

# Processes of change in a rural Swedish community

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## Introduction

This article<sup>1</sup> has its point of departure in how rural inhabitants reflect and act to maintain a viable local community in times of increasing urbanisation and globalisation. Two kinds of changes are discussed. First the kind of continuous changes, which are part of daily life, and that the inhabitants usually find ways to cope with. Two common trends in this category being that most people leave the village during daytime to earn their living and that the school, shop and other local meeting places are closing down. This complicates the important every-day contact between the inhabitants, and to cope with this many people are engaged in associations where they can act as inhabitants of a local community. Second, we identify four types of more radical changes such as the<sup>2</sup> “increase of market pricing relations”, “mobilisation to save third places”, “changed power relations” and the “decrease in the agricultural sector”. To illustrate these changes four narratives are presented concerning moose hunting, the school, the church and farming. The ways in which we handle change sometimes leads to conflict between people. These conflicts reveal a paradox embedded in the concept of rural development, that change implies strains as well as opportunities for the local community, depending upon the perspective. The aim of the research is to understand how the inhabitants of a rural community reflect and act according to such changes. This knowledge can be used to answer the more action-oriented question of “How could rural policy be formulated to better correspond to the inhabitants conception of a viable local community?” The disciplinary base of this paper is anthropology, with influences from sociology, geography and history.

## Outline

In the following pages two concepts are introduced that will carry the thesis, local community/*bygd* and modernity. Also presented here are the rural

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<sup>1</sup> The text is an outline of a forthcoming thesis, written as a monograph. The fieldwork is finished but not the analyses, which means that the theories and empirical findings are not yet integrated. I also miss some important references especially to Swedish researchers in rural studies.

community about which the fieldwork was done, and the Swedish rural context more generally. In the following section the theoretical perspective guiding the research is presented, as is the methodological approach, consisting of fieldwork with interviews and participant observations in a rural Swedish community. This is followed by an attempt to integrate theories relating to the concept of local community/bygd with the actions and reflections that the inhabitants use in the continuous re-creation of the rural community. In this light an attempt is then made to try to integrate theories relating to modernisation with four narratives on change that emerge from the identification of the four processes of change. In the last chapter we use the different processes of change to open up for a discussion on a rural policy that better corresponds with the inhabitant's conception of a viable local community.

## **Background**

The modernisation process in rural Sweden has been ongoing for about 150 years, with two major trends. The first is that farming has changed from self-sufficiency to producing for market, and the second is that since the demographic turn in the 1930's more people live in urban areas than in rural areas. As a result, farmers inhabit a sparsely populated countryside only to a small extent. Today's rural change is manifested in decreasing population, the closure of farms, local mobilisation and restructuring of the service sector, and of peoples' livelihood and their political organisation. Another fact of prescience here is that the EU puts a lot of money into rural policy. The switch from a society based on agriculture and small-scale industry to a society where services and information dominate the employment of rural people has led to a separation between residing space and space for working life. The separation is not only spatial with people commuting to nearby towns, but it also concerns the content where residing still includes cultivating land, even if only on a small scale, while working life is generally now separated from the cultivation of land.

Though many rural inhabitants spend most of their days in towns, many of them are strongly engaged in their local community. Out of several social identities (such as nurse, bridge player or mother) the local or place identity often constitutes a substantial part of rural people's social identity. Of course people also feel rooted in urban areas, but it is more likely in rural areas to find a sense of community connected to a place. It is also more likely that so-called indigenous cultural systems tend to be at the most visible in rural communities (Ray 1999:265). Rather than polarising urban-rural it would perhaps be better to turn our attention towards issues of cultural-territorial identity (ibid: 265). Urbanity is closely associated with modernity, while modernity in some respects is a threat to the feeling of belonging, which is one significant feature of rurality. The thesis

forwarded here investigates how modernity affects rural life, and we will start with two basic assumptions:

- Many people feel related to a place, including its inhabitants and its history. This can be described by the Swedish concept of “*bygd*”, in English *local community*.
- The societal change of western societies tends to break up the relations between people, place and history. This can be described by the concept of *modernity*.

To investigate modern rural life the two phenomena of local community and modernity as well as the relation between them are analysed. This is done by integrating local narratives and social actions with theories of identity, place, time, (high/reflexive and post) modernity, globalisation and development. The two phenomena can be described by different concepts.

To understand what it takes for a place to become a home we utilise the Swedish term “*bygd*”, a part of the term “*landsbygd*”, which could be translated as “rural”. *Landsbygd* literally means the part of the land that is cultivated and settled. “*Bygd*” in Swedish, “dwelling” in English and “*bauen*” in German all originate from the Old English and High German word “*buan*” (Ingold 2000: 185-188). The three concepts have since diverged from the original perspective of “building/ cultivating a world to dwell in”, and we now use separate words for “to build”, “to cultivate” and “to feel at home”. In Swedish the words farmer (*bonde*), live (*bo*), cultivate (*odla*), build (*bygga*) and local community (*bygd*) are closely related, which shows that *bygd* has kept some of the connotations from the original word. *Bygd* thus makes it easier than any English term to encompass an ontological perspective of the world as something created through interaction between persons and their environment. “Dwelling” is closely related to *bygd*, but in the text we will use the more common “local community”. In the thesis my own definition of *bygd* as “a shared conception of interconnectedness between people and a place over time” will be used. This is expressed in dialect, buildings, food, clothes, business, traditions etc. The definition could also apply to local communities in urban areas.

*Modernity* is a term as frequently used as it is criticised, and it will be discussed further when presenting the four narratives on change. A “first approximation” by the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990:1) notes that

modernity refers to modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence.

The worldwide influence is expressed by another social theorist, namely, Arjun Appadurai (2000:1) who grew up in Bombay where he “saw and smelled modernity reading *Life* (...), seeing B-grade films from Hollywood”. Obviously

there are continuities in the history of mankind, with several features that so-called traditional societies have in common with modern societies (often synonymous with Western). But modernity also brought discontinuities like the pace and the scope of change as well as modern institutions (Giddens 1990:6). According to Giddens (ibid:16-17) the dynamics of modernity derive from the separation of time and space, the dis-embedding of social relations and the reflexive ordering of social relations. To distinguish early modernity from today's mode of life terms such as high or reflexive modernity are used. The term post modernity emphasises a new discontinuity without any grand theories to explain society. Theories of modernity do not belong to post modernity.

Rurality related to modernity is problematic since rural communities are rooted both in time and space. Land, forest and water, and the activities historically derived from them are contexts that give rural areas meaning, which is the driving force behind the local engagement of many inhabitants, even though they are not farmers. But to view modernity only as a threat is not enough to understand rural conditions. Instead of a causal connection there is a paradox embedded in the concept of rural (or local) development: change implies strains as well as opportunities for the local community, depending on ones perspective. Development that benefits some people can lead to a loss in the qualities that characterise the rural community, such as landscape or social networks. This paradox becomes manifest in interaction between people with different frames of interpretation, which can lead to conflict. For example, attracting tourists to the region is one way of creating jobs and stabilising the level of services in the region, but it also affects the relationships between the residents and their appraisal of their town, their environment, and their notion of "the good life."

### **The rural community**

To understand the local strategies of coping with the paradox of rural development a case study is done, with participant observations and qualitative interviews. The local community chosen is a parish of 500 inhabitants, in the text referred to simply as G. The parish is situated in the province of Småland, and belongs to the municipality of Vimmerby, which is part of the Leader area "Astrid Lindgrens native place". In G there are no large Leader projects though. The number of inhabitants has remained constant over the last decades, in spite of the few jobs available locally. Most people commute to nearby small towns. There are about ten farms left of which a few are large enough to support a family. We have chosen to illustrate societal change through four narratives from this local community, all of them typical examples of what happens in many Swedish rural areas.

<u>Narrative</u>	<u>Change</u>
1) Moose hunting and hunting tourism	Increase of market pricing relations
2) The fight for the school	Mobilisation to save third places
3) The conflict between the priest and the church council	Changed power relations
4) Farmers and the cultivated landscape	Decrease in the agricultural sector

## **Rural context**

Though Sweden is a small country the living conditions vary between its different parts. There are urban areas, with almost seven million inhabitants and half of them living in bigger cities. There are rural areas adjacent to urban with almost two million inhabitants – Småland belongs to this category. And finally there are sparsely populated areas with almost 200,000 inhabitants. One general trend being that the smaller towns lose inhabitants while the larger cities continue to grow. Sparsely populated areas, especially in northern Sweden lose inhabitants of all age groups, while rural areas adjacent to urban areas show stronger regional variation. The age group of 50-64 tends to increase there while people between 16-29 tend to move away from these areas. Rural areas close to larger cities attract people more than areas outside smaller towns. There are more men and elderly people in sparsely populated areas, while larger cities show the opposite pattern. In recent years the access to shops and schools has decreased in many rural and sparsely populated areas. When it comes to the labour market it is more common to have a diversified working situation in rural than in urban areas. Though the agricultural sector employs ten percent less people today than it did only ten years ago it is still rather important in many rural areas. Moreover, the building trade and the health and care sector are over represented in rural areas. (Glesbygdsverket 2001).

Rural development in Sweden often refers to two phenomena. The first one is the so-called village action movement consisting of local actors. The second is the policy aiming at improved living conditions for the rural population. Characteristic of Sweden is the existence of continuing close relations between the policy and the popular movement. The village action movement continues the Swedish tradition of popular movements that eventually become supported by the Government and thus more or less institutionalised. Other examples are the environmental and the feminist movements. Behind the contemporary process of rural development we have the great changes that occurred during the 1970's and the 1980's. By then a "working community" based on agriculture was gradually being replaced by a "leisure community" based on non-profit-making associations. By the end of the 1970's the government established the rural delegation

and thereby changed rural policy from merely supporting enterprises and infrastructure to also supporting local development projects and local action groups (Herlitz 1998). In the 1980's both the government and the folklore societies wanted to strengthen this trend and in 1987 Sweden joined the rural campaign of the European Council. With political support a local mobilisation process took place often starting as response to a threat against the local school or shop, though over the years concerns inevitably turned more to questions of local democracy and livelihood. Irrespective of their activities the local action groups create and reproduce a place-related communality, and their work can be seen as a way to establish a new idea of what the place is (Berghlund 1998:193).

By the end of the 1990's there were almost 4000 village action groups registered at the Popular Movements Council for Rural Development (Folkrörelserådet Hela Sverige ska leva), which is an organisation for both local groups and national NGOs. The organisation was established in 1989 when the national campaign finished and at the same time as the Rural delegation became the Rural Authority, and later the National Rural Development Agency. Since then, the Popular Movements Council has continued to arrange a rural parliament every second year, and through this function it has acted as a lobby organisation for the government, which gives a strong voice to the village groups.

## Theories and methods

### **A relational perspective**

The first assumption, namely, that many people feel related to a place, is formulated from a relational perspective. A characteristic of this perspective is an ambition to bridge the dualism between body and soul, nature and culture as well as between natural- and human sciences, realism and relativism. This is what guides modern ecological anthropology with Tim Ingold (2000) as its most well known international exponent and Alf Hornborg (2001) as its Swedish representative. Ecological anthropology today is however a rather different discipline than the earlier materialistic ecological anthropology, where physical conditions were supposed to determine culture (Crumley (ed) 2001). The relational approach has grown out of several people's work in different disciplines with important contributions from phenomenological philosophy (Merleau-Ponty 1962, Husserl cited in Abram 1996), ecological psychology (Gibson 1979, Roszak 1992) and developmental systems biology (von Uexküll 1982, Maturana and Varela 1987).

Ontologically a relational perspective presupposes a world that we create by living in it, acting and relating. Every being is living in its own subjective universe (Umwelt according to von Uexküll 1982) where the world is meaningful. This opens up diverse worlds, or diverse perspectives on the world. The

conception of a self-contained individual interpreting the world through sensory impressions is put against a “developing-organism-in-its-environment” (Maturana and Varela 1987).

The environment is “reality constituted in relation to the beings whose environment it is” (Ingold 2000:p168), and should not be confused with “nature” or “real” environment (as opposed to “perceived”), which presuppose an imagined separation between the perceiver and the world. A local community/bygd defined as a shared conception of relations between different components (people, place and time) is an example of an environment for those inhabiting it. Heidegger (1971: 145-161) uses the term “dwelling” to describe how we inhabit the world, perceived as being-in-the-world.

Epistemologically a relational perspective presupposes that knowledge is not something you have but something you create by relating to the world. This relation is often expressed through language (Israel 1992: 83-84). How we understand the environment depends on how we act in it and thus perceive it, writes Ingold, suggesting in essence “we know as we go” (2000: 228). By this statement the dichotomy between perception (a positivistic way of gaining knowledge) and interpretation (a hermeneutic way of gaining knowledge) dissolves, and instead knowledge becomes something contextualised, practical and personal. This appears to stand in contrast to scientific knowledge, but the practice of science is more actively exploring than passively observing, and there cannot be any observation without some kind of engagement. The concept of truth is central in epistemology, and there are at least three different kinds of truths (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 1994). Truth in the positivistic tradition is representative and supposed to correspond to reality. Truth in the pragmatic tradition is applicable and supposed to be useful. Truth in hermeneutic tradition is significative and supposed to reveal a hidden meaning. Most theories have a mixture of all three views, differently emphasised in different sciences. In the research carried out here a search for the meaning making of the local inhabitants indicates an emphasis on significant truth. To avoid such a truth becoming personal and thus difficult to communicate to others we are capable of creating inter-subjectivity, when people in the same cultural context agree on what is truth. Besides significant truth the thesis also aims to represent reality from the local actors point of view, as well as being applicable in rural and policy discourses.

Cognitive anthropology differs ontologically from ecological anthropology. Cognitive science places the world out there, ready for us to confront and interpret. But whereas cognitive scientists are concerned with the universals of human cognition, cognitive anthropologist’s account for human perception and action in terms of acquired schemata that differ from one culture to another. That gives them a view of knowledge that is more contextualised than the view of cognitive scientists. Cognitive anthropology is thus used here as one of the tools

for investigating the question of how the same context (e.g. a local community) could evoke different behaviour from people with different backgrounds (e.g. natives and immigrants). The key concept in cognitive anthropology is that of cultural models, defined as “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared by members of a society...” (Holland and Quinn 1987:4). These models are viewed as networks of complex relations, and they can have a motivational force and thereby explain why people think the way they do, and not only label and describe the world (D’Andrade and Strauss 1992).

In spite of cultural models being more complex than the models of cognitive science, cognitive anthropology still starts from the premise that culture is a *corpus* of transmissible knowledge, as distinct from the ways in which knowledge is acquired in practical contexts of perception and action. There is a movement in contemporary anthropology rejecting this, with Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* as an alternative to cultural models (1990). This movement could be labelled the theory of practice, and resembles the relational perspective on knowledge in the sense that *habitus* reminds of Ingold’s expression “we know as we go”. *Habitus* is not expressed in practice, like cultural models, it rather subsists in it. And if people from different backgrounds behave in different ways, this is not because they are interpreting the same sensory experience in terms of alternative cultural models, but because, due to their previous experiences, their senses are differentially attuned to the environment. Practical theory and *habitus* are concepts that help us to handle the complexity of peoples’ experiences and thus gain a deeper understanding of their meaning making than what is possible with the concept of cultural models.

## **Methods**

A case study was undertaken in the parish of G, which was chosen because there was already some historical research done there by the department of Geography at Stockholm University. Another motive was that G is an ordinary rural community without any remarkable features that attracts tourists or developmental funds. The four narratives were gradually selected during the fieldwork, which was elaborated through participant observations and qualitative interviews. A total of three months was spent in G since 1998 interviewing around 60 persons and participating in moose hunts, different association meetings, church services, homestead day, handicraft day, the opening of a new beach and the anniversary of the sports club. Several spontaneous conversations have taken place in different places, often in the homes of those I got to know more closely. Participant observations and qualitative interviews are two methods that cover both people’s actions and their reflections on those actions, which gives a deeper understanding than only listening to what people say (Bloch 1998).



In the process of analysing and interpreting the data collected I have benefited from methods and theories used in phenomenology to understand how people perceive their environment (Abram 1996), hermeneutics to understand symbolic communication such as metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), and critical theory to place my research in a wider societal context (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994). My role as a researcher is likened to that of the traveller moving in the landscape and meeting people. Where I go and the people I meet are guided by these methods, which literally means, “a way leading to a goal” (Kvale 1997). What story I choose to tell is guided by the knowledge I have achieved. It is important to be aware of how fieldwork affects the researcher, and how the researcher affects the field (Coffey 1999). Doing fieldwork in ones own country raises questions about methods and analyses that help the researcher to overcome a taken-for-granted attitude (Jackson 1987). It also puts higher demands on ethical questions such as how to present the results without offending people or revealing their identity.

## The continuous re-creation of a local community

This part concerns the first assumption that people feel related to a place, which is crucial to deal with in order to understand how the inhabitants of a rural community reflect and act according to change. Here theories about sense of community/bygd are integrated with examples showing how the inhabitants of G cope with continuous changes. The notion of the bygd is thus described as “a shared conception of interconnectedness between people and a place over time”, a definition embedding the three concepts of identity, place and time. The empirical examples concern how the inhabitants reflect and act according to the slow transformations that take place at such a pace and a scale that they may not be noticed in every day life. In other words this part describes situations where the paradox of rural development can be handled, that is to say, when most people do not view change as a threat.

### **Some facts about G**

The name of the parish indicates that it has been inhabited for about one thousand years. Småland was constituted historically by several “small lands”, and G formed the inner part of one of them. This remained until 1971 when G through municipal reform became a part of the municipality of Vimmerby, which historically belongs to another of the “small lands”. The parish consists mostly of forest and has very little fertile land. Traditionally smallholders and crofters inhabited it, and the land, including the forest, is still privately owned in rather small plots. Many people emphasise the importance of equality and solidarity, playing up their differences with other societies with a different history. The area

runs for around twenty kilometres in a north-south direction, while being less than ten kilometres from east to west. A cultivated valley opens up the forest landscape from the north to the south. There are five villages with ten to twenty houses each, including the church village in the northern part. Demographic development follows a typically rural pattern with a rapid increase in the nineteenth century followed by an equally rapid decrease in the twentieth century. At its peak in the late 1800's the population was around 2,700, while today it is approximately 500 (Gerger 1984:23). In a distance of forty kilometres there are three small towns, to which most of the inhabitants of G commute.

### **Theories of identity**

In the 1930's Mauss (1939) described how a person in pre-modern societies refers to a collective representation (the role) and in modern societies to more individual aspects (the self). Mead (1934) tried to merge these two aspects of a person, often viewed as the attributed and the experienced identity. He used the concept of The Self, consisting of The "I" (the self as subject) and The "Me" (the self as object), and he states that it is when these two aspects fully correspond that we feel "the meaning of life". The Self appears in interaction with The Other, when we take each other's role. Identity, according to Mead, is thus shaped in interaction between people. His concerns were about social identities and he did not say much about the role of the environment, except from other human beings. Charon who built on Mead's theories defines identity as "the names we call ourselves" (1995:80). The categories and symbols that make up a person's identity serve dual functions, according to Shaw (1994). First, they make it possible for us to reflect upon ourselves, and upon our intentions and our desires. Second, identity expressions make it possible for others to decide which position a person has in a group. Thus our identities are socially constructed and vice versa they construct society. Among the different communities that form the greater society Wenger points to communities of practice, as the "basic building blocks of a social learning system" (2000:229). Viewing G as a community of practice thus helps us to understand how the inhabitants act to continually re-create their community.

An important anthropological debate concerned with whether the concept of a person varies cross-culturally started in the 1980's when Geertz identified the western conception of the Self peculiar (Spiro 1993). One way of describing differences in terms of identity is socio-centric and egocentric relationships between the individual and the society (Schweder and Bourne 1984). A socio-centric solution subordinates individual interests to the good of the collectivity, while in the egocentric solution society becomes the servant of the individual. A person with a socio-centric identity is defined as a daughter of, or neighbour of someone, and becomes a component in a field of social relations. With an ego-

centric identity you become someone through your personality, style, professional ability etc. Especially in western societies the same person has several social identities, and place identity could exist parallel to professional identity etc. In rural contexts it is more likely that a socio-centric identity is triggered. Another important aspect of identity is the construction of male and female identity (West and Zimmerman 1987). Moose hunting is a rural context where gender identity is evoked, even though the male gender of hunting is breaking up (Adelswärd 1996).

Connected to the concept of person and how people relate to each other, the place and its history are theories of social relations. Fiske (2000) recognises four universal models of relations; Communal sharing, Authority ranking, Equality matching and Market pricing. In order to interact there has to be an agreement on which relational form is concerned. In local communities communal sharing is probably the most dominant form, as well as the dominant norm. Though authority ranking is probably also common in many situations. With modernisation, market pricing tends to increase. Another model to understand social relations, from the aspect of preferably economic local practises confronting societal change, is the concept of the coping strategy elaborated by Aarsaether and Baerenholdt (2001: 15-40). Inspired by Polanyi (1944) they view places and localities as made up by three types of social relations; reciprocal, associative, and market-oriented. This corresponds to Fiske's division and supplements the component of relations between people in my definition of a local community. All three kinds of relations are necessary according to Aarsaether and Baerenholdt. To maintain a balance between them the inhabitants use different coping strategies that ought to include innovations (to create support and relations to the national and global levels), networking (to create local inclusion and relations outside the community) and formation of identity (to be meaningful for those involved). If one of these strategies is missing people will have a hard time encountering problems like providing incomes, maintaining public service and securing the natural resource base.

### **Identity and social relations in G**

Relations to the other inhabitants were historically maintained through work during weekdays and attending church service on Sundays. This pattern gradually broke up from the 1940's onwards, and in the 1970's only a few people were included in these kinds of relations. Sporting activities among the male inhabitants had since the 1940 are grown in importance as a way of keeping up such social relations. Politics, hunting and associations were other, not so widespread, activities. Several female informants who moved to G during the 1970's however told me about their difficulty in getting to know other people. In the village shops

nobody spoke to them, and when passing the houses they only saw the curtains move. It took years before they talked to some of their neighbours.

By the beginning of the 1980's new kinds of social relations had started to develop when one of the women who had moved to G invited other women to attend gymnastic groups at the local school. The mobilisation to save the local school (see Narrative 2) grew partially out of this gymnastic group. The next step was that the different sports clubs, including the gymnastics club, established a common association. As their first task the association put up notice boards in the villages and as their second they distributed a local newsletter to all inhabitants. The newsletter also helps to keep up the social relations at a distance for those who have moved away from G, or for other reasons (such as research purposes) that want to subscribe. Another association was established to look after the rural community centre (bygdegård) and arrange activities like study circles. There were already many old associations, associated with the church, Red Cross, the temperance movement, the farmers association, the local folklore society and political groups. When these became involved in a larger context covering the whole community many of them became more vital. Before there had been a clear division between the northern and the southern part of G, mirrored in the fact that many of the associations had two groups. This division is now slowly being erased.

A lot of activities, old and new, are now engaging many of the inhabitants. Among the yearly events are the homestead day taking place at the old homestead museum, the handicraft day at the community centre where there is at least one study circle every winter season. There are also summer celebrations at the lakeside, a yearly veteran car exhibition, bicycling and other activities arranged by the common sports club, festivities with sport and competitions arranged by the farmers association, trips as well as out- door services arranged by the church.

It seems as if the socio-centric identity is gradually shifting towards that of an egocentric identity, though the associations and the activities connected to them strive to uphold a sense of community where a person is defined though his/her position in a web of social relations. Market pricing relations and innovations are less common than other types of social relations like reciprocal, communal sharing and equality matching, though the shift towards egocentric identity probably also promotes market pricing relations. Conflicts are a part of the cultural practices and thus could be both strengthening and dividing.

### **Theories on place**

The concept of place was first elaborated by geographers, when more qualitative analyses emerged as complement to the positivistic and quantitative tradition in geography. Tuan (1974) used the term "Topophilia" which he defined as the

affective bond between people and place. Starting from that position Relph (1976) developed the concept “Sense of Place”, consisting of four components; the physical space, the activities taking place there, the meaning of those two and the spirit of the place. With this definition it is possible for people to carry an image of the place irrespective of where they are. Discussions of place and modernity are a big field in geography. A general interpretation is that time-space relations are compressed and that place is becoming less important (Harvey 1993), Appadurai 2000). Others reject this and argue that there are new power relations that make way for new interpretations of what place is (Massey 1993).

The interest in the local, the place, the landscape and the feeling of belonging associated with this has lately been questioned. Lippard (1997) writes about the lure of the local, and constructs a theory that links local place to both global process and the politics of representation through which that place is known. The important question for her is

“... how a multi-centred world can be wrested from the control of multi-national corporations to assure a certain local legitimacy of the projects of home and place” (Lippard cited in Mitchell 2001: 278).

The landscape is also political, besides other meanings. An important issue in rural areas is how the possession of land is an aspect of place that highlights power relations (Newly et al. 1978). Another rural issue is how to maintain cultivated landscapes. Olwig (1993) suggests that it is important to maintain the relations between agriculture and cultivated landscape, by focusing on the process of landscaping instead of putting a price on different objects in the landscape as the rural policy of EU (CAP) does.

Urry (2000: 137-138) makes a distinction between two forms of local belonging, land and landscape. The practice of land captures Heidegger’s notion of dwelling, which is the same phenomenon as in my first assumption of people feeling related to a place. Landscape refers to the visible scene, and the practice of landscape is that of leisure, relaxation and visual consumption. He then describes some general features of many local communities (ibid. 139-142). First, local communities seem to be organised through different temporalities, carrying memories of those who have lived there. Second, time may or may not presuppose movement, change or transformation, leading to an understanding of places as multiplex networks and flows. Third, objects are significant in the construction of a local community, which include the significance of informal causal meeting places such as cafés, community centres, spaces under pear-trees and so on. These places could be called “third places”, beyond work and households where communities come into being and neighbourhood life can be sustained. Fourth, many local communities are characterised both by unequal social relations and hostility to strangers. Fifth, local communities are places of

consumption, and many places are themselves in a sense consumed. Finally, local communities depend upon diverse motilities.

Territoriality is a concept related to place, and it has often been interpreted as a matter of instincts, built on the assumption that animals can be dichotomised into territorial and non-territorial species. Humans are supposed to be territorial animals. But there are studies of mobile societies that show flexible territorial behaviour in relation to factors such as uncertainty and risk (Casimir and Rao 1991). An attempt to connect territoriality to modernity is made in a book about how capital, knowledge, business and individuals are crossing borders (Karlsson et al. 1997). To classify some people as indigenous is built both on the assumption of a territorial instinct and on a classificatory model for kinship, based on genealogy (Ingold 2000:132-151). To classify is to de-contextualise, according to Ingold, and is therefore a typical “modern” way of knowing. An alternative that better fits those who are called indigenous people is to view kinship as story based (ibid). Even when stories of descent does not correspond with the genealogical findings (which for many are supposed to be truth) people can prefer their story as truth (Kurkiala 1997). Ingold states that story based descent was abandoned for classificatory models when people, as a way of gaining power over their situation, choose to be defined as indigenous. How long should a people have inhabited a place to be called indigenous? What happens if it is shown that they have been nomads? Are we not all indigenous people on earth? These are questions that Ingold is asking and that are also relevant for answering questions such as who belongs to a Swedish local community.

### **Relations to the place of G**

There are only a few “third places”, i.e. informal meeting places, but they are much used. The only places to meet during wintertime are the school, the rural community centre and the church. They are all situated in the main village in the northern part of G, and in the southern part there are a few minor public houses for meetings and festivities. The last shop closed at the beginning of the 1980’s. In the summer the inhabitants meet at the beach that was restored and enlarged with public money and a local work force. Barnyards are semi-public places that get fewer in number when farmers go out of business.

To maintain relations to the place people often tell anecdotes about different farms and other places when they pass. Particularly during hunting it is common to stop and remind the others when a moose passed this or that way, or of some other event. These may often be old stories that everybody has heard many times before. The different places where the hunters go to wait for game also have their own names that refer to significant features or events.

The following three real-estate purchases show other ways of maintaining relations to a place.

- A man, who lives outside G, wanted to sell his parent's house when they died. He wanted to sell to a family with children instead of getting a market price and his behaviour was highly appreciated. An interpretation being that the well-being of the community was more important than his own (economic) well-being.
- Six siblings wanted to sell their deceased parents small farm, and one of them wanted to buy it and move there. An offer from a German family made the siblings sell to them instead of to their brother. The German family now lives there all the year round and cultivates the land. The brother visits them sometimes and shows them how the heating system works etc. An interpretation here being that he cares about the farm in itself, in spite of who owns it.
- The church sold the old priest's house, where a family with three children has lived for several years. The family wanted to buy, but the church wanted a market price, which the family could not afford. The family moved and most people consider the church greedy and that it does not care about the community. An interpretation being that the church finds its own well-being more important than the well-being of the local community.

It is obvious that people care about the place and have a strong place identity, but it is getting more difficult to practise this since there are ever fewer third places, and the locality of the community is divided into several more private places. The boundaries of the local community are shifting depending on the context. Or perhaps there are no boundaries but a perceived place that exists when people act and communicate it.

### **Theories of time**

The concept of time has also been discussed in relation to modernisation. Historically time was linked to place. When the watch was invented the notion of "empty time" appeared. Now the whole world follows the same division of time though calendars still differ. When time was emptied place was also emptied and they became separated (Giddens 1990). In traditional societies a place is where social activities take place and it has a time dimension of "now". In modern societies it is possible to have relations to absent people and distant places. The local here and now is affected by social actions far away in time and space. But even today we have different perception of time according to context. When living off the land it is more likely that we view time as circular, as compared to when we have an urban surrounding which evokes a perception of time as linear. Societal change is perceived by neo-classical economists as something deterministic, based on a linear perception of time. A way to overcome this polari-

sation is through the concept of an expanding present (Bergson 1996). This is useful when analysing the contextual perception of time that appears when local inhabitants here and now are aware of local history at the same time as they are acting to influence the future.

A concept connecting both identities, place and time is nostalgia, or homesickness. Until the nineteenth century nostalgia was perceived as a medical phenomenon, but with modernity it transformed into a social phenomenon (Johannisson 2001). The need for a place to call home was supposed to disappear in a future where all people were united (ibid: 127). To be nostalgic became a sign of weakness and passivity, and an inability to become modern.

### **Relations to the history of G**

It is quite common for the locals, not just the elderly ones, to be conscious of the history of G. To be viewed as a “real inhabitant” it is more important to have an ancestral line in G that stretches far back in time than if you are actively engaged in the local associations. A sign of the importance of old times is that many people were involved in study circles about genealogical research about 15 years ago. Another example is contained in the various written records about G. The local association of retired people have, together with a researcher who moved back to G, written two reports about work and school in old times. A similar but older text is an ethnographic book from 1812 written by the local cantor. Many inhabitants have read it and quote parts from it that describes the character of people from G. In the 1950’s and 1960’s the vicar collected cuttings about G from the local newspaper. These are kept in five files by the local folklore society, an association that arranges the homestead day every summer and is responsible for some restored old buildings. Two situations illustrate the presence of the past. An 85-year old woman, who moved to G as a teenager, told me with tears in her eyes about when the church of her native village burnt down. It happened in the 17<sup>th</sup> century! A hunter spontaneously lent me some framed letters from the Middle Ages concerning legal disputes about his village.

More recent history is however also important, and many people are still upset about the municipal reform that saw G incorporated into the municipality of Vimmerby. They say that they lost their independence and that G historically belongs to a different area than Vimmerby, with another cultural context.

The inhabitants of G thus live in a kind of expanded present, when they in daily life are conscious about the past and even use it for common activities, which creates new memories to relate to.



## Four narratives on change

In this section we turn to the second assumption about the more radical societal changes called modernity (high, reflexive or post). We have identified four processes of change that many inhabitants discuss in terms of conflicts, fights or problems that have to be handled. These narratives on change could be described in terms of the paradox of rural development, illustrating how people reflect and act according to changes that may imply discontinuity in the history of their community. A situation that is perceived as threatening for some people could be viewed as a possibility for others. There is a tendency that the people who have moved to a village are more open to change than the people born there, including initiatives such as stopping changes such as the closing down of the school. Those who are born in the same village sometimes feel the need not to differ from the majority, and prefer to wait and see rather than take the initiative. They could also be so used to the way things are that they do not even notice what they miss. Differences between people can also follow other criteria, such as sex, generation or class. Different contexts can activate different perspectives for the same person, like the landowner who talked about forestry from a business perspective during an interview and later during hunting talked about the game and the forest in terms of beauty, memories and feelings.

### **Modernisation**

Modernity is mainly elaborated in sociology, starting with Marx, Tönnies, Durkheim and Weber from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. With the exception of Durkheim they were all critical of societal change from a radical perspective. In addition to their German origin they also shared the critical interest and social engagement of the researchers of the Frankfurt school that established critical theory in the 1930's. Contemporary researchers who count as critical modernisation theorists are Beck, Giddens and Habermas. They have in common a view on modernisation as a process of unifying where large scale and general systems dominate the diversity of local systems. Beck stresses that modernisation leads to a risk society, where the global economy, and scientific and technological knowledge, apart from creating wealth, also produce risks (Beck 1992). What are unique in modern society, according to Giddens, are the pace and the scope of change as well as modern institutions like the nation-state, the wholesale dependence of production upon inanimate power sources, and the commodification of products and wage labour (Giddens 1990:6). The dynamics that characterise modernity originate from the separation of time and space, which are then opened up for de-contextualisation and self-reflection. Modern society uses the image of dualism to make it possible to take phenomena out context, changing the meaning by which we construct the world (ibid). Meaning is

replaced by facts; i.e. entities taken out of their context and therefore perceived as objective and general, and thus possible to exchange, often through money. The risk with increasing market relations is discussed by many authors (Polanyi 1944, Sagoff 1994, Lash and Urry 2000, Hart 1999). Hornborg (2001) argues that we are caught in a collective illusion that does not enable us to see other than technological solutions to economic and environmental problems.

Except for the more obvious tools for exceeding time and space, such as cars, telephones and computers, we have literacy (Ong 1990). The ability to read and write is also a tool for increasing self-reflection, which Giddens states as one of the signs of modernisation expressing increasing alienation. The paradox of rural development interpreted within the context of modernisation theory implies that the time-space-relations that give meaning to, and thus create, a local community are replaced by other relations which change the meaning and thereby the whole phenomenon of local community. The “old” community is threatened, and the “new” could offer possibilities for many people, while at the same time holding out the risk that it may simply collapse as a community.

In contrast to Beck and Giddens, Habermas (1990) does not as strongly emphasise the risk factor, nor does he study structure to such a high degree. He views society as a communicative process, which goes against the dominant opinion of society as the sum of its individuals. In his analyses of society he focuses on process, and creates a theory of communicative action that opens up numerous possibilities. In short his theory distinguishes two perspectives on society: the life world and the systems world. The life world is society from the inhabitant’s point of view, while the systems world is the observer’s perspective. Different goals and rationalities guide the two perspectives. In the life world our rationality tends to be more communicative, i.e. we speak in order to understand each other. While in the systems world we tend to act more strategically and speak in order to gain something. Communicative rationality is a utopian phenomenon, and not significant for every day life Habermas remarks, in a polemic with Giddens, who criticises Habermas for being unrealistic. *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, by Tönnies, are two concepts related to the life world and systems world, but according to Habermas are not transferable to modern society. *Gemeinschaft* is connected with the family sphere, while life world is a perspective of life more than a lifestyle.

These more or less critical interpretations of modernisation are questioned. On the one hand there are self-criticism claiming that to make concepts like *habitus* or communicative rationality is to classify and for that we need to generalise and de-contextualise. The concept of local community could be an example of a modern cultural construction raised from increased self-reflection. On the other hand there are researchers who question the concept of modernity, and through ethnographic examples they argue that it is a matter of context, where some

contexts activate modern knowledge, identity etc, while others activate a more traditional or local way of life (Hall 1995). A theory closely related to that of Ingold is the actor network theory of Latour (1993), where he applies a relational perspective to claim that we have never have been modern, and that societal change is a matter of shifting contexts. How to label contemporary society seems to be a never-ending discussion, with different suggestions depending on how to interpret societal change. Modernity, high or reflexive modernity and post-modernity are the most common concepts. The same situation holds for what to call the *époque* before the enlightenment and places outside the western world. Traditional, pre-modern and *a*-modern are some suggestions. The insight that it concerns something highly contextual and dynamic makes it difficult to split time and space into two categories. We use modernisation here for contemporary time and for “western” society, while what is not modern is labelled depending on the context.

### **Globalisation**

A concept closely related to modernisation is that of globalisation, which indicates that modernisation is spreading outside the so-called western parts of the world (this is included in Giddens’s description of modernisation). When globalisation is used instead of modernisation there are usually three fields of change that are mentioned; economic, political and issues of knowledge. The power relations of globalisation are much studied, both north south and male-female. Four different trends for viewing globalisation can be highlighted as follows:

- 1) Hyper globalists, who view globalisation as both inevitable and good.
- 2) Sceptics, who do not view globalisation as inevitable.
- 3) Transformists, who view globalisation as inevitable but are critical
- 4) Those who doubt if there is any such thing as globalisation.

The third trend includes Giddens and many of the others that are critical of modernisation. One who has not only critically investigated the effects on the economy, political and social structures but also on our perceptions of time and space is Bauman (1998). The fourth trend includes critiques from different perspective. Some argue that what seems to be an adjustment to the capitalist mode of production or to western behaviour could better be viewed in terms of assimilation with local practises, and thus a cultural continuity is upheld (Friedman 1994). Some see trends towards both globalisation and re-localisation” (Arce and Long 1999). Ingold questions the concept of local-global, a dichotomy from a horizontal hierarchical model. In this model people and things are put somewhere, either in a very small place (local) or very large (global). Local-global presupposes a location of things and people, while a place needs activity, like inhabiting or dwelling. Instead of locals he talks about inhabitants who “make

their way around in the land”, where movement instead of destination is important (Ingold 2000:219-242).

## **Development**

Another concept related to modernity is that of “development”, a metaphor for something gradually growing. The object of growth has shifted from the 1800’s and onwards, and now we have two alternative meanings. The most common is a neo-liberal definition of economic growth (Vail 1996) while another includes the growth of justice, inclusiveness and sustainability in society (Korten 1990). When the expression “rural development” is used in Sweden it refers to both definitions depending on who is using it. The concept of development presupposes an intention, an actor who acts towards a goal that defines the object of growth. The kind of rural development studied here takes place when local inhabitants act to make it possible for themselves and others to live in a place where they feel at home. Sometimes these actions are included in political initiatives like the CAP<sup>3</sup> or Leader,<sup>4</sup> but mostly they concern spontaneous every day actions without the explicit intention of creating local development. Local inhabitants rarely use the term development when they speak about voluntarily work in the sports club or in organising a market fair.

## **Moose hunting and hunting tourism: An example of increasing market pricing relations**

Many people who have left G return for moose hunting every year. At these occasions’ relations between people, place, and history are confirmed, through an activity where land is actively used. Since it is mostly the landowners and their relatives that are members of the hunting teams, and since most of them have quit farming and many have even moved out from G, the moose hunt is viewed partly as a compensation for the loss of farming. Hunting is an activity that in different forms has been a part of human culture since time in memorial, but the tradition of hunting teams for moose is only about fifty years old in Sweden, while hunting smaller game individually has a longer tradition. The importance of hunting seems to be to strengthen the bonds to place, but also to the forest, animals (game and dogs), and to (male) friends. Other features are the excitement generated and the opportunity to “step beyond” civilisation. This corresponds to research showing different aspects of hunting (Adelswärd 1996, Ekman 1991:

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<sup>3</sup> CAP is the Common Agriculture Policy of EU.

<sup>4</sup> Leader is one of the common initiatives of EU, aiming at stimulating innovations to promote rural (economic) development. Leader areas are governed by a partnership consisting of private business (enterprises), public sector (local authorities) and idealistic sector (non-profit-making associations). The partnership should mirror a bottom up perspective.

64-76). Despite social change there is a cultural continuity in hunting. How the meat is distributed, who gets the trophy, who is included in the team, how the game should be treated both when shot and when slaughtered, the great importance of equipment are in many ways similar to societies of hunter-gatherers.

Women and hunting is a combination that is gradually becoming more common, but it is still problematic. There are some women engaged in moose hunting in G, but most of them drive the game and only a few actually shoot. One middle-aged woman born in G and still living there has been hunting since she was young. She was a member of a big hunting team but is now only hunting in her own forest together with her son-in-law and his friends. “She probably wanted the meat”, is a comment from her former team. To hunt for the meat is not serious and the fact that she is a woman could explain that judgement. Another woman in her forties moved to G as an adult and then started to hunt. She and her husband are members of a hunting team together with some neighbours, though she did not feel accepted during the first few years. A tense situation arose when she invited a young German woman who was knowledgeable about hunting to participate. In spite of the fact that it is allowed to invite friends to the hunt this was not deemed acceptable. The others did not say anything at the time, but later showed their displeasure in different ways such as when the woman did not get the usual congratulatory call on her birthday. One way to understand this behaviour is to argue that local identity was too brittle or weak. As a woman who had moved in to G she did not really belong to the hunting team and when she brought a female foreign guest the link simply became too weak. Since then she has become more accepted cultivating good relations with the other hunters.

A relatively new phenomenon is that of hunting tourism, which began in the 1970's when land prices began to rise and the moose stock increased. Hunting opportunities were leased for several years and for relatively small sums of money. What has happened in the last fifteen year is that foreign tourists have come to G for hunting, paying more money and leasing for a week at a time. This is prevalent across most of the country. Landowners have since then tried to find a balance between, on the one hand, getting an income when farming is not so profitable, and on the other, contributing to the local hunting tradition as a way of maintaining a lively community. Both perspectives, the economic and the cultural, are needed to maintain a rural community.

Some hunting teams and landowners in G have tried out different models for hunting tourism.

1. One hunting team has paying guests one week a year. It is always the same six Danes that come and the money goes to the equipment of the team.

2. A few landowners, all of them active farmers, lease for one or two weeks and hunt together with the tourists.
3. One landowner, living in G but not hunting himself, leases all hunting to the same Danish person who in turn leases to other hunters.
4. One landowner, neither living in G nor hunting, leases all hunting weekly to different groups from Germany and Denmark.

Most people in G understand the importance of local provision and thus find the first two models acceptable. The most problematic situation is when landowners let foreign people in without taking part themselves. During an interview one hunter was critical towards his neighbour who leases all hunting to foreign tourists. Later, when we walked in the forest he pointed to the place where he plans to build a hut for hunting tourists. Next time we meet he points out the contradiction. This illustrates that the same person can have different opinions about the same phenomenon depending on the context.

The problems with hunting tourism according to the inhabitants of G can be categorised in three ways.

- A cultural problem. Through the exchange of money, relations between hunter, forest and game are changed thus changing the meaning of hunting itself. The price mechanism gives instrumental values to what used to be intrinsic values. Expressed by the hunters themselves as “The money has ruined the hunt” and “With hunting leasing the ethics are gone”.
- A social problem. Relatives and friends that return to G for hunting might not be able to afford hunting when the prices go up. The same holds true for inhabitants who do not own land. It is already hard to attract young people, which could partly be explained by the high costs. This evokes the question of how the local identity is created and ultimately re-created.
- An ecological problem concerning game preservation. Most of the Danes hunt without a Swedish guide, and they are accused of simply “shooting everything that moves”. It is also supposed that they consume a lot of alcohol. For these reasons people become worried that such people do not stick to the hunting regulations, and view this as the reason why there is a significant decrease in young deer. The Germans have Swedish guides and are believed to stick to the rules. But for both groups the hunters of G are afraid that those who pay want something out of it, and lack solidarity towards regulations and game preservation.

Some examples from hunting illustrate who belongs to the community and who does not, i.e. the concept of local identity. Danish hunters are considered to be less foreign than the Germans, since they can speak with them and recognise their behaviour. Even among people in the community there are those who

belong more than others. Hunting teams from the northern part rarely hunt together with those from the southern part. The landowners are usually viewed as belonging more to the hunting teams than are the other members of the team.

Hunting tourism is becoming more common, but the way to handle this differs on an individual basis. The only common platform to discuss the problems is at the annual meetings of the local association for moose preservation (älgskötselområde). All landowners/teams in G are members except for two, of whom one is the landowner leasing to the Germans and the other is the couple involved in the conflict with the priest (see Narrative 3). These associations have taken over some responsibilities from the local authorities, and the members agree on common rules for how much game to shoot. The co-operation between the teams has worked well and the next step is to co-operate with neighbouring associations to create bigger areas with the same rules. This move towards an ever-larger scale of organisation is however criticised by some of the hunters.

One interpretation of what happens when local hunting meets hunting tourism can be seen in terms of the modernisation process. When the moose hunt is taken out of its context of a male network that confirms the community, its meaning is changed to that of a source of income for the landowner. To make this possible hunting must become a part of the market economy, which many hunters oppose. To put a price on something you have to redefine the context from that of a relation to that of an object that can be measured. An object is something that you can have claims on, it becomes a resource that you can own or use (Evernden 1987). Tourism in general involves the risk of objectifying “the other” (Urry 2002). Of course beforehand hunting was also a way to ‘provide’ but it was directly (meat instead of money), moving between contexts when relating to the game as a subject, rather than as an object. To relate to everything as a resource reduces the diversity of values to the level of the instrumental only.

### **The fight for the school – An example of mobilisation to save “third” places**

This narrative contains two processes of change. One is the diminishing number of “third places”, i.e. informal meeting places between the spheres of residence and work. The other process of change is the mobilisation triggered by a threat. The most well known Swedish example of inhabitants mobilising to keep open their local school is that of Drevdagen in the 1980’s (Halvarsson 1999). In other local communities it is the local shop that is threatened and there are parallels between what a shop and a school means to a local community (Kaijser 1999). In G the last shop closed at the beginning of the 1980’s before the development of new kinds of social relations that made mobilisation possible. A few years later the municipality suggested closing the school, because too few children attended, thus the children would be moved to the neighbouring community which had become bigger than G. The school was built in the 1940’s representing progress

and wealth. Not only parents, but also the other inhabitants were engaged in the struggle to keep the school open.

A mother who had moved to G some years earlier took the initiative to mobilise the inhabitants against the decision. She engaged not only other parents but also other inhabitants, one of them a returning researcher who specialised in work on local schools, and who presented facts that made it difficult for the authorities to ignore the protest. Not all inhabitants became engaged and the fight made peoples' opinions visible in a way that had never been manifest before. The school is situated in the northern part of G and some of those in the southern part already preferred the bigger school in the neighbouring community closer to them. The woman who took the initiative was also a politician, and another local politician from the same party spoke in favour of the decision, which evokes bad feeling from many inhabitants. After a while the fight succeeded, and the school was given a reprieve, but only for a year or two at a time. This has created a lot of uncertainty among both the inhabitants and the teachers, and several times they have had to mobilise again to avoid a new threat. In recent years the school has had classes only up to fourth grade, and sometimes in B-form, i.e. different grades in the same class. Currently there are very few children registered, and it is probable that the school will close next year.

The narrative can be viewed both as a success and as a failure. It is common that a threat against the school activates place identity and that the inhabitants will mobilise in its defence. The success is that mobilisation as in many other villages led to other initiatives, which will still exist when the school is closed. It was also a success that the school continued for another fifteen years. The failure is that G lost another of its few common meeting places, and also the opportunity to work together for the school, while it has also become difficult for the children to create relations with each other and with the place. Many conflicts have been avoided because people trust each other because they went to school together. Yet another consequence is that the boundaries of the community change, with G gradually merging with the neighbouring community. The fusion of the two parental associations into one some years ago is an obvious step in that direction.

### **The conflict between the priest and the church council: An example of changing power relations**

This narrative concerns a conflict between, on the one hand the traditional members of the church council and on the other, the new and modern priest. The church in G was built in 1903, when the process of ongoing population decline had already begun, though there were still more than 2000 inhabitants in the village at that time. The church is an impressive building, much bigger than what one would expect for such a small village. It is built near the school and the two institutions remind us of days gone by when G was a municipality of its own. The



church council has for many years been dominated by a couple, which were powerful when G had its own local authority. The wife is a daughter of the last head of the local government board, and the church council has served as an unofficial local government board, though for some years now G has, together with the neighbouring community, formed a common parish. Three priests have quit because of the powerful church council, and the new priest was conscious of the situation when he arrived in 1996. He became very popular and soon the church services were attracting more people than for a very long time. One example of his many new ideas was the yearly “hunting service” before the moose hunt, with a stuffed moose, beer and pea soap in the church.

Two years ago the priest got tired of not being able to make decisions on his own and after a fight before Christmas he closed the church and told the parish that “it’s me or them”. Unlike traditional ways of handling a conflict he also called the newspapers. Some people in G answered in the same public way and distributed a call in favour of the priest. Many added their name but many preferred to be neutral, not only those who was born in G but also some of those who had moved there. A few people took a stand for the church council. Finally the priest stayed and the old couple and a few other elderly people left the church council. They also left other associations associated with the church, and they do not even attend church services anymore. The new church council consists mostly of the same people that engage in the local associations. Some of them are atheistic but the priest says, “it is more important how people act than what faith they have”. Other visible changes are that the church visitors applaud when artists perform in church, and that the churchwardens are now much more likely to be casually dressed.

One interpretation of this is that the church has changed identity from representing the “old community” (when G was a municipality) to representing modern development as one of many local associations. Thus power has shifted from the old people involved in the municipality of G to the younger people engaged in other associations. In this case the change was so abrupt that some people literally stepped out of the community. Different interests as in this case do not have to lead to conflict, but when the change is abrupt there is a risk that the persons involved distrust each other and the situation. From aiming to maintain traditional values and sometimes reject change, the church is now driving change together with other associations.

### **Farmers and the cultivated landscape – An example of ongoing decline in the agricultural sector**

For centuries G has been characterised by smallholding, with an open landscape in the Central Valley and small plots in the forest. The farms are almost the only local working places and they represent the major part of the area’s economic

activity. There are about ten farms left, three or four of them providing full time work for the owners, while two of them still have employees. Many others live on a farm and grow some hay for the horses. Everybody is aware of the decline of the farming way of life in G, and both farmers and others talk about it as a problem.

Seen from outside: The farmers play an important role locally, though not now so much as food producers. Most people seem not to care so much about the food quality or where the food is grown. Only a few, well-educated persons, prefer ecological food. Many women cook and do not buy semi-processed goods. Farmers are instead appreciated as agents of local culture and as landscape keepers. They are in a concrete fashion upholding the relations to the place by cultivating the land. In some parts of G the fields are now abandoned and people worry that these areas will soon become overgrown with weeds. In one of the villages a younger couple rear sheep in addition to holding down full time jobs in the town, and thanks to them the landscape is still rather open. Now they are divorcing and selling the sheep, which will affect the whole village. All inhabitants know who is living on the different farms, and how they are running their farms. Those who have lived on a family farm for generations have a special role as “real” inhabitants. A young farmer, who mistreats the farm and the cows, was excused in the presence of me by the inhabitants in a way that goes against their conception of a respectable farmer. They know his background and thus they do not want to blame him.

Seen from inside: The farmers are both local inhabitant and professional, and there is a widening gap between the two identities. The local farmers association stresses the professional role, and at a yearly market-day at the community centre they placed themselves a little apart from the other activities. One of the two biggest farmers views the farm and not the community as his home. Outside his farm he is as much from Småland as from Europe, he says. The other big farmer is very active in several local associations, including the farmers’ association, and is very well known in G. Some young farmers prefer the company of other farmers even if they live in another district, and many farmers are sceptical towards rural developments such as the Leader programme and other modern projects. There seems to be a level of mutual ignorance between farmers and other rural inhabitants, which probably will increase in the future. To change identity from being food producer to landscape keeper is something many farmers may have to reflect much more deeply on in future (Flygare 1999).

Farmers are still important for the community through the way they maintain relations to the place and the historical continuity of the community, but the question remains whether the farmers will manage to let the community remain important to them. The rationalisation and mechanisation of the agricultural sector makes it difficult to manage smaller farms. The result is that the farmers

become fewer and fewer, which undermines the importance of farming in rural communities, which in the future also undermines such rural communities themselves.

## Discussion

To understand how the inhabitants of a rural community reflect and act in accordance with change, we first have to know what it means to be an inhabitant of a rural community. One answer to this could be: It means that you uphold relations to other inhabitants, to the place and to its history, that social relations are sometimes reciprocal, that all kinds of relations (to people, place and history) are elaborated in activities, and that you – among other social identities – also present yourself as an inhabitant of a community, i.e. a place identity. Other ways to express this are to be an inhabitant of a local community you have to dwell there, or the place has to become a *habitus*. To dwell does not mean that you have to live there permanently or spend the whole day there. As many people commute and thus leave the community during daytime, they have to find other ways to maintain such relations or to dwell. The local associations and the activities connected to them have increased over the last fifteen years generating a number of social relations, which have led to new projects and associations. Place identity is strengthened through these associations, but also through activities such as hunting and “small talk” about people, places and memories. Relations to the place and its history are also maintained through activities such as the yearly homestead day, the church ceremonies and study circles where elderly people publish books about their memories.

The next step will be to discuss change. Change is a part of life for all organisms as well as for all communities. Societies have through history been characterised by mobility and shaped and influenced from outside, though at different paces and scales. This implies that the notion of what it means to be “a community” is constantly under negotiation, being created and re-created. The activities and reflections presented above are part of the continuous re-creation of the community, helping the inhabitants to balance change and tradition. To avoid the collapse of the community the inhabitants strive for continuity and therefore changes are interpreted within the context of existing cultural models of how to relate to other inhabitants, to the place and to its history, manifested in traditions and norms such as how to celebrate midsummer or how to greet each other. To change these models could be difficult and frustrating, something that newcomers and young people in particular have experienced to their cost. In spite of this, many of the developments of the last fifteen years have been initiated by new inhabitants. Moreover, they have generally been appreciated and encouraged by many native inhabitants. This may then illustrate that instead of the rather

static concept of cultural models, the concept of *habitus* may be one that better corresponds to the complex situation where different actors with different experiences are engaged in the continuous re-creation of the community.

The four narratives illustrate situations that evoke conflicts or fights, showing what could happen when relations are not possible to maintain, or when cultural models are violated. To make a generalisation possible the narratives are compared with other research and interpreted into processes of change that many (Swedish) rural communities are experiencing. The narrative on moose hunting and hunting tourism illustrates the increasing encroachment of market pricing relations, which is the driving force behind the modernisation process. The narrative about the school illustrates both the process of the erosion of “third places” as well as the tendency for inhabitants to mobilise in order to save these kinds of places. Such mobilisation is at the heart of the so-called village action movement. The narrative about the conflict between the priest and the church council illustrates the changing power relations of the last decades, influenced in particular by the village action movement. The narrative about farmers and the cultivated landscape illustrates the decline of the agricultural sector, which is a trend closely connected to the modernisation of agricultural policy after the Second World War. Every narrative contains a little bit of all four kinds of changes, though each is chosen to illustrate only one of them. These four kinds of changes could be seen as examples of discontinuity that are threatening the Swedish countryside. The time-space relations that give meaning to, and thus create, the community are in these examples replaced by other relations which change the meaning and thereby the whole phenomenon of the community as *habitus*, or a dwelling-place for the inhabitants. But we should always remember that what is perceived as others often welcome a threat by some people.

The paradox of rural development – that change implies strains as well as opportunities – must be handled locally but it is necessary that such policies create the conditions for inhabitants to act according to their own views. As there are different views in a local community one suggestion is that, as a complement to economic and legal policy instruments we should also introduce methods for handling conflicts, social learning and other communicative instruments that empower the inhabitants to act in a way that maintains the local community without conserving it or completely renewing it. The continuous re-creation of local communities presupposes change, but not discontinuity.

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