstances. Can international migration enhance resilience in rural communities? And how do such resilience processes relate to retention and receptiveness? Earlier studies have shown that social inclusion, welfare, networks and participation are crucial factors for building resilience (Kulig, 2000; McManus et al., 2012) and that resilience arises from processes where collective action helps to negate and counterbalance individual vulnerabilities (Wilson, 2010). Thus, both structural and social integration processes need to be considered. Communicative processes are central, because they are involved in the constitution of meaning and identity, and can include critical approaches important in formulating and re-formulating places and place-narratives.

Buzzanell's (2010) approach to resilience stresses interaction in terms of the meaning and impact of communication: 'resilience is developed, sustained and grown through discourse, interaction and material considerations' (p.1). The construction of resilience entails collaborative exchange involving the family, workplace, community and members of inter-organizational networks (ibid., p.9). This in turn requires input from various members of a community, including rural elites, in terms of keeping 'the rural myth' alive or co-constructing new stories and organizing logics and identities.

Resilience is a process resulting from both the ability to lean on the traditional and well-known, and the ability to see possibilities and be open towards new elements – individuals, practices and ideas. These abilities lie within the social and political local context (Stenbacka & Forsberg, 2013).

3. Study design and material

This study explores the similarities and differences in how Nordic rural elites perceive immigration in relation to local resilience. Our overarching methodological approach is a most-similar/ most-different comparative case study (Ragin, 2000). The former involves selecting municipal cases in three Nordic countries with rather similar open economies, and welfare policies (Bevelander et al., 2013; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Esping-Andersen, 1990). The most-different approach refers to increasing differences in national immigration and integration discourses and policies (Andersson et al., 2010; Borevi et al., 2017; Kraus & Kivisto, 2015) and in regional development (Lindqvist, 2010). Further, differing local contexts (physical environment, size and shape of labour market, demographic situation) affect processes of transformation. By juxtaposing differing cases, the comparative approach helps to identify potential similarities and peculiarities. The approach reduces the belief in universal causality and opens up for local and place-related developments and explanations (Robinson, 2011). For studying contemporary and deeply rooted objects in a real-life context (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2003), the comparative case approach is appropriate because the interviewees are embedded in what is researched, the different and specific spatial and temporal rural contexts.

3.1. National frames

Of the three, Sweden has had the most liberal immigration policy and Denmark the most restrictive, with Norway in-between. Because of recent political changes, Norway is now competing with Denmark in restrictive immigration policy. In all three countries, implementation of national integration policy occurs mainly at the municipal level. In addition to the national policy for integration of refugees, any local integration policy is left to the municipalities to decide.

While Norway has many (428) and relatively small municipalities, Denmark and Sweden have undertaken comprehensive centralization reforms and mergers, resulting in fewer municipalities (98 in Denmark, 290 in Sweden). Denmark is small, flat and densely populated. Norway has a long coastline, many mountains and valleys, and a scattered population. In Sweden, the population is concentrated in mid- and southern Sweden. Population density is especially low in the northern forest areas.

3.2. *The cases*

The main criteria for selection of the national cases were a relatively high share and mix of immigrants in a rural/remote/peripheral municipality. The municipality is the formal case unit, which allows for comparable open data on the proportion of immigrants.

Table 1 shows that immigration is persistent and increasing. The municipalities can be described as multi-ethnic. Confirming Sweden’s long experience with fairly open immigration, the share of immigrants in the population is highest in the Swedish case, and lowest in the Danish case. In one of the Norwegian cases, the immigrant population has more than tripled from 2004 to 2016. Due to municipal structure, there are major differences among cases as regards population size. The Danish and Swedish cases both have towns with about 25 000 inhabitants, whereas the largest town in the Norwegian cases has about 3 500 inhabitants. Unsurprisingly, population density is highest in Denmark and lowest in Norway.

Table 1: Case descriptions. Immigrant population 2004 – 2016*

	Case Denmark	Case Sweden	Case I Norway	Case II Norway	Case III Norway
Whole population	65 500	27 000	4 500	9 000	10 000

Immigrant population 2004	3 000	3 000	350	400	800
Immigrant population 2012	3 500	4 000	650	1 000	1 000
Immigrant population 2016	5 000	6 000	750	1 500	1 600
Immigrant population 2016, %	8	21	17	16	15
Diversity: Country origins 2016 (N)	90	82	47	60	71
Population per km ²	70	18	2	35	3

Sources: Statistics Denmark, Statistics Sweden, Statistics Norway and Ministry of Local Affairs.

* Immigrant population = persons born abroad or born in a Nordic country to two parents born abroad. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 500, and the nearest 50 for the small numbers.

In addition to national integration policies, local activities and policies aimed at including migrants and supporting the multi-cultural transformation of the community feature in the case contexts. Some of the elite persons in this study have been active in formulating policies and activities of inclusion; others appear unaware of their existence.

Table 2: Local efforts to promote social inclusion

	Case Denmark	Case Sweden	Case I Norway	Case II Norway	Case III Norway
Municipal plans/activities		X	X	X	X

• Welcoming activities	X	X		X	
• Adaptation of local services		X	X	X	
• Symbolic initiatives	X	X		X	X
• Initiatives towards the natives		X			
Local industrial initiatives/adaptations	X	X		X	X
Civil society initiatives	X	X	X	X	X

Although different magnitude, ambitions, and involvement, together the cases feature a spectrum of local strategies aimed at integration. Initiatives range from capacity-building among immigrants, bridge-building with locals through language cafes, awareness-building and adapting services to immigrants, to various kinds of welcome and settling-in policies, as well as symbolic initiatives like integration days highlighting local diversity, integration prizes and street signs in Russian. Some activities are directed towards specific groups, like skilled migrants, refugees or families.

The case descriptions give a backdrop for understanding the point of departure for the rural elites' narratives of their places becoming multi-ethnic. Through their narratives and how they present in-migration and immigrants, we can gain information about the potential for achieving local resilience and the roles ascribed to in-migrants in this process.

3.3. Case description Denmark

The Danish case is located in northern part of the country, with one main city and some towns surrounded by small villages, rural districts and areas with holiday homes. The share of immigrants in the municipality is 8%, much lower than the national average of 13% and lower than the share of immigrants in the major cities, especially in the capital, Copenhagen. The selected municipality illustrates a development where the share of immigrants has nearly doubled over a 10-year period. Immigrants have a more diverse pattern of settlement but live mainly in towns and in the largest city within this municipality. Refugees have primarily been assigned social housing, located in the biggest cities and a few towns.

In this municipality, more than a third of the jobs are within the public sector (administration, health services and education) followed by private-sector jobs, especially in trade and transport. Skilled immigrants work in a few local industries and hospitals; unskilled migrants work in manufacturing, cleaning, farming/fishing and service industries as well as in public services, especially health and elderly services. In 2015 employment among the native Danish population was 72.9%; for immigrants from Western countries it was 61.5%, and 42.4% for non-Western immigrants.

3.4. Case description Sweden

The Swedish case municipality is located in mid-southern Sweden, about 210 km from Stockholm. The biggest town in the municipality has about 14 500 inhabitants (2014); the next-largest town has about 3200 inhabitants, and there are four villages with 600–770 inhabitants. The share of residents with foreign background was slightly more than 21% in 2016, similar to the national average. This municipality was selected because of its mix of international in-migrants.

The five most common types of work in 2014 were within the healthcare and service sector; civil engineering and architecture; assembly-work, engineering and as technicians; and in sales/commerce. One multinational company employs around 2,800 highly educated engineers and technicians from all over the world. The second-largest employer is the municipality itself (2,500) followed by the county council (including health care, 500) and a brewery (300). In 2015, 7% of the population was unemployed, as against the national figure of 6%. In the biggest town of this municipality, 29% hold degrees higher than upper secondary school, as against the national figure of 39%.

3.5. Case description Norway

The Norwegian case is part of a larger project involving three rural cases. The share of the immigrant population is a little lower than the national average – 17%, as against 11–12% in Norwegian rural and remote municipalities in general.

The following conditions were decisive for the selection of the cases: spread in immigrants' origins and reasons for residence permits, differing industrial contexts, and differing geographical locations. One case is located in the inland mountain area (I), one on the west coast (II) and one in the north (III). In all three, there is a main village where the majority of the immigrants live. Labour migrants have a more scattered residential pattern than do refugees because they often have access to a car.

The main industry in the Inland case is tourism, so this is a place of high mobility. On the West Coast, the main industry is maritime/marine, with periodically high circular migration. In the North, the main industries are mining and public services (health). When our project started in 2012, all three municipalities were experiencing an economic boom and the need for a larger work force. Later, the decline in the oil industry affected the labour market on the

West Coast. In the North, bankruptcy has closed the mine twice, but tourism is expanding.

Despite the economic ups and downs, immigration has increased in all three cases.

Employment patterns have varied. In 2015, in the Inland case, employment was higher among immigrants than among natives. In the North, employment rates were the same for natives and immigrants, whereas natives had a slightly higher employment rate in the West case. In the In-land case, employment among refugee women is higher than among men; in the North, this applies to female labour immigrants and family immigrants.

3.6. Across cases

Housing markets and politics vary among the Nordic countries and cases, with differing residential patterns (Andersson et al., 2010; Bengtsson, 2006; Skifter Andersen et al., 2013).

In the Norwegian cases, immigrants are more often homeowners; they live more often in small houses, and more often in the same neighbourhoods as natives. In Sweden and Denmark, there are blocks of flats with public and private rentals, also in rural areas. Immigrants are over-represented here: they often live in other neighbourhoods than the majority of the natives. In Sweden as in Norway, highly skilled migrants tend to have residential patterns similar to those of the native population.

3.7. Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted in the five rural municipalities described above: Norway (3), Denmark (1) and Sweden (1). The cases cover 87 interviews with rural elites, here defined as key persons holding a position with power to influence local thresholds for the inclusion of newcomers and how the community should respond to immigration. This includes political decisions, the power to employ and dismiss as well as influencing the conditions for access to local organizations and the informal community. The rural elite is diverse in professions, age and gender, with local natives, native in-movers and persons of immigrant background.

Professions range from politicians, including mayors, planners, municipal services; to employment, integration, education, health and librarians, CEOs of public and private businesses, entrepreneurs, estate agents and leaders of voluntary organizations. The rural elites tend to work in one of the towns/villages in the municipality.

Elites' individual perceptions of what is a good rural (multi-ethnic) community, and how they see immigrants becoming part of the community, are of considerable interest, because of their influencing capacities and roles as decision-makers.

Table 3: Interviewed local elites

Cases	Number of interviewees	Immigrant background
Norway I	14 (3 women, 11 men)	1
Norway II	26 (15 women, 11 men)	4
Norway III	21 (9 women, 12 men)	2
Denmark	15 (7 women, 8 men)	0
Sweden	12 (5 men, 7 women)	2

Semi-structured interviews have functioned as a vehicle for gaining access to information about opinions and experiences among representatives of the rural elites. Several pre-formulated questions guided the interviews, which focused on descriptions, explanations and understandings of contemporary societal processes and events related to international immigration, behaviour and the understanding of the development of the (multi-ethnic) place. This procedure made it possible to compile information on common questions, give room for diversity and pay attention to context-specific aspects and processes. The interviews were

conducted before the 2015 refugee influx, except for Denmark, where interviews took place in the period May–August 2016.

The narratives of these 87 key actors form the basis for our qualitative analysis. In the empirical material, various understandings of inclusion/exclusion emerged in discussions concerning expectations to immigrants, themselves and other local agents. We have analysed the interviews to identify main trends and differences concerning immigration and local resilience in and across cases. Quotes illustrate and support the analyses.

4. Results and discussion: How do the rural elites perceive the impact of immigration?

First, we describe and analyse how the rural elites see international in-migration as a potential for promoting or restraining local resilience, as well as the expectations they ascribe to immigrants as co-producers of such resilience. The further analysis is guided by the two sets of interlinked and dual concepts – retention/receptiveness and inclusion/exclusion – to explore how such processes affect the multi-ruralization of Nordic rural places.

4.1. International in-migration as a potential for promoting local development

In line with earlier research on immigrants' contributions to rural areas in Norway (Haugen & Lysgård, 2006; Rye, 2017; Søholt et al., 2014) our study shows that immigrants are valued primarily for contributing to economic regional development, rather than in terms of cultural and ethnic diversity as such (see also Schöpflin, 2000). They boost the local economy and service production, and thereby the material conditions of the native population.

This municipality is characterized by industries exposed to global competition. To compete we have to recruit workers, mainly immigrants. ...

Many of the refugees work in the maritime industry. There is high

employment among the refugees who choose to stay on in this community.

(Chief municipal executive, Norway, II)

Immigrants are seen as a necessary labour force filling local positions in various sectors: food processing, maritime, mining, manufacturing, construction, cleaning, service, farming/fishing and tourism, as well as in public services, especially healthcare and elderly services.

According to the elites, immigrants are an essential workforce. Instead of competing with natives, they tend to fill vacancies.

We sent mails to approximately 200 unemployed native Danes. No one responded. They would rather lose their unemployment benefits than work in the pig farm. (Municipal employee, Denmark).

In the production in the harvesting plant (fishery) there were about 30 people employed. One was Norwegian, the rest were foreigners, but no refugees. (CEO Business Park, Norway III)

We know that it will be the foreign-born who will work in our homes for the elderly. We know that. That is the future: - luckily, there are people who want to care for our elderly. (Politician and entrepreneur, Sweden)

Most importantly, immigrants fill jobs that are not attractive to the local population – often unskilled and low-paid local work. To a lesser extent, but important for the rural places, they also fill some skilled jobs in industry and public services.

We couldn't run the hospital without immigrants. About 20% of the doctors and nurses are from abroad. Many are circular migrants on contracts, others have settled down (CEO, Hospital Norway III)

In Norway and Sweden, immigrants are valued because they make it possible to maintain and establish businesses in remote areas with limited local labour force, like the fishing industry in Norway. Some enterprises with global activities value and include immigrants who can enhance business activity – language and cultural skills are in demand, in addition to professional skills (Norway, III).

Immigrants are also appreciated for creating local businesses and thereby contributing to the common good. Examples include cafés and restaurants, hairdressers, shops and artisans, supplying services available to all. Such activities could not survive without interaction with the local community, indicating that the population is open to new elements and practices in the community. Findings from recent studies on immigrant entrepreneurship in Norwegian and Swedish rural contexts confirm that immigrants start businesses, which add to the local community (Hedberg & Carmo, 2012; Munkejord, 2016; Najib, 2013). Munkejord (2016) stress that entrepreneurship is a way to support oneself, participating in the local society and being able to live in a region of perceived attractiveness. In Denmark, interviewees did not mention immigrants as entrepreneurs, but, when presented with observations from the researchers' fieldwork, acknowledged that immigrants were operating local businesses like restaurants. The importance of migrants in relation to supporting local consumption was emphasized:

Most of the money stays here. They [the immigrants] rent housing, they shop for food and most of them have no cars to travel further, so they spend their money here.

(Politician and entrepreneur, Sweden)

Also in the Norwegian cases, estate agents and property owners emphasize that immigrants contribute to a more dynamic housing market.

Another pragmatic argument expressed by rural elites in Sweden and Denmark and in the Western case in Norway emphasizes how immigration contributes to population growth – or by minimizing a long-term trend of population decline. They acknowledge the value of a demographic profile with more children, an active labour force, etc., with better prospects for future local development. Although rural Norway benefits from international in-migration, immigrants' contribution to population growth was mentioned in only one of the cases.

4.2. International in-migration conceived as restraining local development

In all three countries, the key actors emphasize that *refugee* in-migration constitutes a challenge compared to *labour* migration. Whereas the latter relates to job opportunities, refugees settle for other reasons. Only after arrival in a specific location, is their job potential assessed and matched with local businesses, often by municipal initiatives facilitating refugee entry into the labour market (Søholt et al., 2015). Differing views on the employability of refugees compared to labour migrants relate to perceived poor work/language skills of many refugees, according to employers and municipal employees in Sweden and Denmark. In Norway, some interviewees thought of refugees in more ways: as capable, skilled, or as temporary, and therefore less attractive.

Furthermore, local industries have changed, and now require fewer, more skilled labourers. Even for unskilled work, interviewees held that refugees might have difficulties in managing a job. Such perceptions serve to exclude refugees from the labour market, and their lower employment rates affect municipal budgets.

We don't have very many well-educated refugees. Many of them are illiterate and have few formal skills (Local politician, Denmark).

However, the Danish and Norwegian cases show that employers realize they might lose qualified labour if they do not involve themselves in finding out about immigrants' and refugees' capacities for specific working places and for the community.

I'm afraid many immigrants are over-qualified for their jobs. I suspect that many refugees have simpler jobs than their qualifications. (CEO, private business, Norway, III)

Because of the pronounced focus on labour-market participation, migrants of refugee background are pre-judged as having a longer road to integration and inclusion. Other migrants like spouses may also be unnoticed.

It is really important when recruiting doctors that we also find a job for their spouse or partner who also typically has an academic background. Otherwise they won't stay. (Head of municipal organization on employment service for immigrants, Denmark)

Employability is a two-way process. It concerns the skills of those seeking work, and the local employers' general assessment of immigrants as well as assessment of the employability of different categories of immigrants. Together these aspects can influence the labour-market inclusion, exclusion or segmentation of immigrants on the group level. Both Danish and Norwegian interviewees who have experience with immigrant employees realize that they must involve themselves in getting multi-cultural workplaces to function. A key issue is workplace communication; also important are the underlying values of the workplace.

There should be some arrangements to prepare immigrants for our culture, in everyday life and at the workplace. Why Norwegians are as they are. They should get help to crack the social codes. (HR, industry, Norway, II)

These words reflect the intention to include. Newcomers are expected to learn the local codes to be able to function in their jobs, seen as a prerequisite for contributing at the workplace and in the local community. The account given by a Danish employer shows that specific needs of Muslim employees in terms of diet, prayer-time etc., are accommodated, but also stresses the need to get accustomed with Danish culture and habits. There is a will to include, but inclusion is conditional on investments in new practices, language courses, etc. A Norwegian employer expressed a different view. In his perspective, Muslims were unsuited for the local (tourism) industry because they were believed to have religious norms and practices conflicting with this kind of service industry and because their appearance might disturb the image of the place. Muslims were valued as “out of place”.

Especially the Norwegian cases reveal segmentation in the labour market and presumed employability according to ethnic background, religion or reasons for a residence permit. Similar results are found in a recent study from Norway where ethnicity is perceived as a skill (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017). According to Waldinger and Lichter (2003), categorizations (valued/ not-valued) shift over time, with changes in the need for labour and changes in immigration. Thus, in places undergoing flux, immigrants who are disqualified at one point in time might be revalued later.

In all the Nordic cases, the rural elites describe parallel or separate social communities, but without conflicts. In discussing multi-ethnic social inclusion and exclusion in the community, interviewees note the importance of participation in local organizations, as well as the lack of informal meeting-places. In line with Shucksmith (2003), these narratives contain reflections where social exclusion is related to societal processes – labour-market structure, housing supply and other local aspects. However, they sometimes also focus on the individual, and individuals’ lack of resources, like limited language skills, illiteracy or lack of engagement.

4.3. Expectations to immigrants as co-producers of rural resilience

Rural elites' expectations to immigrants are similar in Norway and Denmark. Having the right attitude, taking the initiative, joining local organizations, developing language skills, and making an effort are all expected.

They have a sound attitude. They understand that you should contribute before you can enjoy. It's about old virtues. They come from quite a different society, you know. (CEO, Denmark)

These expectations indicate that immigrants are seen as mainly responsible for practices of inclusion. Certain attitudes and behaviour are considered important in order to function at work, communicate and participate in the communities. This is in line with arguments of an ideological shift 'from rights to duties' in Norwegian and Danish integration policies, as discussed by Borevi et al. (2017). A similar development is visible in Sweden; however, immigrants' rights together with the duty of the municipality to offer relevant language training are emphasized. Rather than putting responsibility on the immigrants or the majority population, it is placed within the public domain, and in local associations and organizations.

Across cases, the rural elites expect immigrants, and other in-movers, to engage in civil society and contribute to thriving rural communities. In this regard, they are valued as individuals with potential to contribute to the local community as social and political resources, not only labourers and taxpayers. These expectations to participate and contribute build on the recognition that such small communities are vulnerable if residents do not get involved.

To support and guide young immigrants into our winter sports is an individual engagement for me. It's not part of my job. (CEO in public administration; voluntary work for sports club. Norway I)

Especially representatives of civic organizations noted that through participation and taking responsibility, immigrants would have the possibility to offer new ideas, practices and traditions to the community, to the benefit of all. Here, the migration experience is seen as a potential qualification. This understanding aligns with an understanding of the rural as a site of openness and cosmopolitanism (Cheshire & Woods, 2013; Stenbacka, 2018) where new ideas and a diverse population support community development.

4.4. Multi-ethnic rural community and local resilience

Interviews with local elites in all Nordic cases show openness to immigration; in rural Norway and Sweden, there is a long tradition of labour immigrants. In the Danish case, especially Vietnamese arriving as refugees in the mid-1970s have become part of rural communities. The visible presence and deemed importance of immigrants vary, but in all cases, rural communities have become multi-ethnic in population. In Norway, the three cases exhibit differences in how immigration has become embedded and contributed to the place. In the Norwegian Inland case, immigrants get little attention, as in Denmark. They are welcome, but are invisible or absorbed into flows of travellers and tourists. In general, Europeans are not noticed to the same extent as, for example refugees from Somalia or Afghanistan.

No, I don't think immigrants have changed this place. They work hard, and go back home. They are few and immigration is something new in the village. We are many years behind Oslo. I haven't seen any workers wearing hijab. No, hijab in the tourism industry wouldn't do... (CEO, tourism industry, Norway I)

In the North, immigrants are interpreted as a continuation of the regional history of being multi-ethnic. According to rural elites in Denmark and two cases in Norway (I, III), immigration has not changed the character of the place. Interestingly, this perception of no

change involves a continuous change where immigration has contributed to local optimism, especially when it correlates with economic development. Thus, the mayors in the Danish and the one of the Norwegian cases both embrace immigration.

I think this [immigration] has been good for the development of our village.

We have got new people with other traditions and backgrounds. We're proud of our immigrants, and many of them have become even more 'native' than many of the people who were born here. (Mayor, Norway II, 2008)

Asylum seekers are both good for the economy and for the life in small towns. (Mayor, Danish case)

Local elites in the Danish case expressed openness to immigration, but also described resistance to change among some local people. In contrast, instrumental openness appeared continuous in the Norwegian and the Swedish cases: 'in-movers and immigrants have always been important for these municipalities, in line with the dynamics of the local and later global companies and industries. 'Without in-migration there would be no [place]'. All the Nordic rural cases have attracted in-movers, but who these in-movers are has changed over time – from compatriots, to other Scandinavians, to people coming from all over, and with differing reasons. However, the extent and numbers of immigrants have varied a great deal, but have been much lower in Denmark. In some cases, there is a tradition of impersonal friendliness and a cosmopolitan attitude including taking mobility for granted. Still, some interviewees noted that their villages were not 'including' social places, also not for national in-movers.

You can participate in activities and you meet people through your job, but you don't get on the inside of social life ...Immigrants are better off, they socialize with each other. (Headmaster, N I)

When asked about what in-migration means to the local community, some interviewees included cultural diversity, and contribution to the community as important for the future of local resilience. In the Swedish case, responsibilities of the public authorities are considered important:

Cultural diversity, I believe in it. It opens people up /.../ the narrowmindedness that often appears in small communities. I think diversity is good for society. I believe that we are more similar than we realize. And as for the workforce, if they get the right introduction and get set on the right path, it will be good for society. (Employment officer, Sweden)

This reflection expresses both an individual and a community perspective. The ‘right introduction and the right path’ refer to collective action that may help to negate and counterbalance individual vulnerability (Wilson, 2010), as well as factors like social inclusion, participation and welfare necessary for building resilience (Kulig, 2000; McManus et al., 2012). Place, in the understandings of the local elites interviewed for this study, is increasingly experienced as process rather than a fixed authentic entity. Even though not socially included, most immigrants are included in the local elites’ narratives in pragmatic ways because they have a place in the labour market. Others, like refugees, are more often considered less employable and of less importance.

4.5. Rural places – thrown together by forces of retention/receptiveness and inclusion/exclusion

The ‘being thrown together’ of different migration flows vs. stayers, industrial sectors, degree of remoteness, inclinations towards cultural traditions vs. openness to the world and pragmatic views on changes – all this lays the ground for an array of interrelated processes between exclusion/inclusion and retention/receptiveness. How these processes work together

affect how immigration may link to rural resilience, and in what ways. Table 3 presents a framework across elements of exclusion/inclusion and retention/receptiveness as expressed in our interviews with rural elites.

Table 3: Retention/receptiveness vs. exclusion/inclusion

	Retention	Receptiveness
Exclusion	<p>A</p> <p>Parallel social communities</p> <p>Immigrants perceived as category</p> <p>No specific efforts to include in labour market</p> <p>Prevailing value: ignorance</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Structurally included in labour market, but segmented</p> <p>Community: all are welcome, but no specific efforts to include.</p> <p>Immigrants have to take initiative</p> <p>Prevailing value: welcome if you involve yourself</p>
Inclusion	<p>C</p> <p>Assimilation</p> <p>Inclusion in local practices and traditions.</p>	<p>D</p> <p>Inclusion in labour market and civil society as individuals.</p>

	<p>Prevailing value – welcome if you become like us</p>	<p>Openness to new ideas, practices, activities, adaption of traditions for including</p> <p>Prevailing value – social esteem</p>
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Each square is an ideal type, not a description of specific cases. The cases have features from all the squares but in different ways. In our interpretation of the rural elites' narratives, inclinations towards receptiveness/inclusion (D) support the development of broad-based (economic, social and cultural) rural resilience. Immigrants' inclusion in the labour market as such may contribute to local economic development, whereas ignorance and/or lack of social inclusion might simultaneously produce a segmented labour market (B) and parallel social communities (A). Processes of exclusion/inclusion and retention/receptiveness that produce new, undesirable inequalities might imply less stability, and deprive the community of the potential of all residents participating in co-producing the common and desirable future of the rural place. On the other hand, local expectations as to inclusion through assimilation in local practices and traditions might imply inclusion if in accordance with what the immigrants will, or promote exclusion if expectations of assimilation are not followed by openness (C). Expectations for immigrants to participate in both the labour market and in civil society can be seen as 'conditioned receptiveness'.

5. Conclusions

This article has examined how Nordic rural elites link immigration to local place resilience, what characterizes their perspectives, and what roles they ascribe to immigrants as co-producers of local resilience.

Our study contributes to the literature on the relations between immigration and rural resilience by addressing the perspectives of the rural elites. By focusing on rural resilience, the study further contributes to the understanding of processes and factors promoting inclusion, through the eyes of the elites. We chose to study rural elites because they are *influential* as regards local development and because migration research has often neglected the importance of their perspectives for inclusion/exclusion of immigrants.

In the literature, rurality and rural places are understood as traditional and rooted (etc.) and/or as part of or in opposition to globalization, cosmopolitanism, etc. Despite differences in national integration policies and different kind of places, the elites' narratives across our Nordic cases, underscore local economic development as paramount for the future resilience of their places; immigration is assessed mainly in this perspective. The economic perspective confirms previous research in the Nordic countries. The elites express pragmatic views regarding immigration, and are less concerned about whether immigration challenges local culture or contributes to an ethnically segmented labour market. On the other hand, pragmatism indicates that the hiring hierarchy might change with local needs and with who the in-comers are. In all cases, we found examples of immigrants of various origins who hold highly qualified jobs.

Even though these rural places are undergoing continuous demographic changes because of migration, and despite great differences in the share and diversity of immigrant populations,

we found few narratives about ‘place-changing’ due to immigration – because such mobility is perceived as normal. Across cases, the Nordic rural places are characterized as having both urban and rural characteristics, located in a rural landscape. This is best exemplified by the smallest Norwegian case, which is characterized by high mobility and cosmopolitanism because of tourism, but also by rootedness, traditional authenticity and some kind of a global ‘whiteness’, making immigrants that do not fit this picture less relevant in the narrative of the local rural elites.

Despite the fact that the elites have similar perceptions of the importance of immigration for local development, their frame of reference is not ‘the rural’ in general, but their specific place. An additional dimension characterizing differences between the places is constructed through narratives of outsiders and insiders. Former immigrants become locals and even elites; or they continue as outsiders, thus illustrating the elites’ power to define, include or exclude new compatriots. For example, only in one case (Norway) were Muslims mentioned as unfit for the local labour market, while a Danish employer was concerned about adapting services to Muslims specific needs. In the Swedish case, responsibilities of the local authorities were considered important to prepare for integration, while in the Danish and Norwegian cases the migrants were ascribed the main responsibility for integration. This mixing of perceptions of insiders and outsiders, varies across the cases studied here, giving each case its own flavour in the multi-ruralization process reconstituting the place, and framing the local elites’ narratives. There is in fact no hegemonic ‘Nordic rural’.

Through combinations of the dual concepts of retention vs. receptiveness and exclusion vs. inclusion, we find that rural elites include/exclude immigrants in their place narratives in different ways, depending on their interpretation of how migration links in with the future of

their place. These elites are concerned with the potentials inherent in immigration. However these potentials, according to their narratives, are conditioned by the elites' own norms of diversity adapted to their place, and by immigrants' own efforts to be included – whether by becoming like the majority, or by active engagement in processes of assimilation or other ways of participation and influencing the place. Our analysis indicates that rural resilience can be enhanced by immigration beyond economic development as such – if it is accompanied by local receptiveness building on social esteem. We thus argue that *conditioned receptiveness* distinguishes the attitudes and the way immigrants are placed in the local narrative.

Possibilities for achieving rural resilience, developing municipalities and places that can adopt to and challenge new circumstances, is on the agenda in Nordic rural communities. In this study, we have analysed rural elites' narratives of the relations between continual and diverse rural immigration and rural resilience. Following Buzzanell's words (2010, p.1), 'discourse, interaction and material considerations' are all *nuts and bolts* for building resilience. Rural elites are active in shaping their local communities by contributing to discourse, interacting in various arenas and making decisions regarding material considerations. Our study sheds light on the way these rural elites' norms of diversity affect how 'difference' is placed and handled through processes of inclusion/exclusion vs. retention and receptiveness, affecting the rural as an enabling space for building local resilience.

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