

A Human Geography Testament



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Karlstad University

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Geography, Media and Communication

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+46 54 700 10 00

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Preface

This publication is to be seen as my testament to human geography with a focus on my research. The publication consists of two parts: two paper presentations and a text that summarizes all my published research results together with a list of my publications.

An explanation of the paper presentations is necessary here. The papers have been in my desk drawer for a long time but have never been published. Now when I am finishing my research career I would love to see them in print at last. Let us call them the expression of my last scientific ambition. They are unpolished versions directly from my heart.

The second part consists of a summary of my research during my academic career. I also relate the text to my publication list at the end of the volume. If you find a publication interesting to read, but not possible to download, please let me know (gerhard.gustafsson@kau.se). I will probably be able send you a free copy since I have copies left for many of the publications.

Many thanks to Michael Cooper for correcting the English once again, as always and thanks also to Solveig Nilsson Lindberg, Head, Department of Geography, Media and Communication, for taking care of printing costs.

To whom it may concern - Enjoy your readings!

Karlstad, October 2016

Gerhard Gustafsson

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Complementary Aspects of Thoughts in Human Geography

Abstract

In different textbooks dealing with the history of thought in geography you can find many schools of ideas, but not so often an attempt to link these different ideas together or to see where the basic difference between them lies. The article focuses on the idea that different ideas are complementary rather than incommensurable. There is a try to organize the ideas around a human being and a presentation of three levels of truth for the individual or, perhaps better termed, three human expressions of truth; what we think, what we say/write or what we do. Natural laws and cultural laws are also included in the analysis. A central question is what can be found that comes close to this discussion on complementarity in geography textbooks. In conclusions from the point of view of complementarity an example is given dealing with social structure, or social development. We can accept and evaluate different cultures focusing on the fact that we have much in common, but also differences. Examples on complementarity are also given from different areas like migration research and different concepts on space.

Keywords: complementary, thoughts, human geography

Introduction

For a long time I have been thinking of how to handle all the ideas emerging in geography and in all social sciences. It was easier when I was a student (at the beginning of the 1970's) and we did not think of alternative ways of doing research. This was the positivist period with a belief in objective knowledge as the truth (the key book was Harvey 1969). Over the years alternatives appeared, here exemplified and simplified, first as different paradigms (inspired by Kuhn 1961), then as different discourses (inspired by Foucault 1972) and, later, as situated knowledge (inspired by Haraway 1991), the last two defined here as context dependent knowledge. In other words, there has been a development from a belief in the cumulative growth of knowledge, over changes to contradictory knowledge forms, to a more context-defined knowledge, depending on time, space or social focus.

There is a danger that just a few research ideas are popular at any given time. The "research" front is the central concept here, which leads to a situation where researchers just discuss the current idea and reference it in special journals. This means that we have a reductionist effect – much good research never reaches the broad audience. In this sense, I do not think we have a better understanding of the world today compared with earlier days – the knowledge concept has become fragmented. A complementary view could perhaps help here. If you have worked with/in geography for forty years, your memory is very rich.

In different textbooks dealing with the history of thought in geography you can find many schools of ideas, but not attempts to link these different ideas together or to see where the basic difference between them lies. Often you find many contradictions or differences in the approaches in geography and, at least when the paradigm discussion began, ideas or paradigms which were impossible to compare or distinguish between; the ideas were incommensurable.

From one of my own research fields, "regional development", it has been my experience that if we really try to understand each other, it is possible. Earlier, during 1980's, I worked a lot with local aspects and in close contact with people in what can be defined as humanistic geography whilst others focused on infrastructure and more economic circumstances, but we all focused on processes or goals for regional development. Taken together, these various aspects could contribute more to society than each one separately. Often there were debates or conflicts about which research design was the best or most important. These discussions often led to non-communication and mistrust. I think that today we have reached a point in geography (or social sciences) where we need to think along new lines. We have to take care of the rich heritage of ideas and try to evaluate them in a new way. Here is an attempt in that direction – to see how different ideas can be related to each other in a more sophisticated manner than

before. For example and perhaps provocative, you must be prepared to be both a “realist ontologist” and a “constructivist ontologist”.

Here I argue that different ideas are complementary rather than incommensurable. I will do that first by trying to organize the ideas around a human being. I think that in geography the individual human being is of the greatest importance. It is clear that introducing humans into geography was critical in many ways, first in humanistic geography and later, for example, as a constructor of different texts.

I do not wish to make excuses for my style of writing in this article but would like to explain that I really have tried to express myself in a very direct, clear, short and simple way just because I think this is important for this text. I also believe that this is the only way to express what I want to say and to promote communication and understanding among scholars. I think there is too much non-communication and misunderstanding today. I am not the only person who often finds it difficult to read and understand published texts, especially in professional journals, often with lots of name droppings and lots of abstractions. Here there is a hope to deliver a text that can reach a broad audience of geographers or other readers, because the message in the text is of greatest importance for the development of human geography and social sciences.

A tentative idea on complementarity

In this article, I will present some of my old ideas I have used to make a difficult text easier to understand. In fact, I started this thinking when I tried to present Peet’s (1998) “Modern Geographical Thought” in a simple way for my students many years ago when the book was first released. The presentation is based on my old “line-men” figure – see figure 1. The main idea is a presentation of *three levels of truth* for the individual or, perhaps better termed, *three human expressions of truth*. As human beings, we *think*, we *say/write* (expressions in words) or we *do* (actions). It is interesting that this very simple statement is basic for understanding the nature of many research methods in geography. Field observations, surveys, discourse analysis and in-depth interviews/phenomenology or introspections can easily be related to what we do, what we say, what we write and what we think in that order (see, for example, Kitchen and Tate 2000 and Flowerdew and Martin 2005). The greatest challenge is always to grasp what is inside a person’s head and here we have crucial questions concerning ethics and confidentiality.

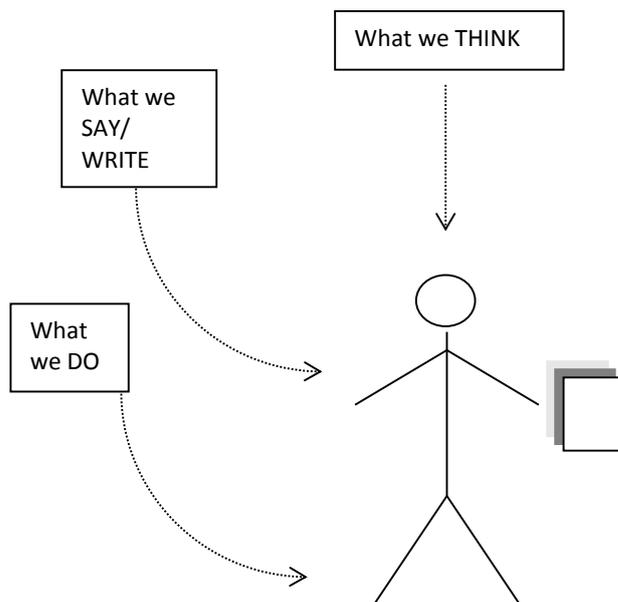


Figure 1. Three levels of truth for an individual human being

It is impossible to argue that one of these truths should be truer or better than the others. If these levels receive the same knowledge, you have a very consistent human being, but the situation is different if the three levels differ.

There are two concepts related to above presentation that need to be discussed here: triangulation and the “trilateral true concept”.

Method *triangulation* has traditionally been seen as a way to validate the truth by looking for an answer by means of different methods. Here it is important not to evaluate similarities as the same truth when the similarities can be expressions of differences. In other words, traditionally method triangulation fits the positivist theory, but can basically express different truths in different views, for example “Three levels of truth for an individual human being”. In geography, this distinction is observed by Flowerdew and Martin (2005) but more clearly expressed by Denzin and Lincoln (2007 and 2011).

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008) describe what they call a *trilateral true concept* based on correspondence, application and signification. This is their own definition but it is certainly of interest here; however, the publication is in Swedish. This can perhaps be linked to different models of explanation in science such as deterministic models (nomothetic), unique explanations, genetic explanations (ideographic), functional explanations or purpose explanations.

To sum up, we have three different kinds of concepts here: “three levels of truths/three human expressions of truth”, “triangulation” and “trilateral true concept”.

Based on Peet (1998), different ideas in geography could be linked to the basic circumstances for the three levels of truth and for the individual in society and nature. What we think can be related to humanistic geography, what we write can be related to poststructural geography, what we do can be related to behavioural geography, our sex can be related to gender geography, cultural laws can be related to Marxist geography and positivist geography with a strong link to natural laws. – see figure 2.

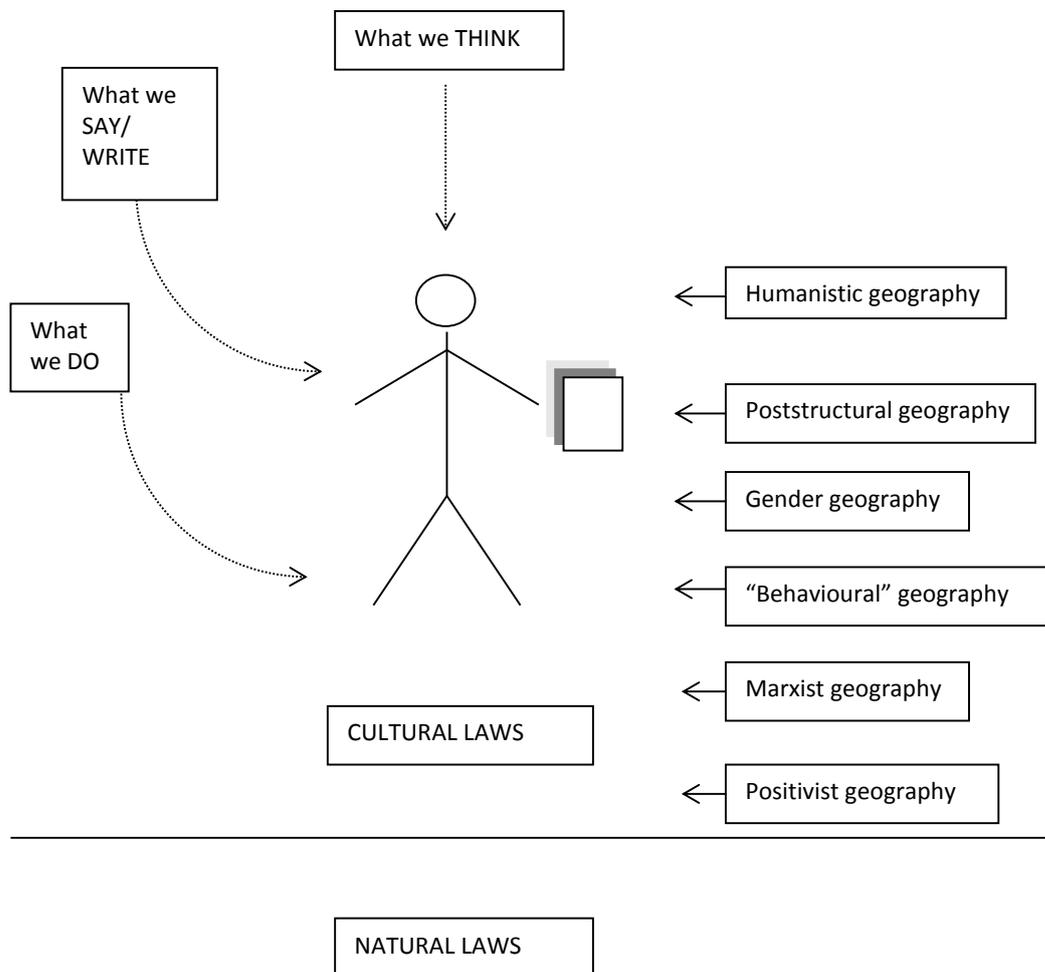


Figure 2. Different ideas in geography and the individual in society and nature

Complementarity in textbooks

Earlier I claimed that it was difficult to find discussions on complementarity in relation to incommensurability in different textbooks, but the question is what can be found that comes close to this discussion. The words are not used but it may be asked whether it is possible to find synonymous aspects or discussions. Below there are some comments on central textbooks dealing with ideas in human geography that are today used at universities. The idea has been to find at least one point where there is a connection no matter how close it is.

Peet (1998), *Modern Geographical Thought*, does not mention complementary or incommensurable aspects of geographical thought. He presents geographical ideas as emerging from one and later differentiated routes in history. The links between the ideas come from history. He does not discuss the relation between them today, but seems to focus on “human geography as social theory” (p. 33) and have a clear idea of what he likes. In the preface, he states:

“I have been largely persuaded by socialist feminism and partly persuaded by poststructuralism, yet remain unconvinced by most of postmodernism, except Baudrillard, with whose notions of sign-domination I basically agree. The book is therefore written from the perspective of a kind of materialist poststructuralism which remains committed to a radically humanist socialism defined as reproductive democracy – that is, direct, popular control of the basic institutions of society.” (Peet 1998, p. viii, preface)

Agnew, David and Rogers (eds.) (2003), *Human Geography. An Essential Anthology*, consists of original texts from different authors from over the last 150 years. It presents clusters of ideas in human geography. They claim that: “... each cluster is related to one of the ‘three traditions of geography that conventional approaches to geographic thought have seen as competing with one another: the cultural, regional and spatial traditions.” (p. 11) Here there is evidence for competitive thought but it is not possible to find a discussion of complementarity. Kitchen and Tate (2000), *Conducting Research into Human geography*, is one of few books that really try to link geographical ideas with methods. They present 12 different approaches used during the past 30 years. They discuss “What approach is best?” and conclude that: “It is for you to decide which school of thought best reflects your beliefs in how a question should be approached and answered” (p. 19). It is difficult to see what this means for complementary issues, but I think it is very much about choosing an approach related to a special research problem. There is no discussion on complementarity. Flowerdew and Martin (2005), *Methods in Human geography. A guide for students doing a research project*, claim that they “... want to get away from the

idea that certain techniques are only applicable to certain kinds of problem.” (p. 5) and “Nowhere here will you find an author who claims to tell you ‘how to do it’. Indeed, most of them explicitly state that there is no single ‘right’ way of tackling research problems in human geography.” (p. 7) Here you have greater freedom to choose method, compared to Kitchen and Tate. Livingstone (1992), *The geographical Tradition*, presents a book “... to illustrate what geography was like at certain points in the past.” (p. 30) He also claims that

“Because it has connoted rather different things to different people at different times and in different places, it has employed a range of vocabularies to suit different purposes – from magic and theology to science and art. On occasion these discourses have been in conflict, at other times they have been mutually reinforcing.” (p. 358)

Livingstone does not provide any guidelines on how to handle different ideas related to each other in contemporary society. Nayak and Jeffrey (2011), *Geographical Thought. An Introduction to Ideas in Human geography*, argue in their book concerning geographical thoughts:

“... the way in which certain ideas emerged as a reaction *against* previous approaches. It also should be repeated that although there is a rough chronology structuring the organization of the chapters, this is not supposed to suggest a progression from the dark past of empire through to the enlightenment of post-representation. Instead, we can see through this account the cyclical nature of the emergence of what we understand as present-day geography, dependent as it is on the recovery of ideas from the past.” (p. xv, introduction)

Here we can see that there is a tendency to apply historical ideas to contemporary society and perhaps use ideas as complementary. Holt-Jensen (2009), *Geography. History and Concepts*, is a little pessimistic about a change of thought in geography that I think would promote complementary:

“Since the 1980:s poststructuralism and postmodernism have come to the fore in human geography. This, in principle, means the death of all orthodoxies and an openness to basic criticism, including self-criticism in all fields of inquire. But it may also lead to scientific impotence: a situation in which we do not dare to continue an investigation, present its results or write it up as a thesis because we can see all its weaknesses and the potential for criticism from others.” (p. x, preface)

But Holt-Jensen summarizes ideas on how to proceed in three points: “1) Every scientific presentation is a simplification, 2) You should not believe that something written in a textbook or presented by senior academics is true simply

because they say it is true or 3) Criticism should be positive and constructive rather than negative” (pp. x-xi, preface)

Cloke, Philo and Sadler (1991), in their book *Approaching Human geography. An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates*, stress the problem of finding “*the way forward for theories in human geography*”. (p. 202) Instead they say:

“Rather, we want to stress that what is involved now is indeed an acknowledgement of diversity, but an acknowledgement that need not be a straightforward celebration of, a self-indulgent ‘wallowing in’, the chaos of different and competing approaches: an acknowledgement that can become a forward step away from the naivety of totalizing theories that obscure more than they reveal, towards a recognition of the possibilities for creative and fruitful *dialogue* between different approaches, each capable of opening a distinctive ‘window’ on the human-geographical reality beyond.” (pp. 202-203)

They do not believe in a relativism such as ‘anything goes’ and at that time I do not think they thought of approaches as complementary but they were aware of the problems I raise in this article.

All these textbooks can be related to the tentative idea of complementarity and it is of course possible to use theories in one or another way. The central point here is that different ideas focus on different contents in the world, like human writing or political structure. Here I maintain that different ideas and contents could or perhaps even should be used in a complementary way.

Conclusions

Since the textbooks do not give any clear guidelines, I conclude this article by giving some concrete examples on how the history of thought in human geography can be used in a complementary way.

Referring to three levels of truth the complementarity can be discussed. For example, an individual does not care (think) about protecting the physical environment but proclaims (says) he does because it is politically correct. He or she also just sorts waste at a minimum level that can be observed (do). Here we have three different truths and implications for the world. For example, if you wish for a more environmentally protected society, which many people see as desirable, it is necessary to attempt to manipulate people with more information. To provide another example, an individual is convinced (think) of the equal value of all human beings. He or she proclaims (says) that he or she does not give aid when people ask (in fact he or she thinks that richer people should give instead). However, he or she gives (do) a small amount of money on a regular basis, as

indicated in the register of an aid organization. Again, if many people think in the same way and a country wants to give more aid to other countries, this implies that it would be easy to raise the state tax for this issue. If the tax is progressive, richer people contribute more than poorer. In these examples, the three levels of truth have been used as complementary.

In another perspective human beings everywhere in the world have much in common. From the point of view of social structure or social development, we can accept and evaluate different cultures focusing on the fact that we have much in common but also differences when comparing. Conducting an analysis from this perspective means that we can use traditional positivist knowledge based on cultural laws (derived from the concept of natural law) and explain that basically all societies are based on some relation to the earth. A farmer in Värmland (a province), Sweden, has much in common with a farmer in India. They are both dependent on ecology and how the soil should be treated. At the same time they can both be connected to the internet and I think that here we have a cultural law that interlinks the whole world in the sense that it can be applied all over the world (except to those excluded by the digital divide). Here it is possible to make generalizations. In between these levels of laws (traditional nature and modern high tech IT) there are many cultural expressions that it is possible to investigate with the aid of different ideas. Here we have a greater number of unique empirical observations. This example provides a basis for complementary research with the focus on both similarities and differences (see also Gustafsson, ed. 2009).

Another example can be taken from migration research. Over the years, many ideas have emerged. Early, during the positivist era, there was an attempt to explain migration flows with the aid of the gravity model, borrowed from physics. The flow of people between two cities was explained by the model related to the number of citizens in the cities and the distance between the cities. Later research focused on pull and push factors at the points of departure and entry. Today research is more focused on regional identity and life-cycle related migration. If all these theories are brought together for the study of a specific migration situation, a more complex picture of the explanations behind migration emerges – the theories complement each other. It is not so easy to explain such a complicated decision as migration with just one explanatory factor. Exceptions can of course be found, for example among refugees, but even then there are selective processes behind who is forced to migrate. For example, statistically most migration in Sweden is short distance, but factors such as peripheral decline and urban attractiveness explain special geographical patterns. At the individual level, some people move because they also have special feelings for a place and are at a mobile age.

In geography we have seen a development from an absolute space, over a relative space to a relational space. In one of my study areas, Ostmark region (an area west of the Twin cities in Minnesota, in Meeker county) in the US, I maintained, in a footnote, many years ago the complementarity of the different concepts of space:

“⁵⁴ ... A discussion on the concept of space in geography may, in terms of the history of ideas, vary from an absolute space, via a relative space and a mental space to a so-called relational space. /.../ If the concept of a relational space were used to analyze the area /.../ it would surely include the mental aspect, but also different kinds of relations to its surroundings, as in farming, the dependency on Japan as some kind of international market without any spatial limitations at all. However, for commuters a relative space is a reality. One does not commute far, because of the time and the costs. In the concept of relational space there are also narrower spatial links such as those between friends or relatives, where the distance is of less importance for keeping the structure or relations together – social space. And it may also be said that the concept of an absolute space was useful for understanding how the colonization of the extended study area took place. The fact that people with similar backgrounds settled together is an expression of what could be captured by the concept of relational space, here social relations. But this is just to show that the study includes different aspects of the science of geography and that no special ideological idea lies behind it. During the last few years I have become more and more convinced of the necessity of complementarity instead of incommensurability, no matter whether the ways of conducting research are pure science, paradigms or discourses. ... ”

(Gustafsson 2000, p. 68)

Cultural turn, spatial turn and material turn? Where will it all end? In fact, the geography of the world is inhabited by materialized and culturalized individuals and societies and expressions of nature in space, which has always been a key concept in geography – that’s it!

We have seen a traditional, a modern and a postmodern society develop and this has very simplified effected thoughts in geography: descriptive analysis, positivistic geography and postmodern geography. But again, where will it all end? ? In a footnote in the above mentioned research report I claimed:

“⁶⁴ Forgotten something? postmodernism, poststructuralism, postpositivism, posthumanism, postcritical (yes, perhaps a little) ? but let it be, let it be (Lennon & McCartney) I think this is Geography!”

(Gustafsson 2000, p. 97)

I have not used the terms ontology and epistemology, with one exception, but this *is* about this very difficult problem: how to grasp the world with all

limitations in a given research situation? In my argumentation you must accept different kinds of ontologies, like one common or ontologies related to different ideas/approaches, no matter how knowledge is developed epistemologically.

I think it is more important to evaluate and use the rich heritage of knowledge developed in the discipline in a complementary way, rather than always trying to find out new perspectives on the geography of the world, often to be unique. This is the statement for my testament to human geography when I now am retired. It is my hope that this provocative contribution will promote a healthy debate concerning the progress in human geography.

To end this article I will take the opportunity to present an idea I have had for a long time: the slow university. This idea can be linked to the development in society of the concepts of slow food and slow cities. There is a trend today that universities in Sweden, as earlier in many other countries, are increasingly moving in the direction of producing more research findings in peer-reviewed journals. At the same time, society out the university is developing ways of creating greater access to information of different kinds. This situation implies, I believe, that in the immediate future it will be more a question of having special knowledge available at a special place and time, based on the rich heritage of geographical knowledge we have access to (a complementary approach). Here it is impossible to say that there is a demand for cutting-edge research knowledge. A slow university would be less oriented towards economic growth and focused on less reading and less writing in favour of more reflection and more practically oriented knowledge. I believe that, in research during the last few decades, we have built too many new worlds without relation to the real world out there. I tried to express this idea in an official program when I was awarded a full professorship in 1999 but was censured. I came back with the idea in a written text and a discussion with my old colleague and friend Professor Rana P B Singh from India, published in a research report (Gustafsson (ed.) 2009):

“Sometimes I think of taking my guitar and walking away along the country road with no pressure on myself – free from both materialistic and social bindings. Here I would like to add some ideas I have had for many years. You know about ‘slow food’ and ‘slow city’ movements, coming originally from northern Italy. I have tried to proclaim the strategy of a ‘slow university’ but all respondents think I am joking. In fact, I think that we need to stop and think of what we are doing. We are reading more and more and we are writing more and more with fewer resources in time and money. Everything in our society has to become more effective, all political parties support the growth economy. This is also a question of the quality of life.” (page 55)

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Geographical Identities and Social Change – Some Critical Aspects on Regions as Key Factors for Development

(Earlier versions published in Gustafsson 2006 and 2009 – see list of Publications at the end)

Abstract

The terms ‘Local and Regional Identities’ have been frequently used by geographers and regional planners when talking about regional development. These aspects are often deeply rooted in people’s awareness of their own history related to places, landscapes and regions, but what does this terminology mean today when the world is changing so much, with increasing individual mobility and the globalization of society? Here the aim is to critically use and evaluate the terminology related to regional development.

This work is unique in that it applies four different points of departure in questioning the relevance of constructing new regions at a time when the world is perhaps developing in other directions/ways, especially as concerns other spatial implications and various aspects of identities. First, in an attempt to develop a frame of reference this study will consider different kinds of identities, of interest to geographers with a humanistic approach: *person identities*, *region (or landscape or place) identities*, *spatial relational person identities* and *spatial relational region identities*. Secondly, there is a presentation of some ongoing changes or trends, related to different kinds of identities relevant in this context. Thirdly, there is a socio-anthropological discussion about different ways of organizing society related to the concepts of regions and territorialities. A fourth point is the proposal of a network-place alternative to the concept of regions as the normal way of developing Europe. Changes in geographical identities and structures show that it is not easy to talk about regions as key factors for development.

Keywords: region, regional development, identity, spatial relational identities

Introduction

Regional structure has changed a lot during the last few decades. The situation in many countries often means stagnation, like less people and jobs in the peripheral regions in the countryside. In rural areas close to urban regions, where there is growth, a more living countryside providing a residential area for commuters is likely. The growth areas are the urban areas, especially around the big cities. In Sweden, this pattern is very typical.

Development and planning activities have changed a lot over the last few years in Sweden (see Gustafsson, 1999). Modern regional planning began in the 50s and 60s and reached its peak during the 70s. At that time there was a widespread belief in the possibility of effecting social change, but since there were many failures, planning came to have less and less status. During the 90s, one could say that planning had a low status and in regional planning concepts like the term 'development' were used instead of 'planning'. This change from a belief in rational planning may also be described as a shift from 'top down' to 'bottom up' activities.

Today it is difficult to say whether there is an ideology or not steering political life in Sweden and elsewhere. The dominant political model lends support to 'market forces' and local 'individualism'. This seems to be the new political approach to be found in different areas all over the world.

A new topic of discussion on the regional policy agenda is, in simplified terms, whether to accept old natural cultural regions (old regionalism) or to build up new economic regions (new regionalism) - as Syssner (2006) puts it, 'The future of Europe is the future of regions' - as a goal or instrument for regional development. The strategy of building new regions was originally introduced in the Council of Europe as a way of strengthening different areas within the European Community, but the strategy can be confusing and not unproblematic. Keating (1998) observed this development and saw the new regions simply as complements to cities and stateless nations in the future (see also Keating (ed.) 2004). Building up new regions often means a weak natural or cultural base; examples can be found which just have in common the desire to become bigger and probably be seen as a marketing base – see for instance Mälardalen, west of Stockholm (Löfgren, 1995 and Westholm et al, 2008)). When the world, as a whole, is becoming more and more integrated, it is strange to see a closure in Europe and within Europe of the concept of regions. It seems as if traditional economic regions have lost their importance in many ways, but one way of handling this is practical work with clusters, which is very popular today; for example in the province of Värmland, in Sweden, you can find the 'Paper

Province' and the 'Packaging Arena'. However, this is hopefully not the end of geography.

The claim is made that there is a failure in Sweden to build regions, at least in a traditional sense, although new regions have recently been formed on the basis of the idea presented above and steered by a 'thought style of social planning' as Nordström (2008) calls it in the minds of politicians and planners. Nordström claims that this 'thought style' is very conservative and has a negative attitude towards alternative ideas. Research findings show that in many cases the new regions have no real function as regards economic and cultural relations within the region. It seems as if the process of region building is very much inspired by or shows similarities with what has been described by Anssi Paasi in his model (see Jönsson et al, 2000, page 140 and a reference to Paasi, 1986) for the region building. It consists of the following stages:

1. Demarcation
2. Common symbol
3. Common institutions
4. Regional identity

The failure is mainly that the last stage never occurs. If regional identities can be used/found, a somewhat inverted model could perhaps be used.

Earlier goals for development in Sweden were based on visions like socialism, local subsistence society, green wave - utopia etc, but today development is very much about growth, in particular economic growth. The visions are weak except as regards the market economy (some talk about sustainable development – e.g. as a combination of the consumer society and ecology (ecological modernization)). Regional development as detailed for instance in the *Regional Development Programme 2009-2013* (Region Värmland, 2010) highly focused on growth. In practice, development is about instruments rather than visions and we are moving in a flexible way towards the future with unknown social structures.

The focus in development work is also on local and regional identities. These identities traditionally relate to homogeneous regions like cultural regions or special places. In Sweden, old provinces (landskap) are of greater importance than counties due to an older heritage function. The provinces date back to the middle age laws with different laws for different provinces, whilst counties date back to the 18th century with a standardized law for all counties in the country.

In political life today, there is often a sensitive (based on unclear feelings) debate without a good knowledge of the prerequisites for a change in the regions. It is just a matter of a feeling that one should act in one way or another. Recently

in the county of Värmland, the social democrats agreed to apply to join 'Västra Götalands län' (a new county in west of Sweden) and 'moderaterna' (a right of centre party) want to keep Värmland as its own region. Investigations and discussions are in progress in Värmland today concerning this issue.

The following is a presentation of four different aspects of the ambition to critically evaluate regions as key factors for development related to identities: a theoretical section on a *definition of identities* in geography (The formulation of a definition of identities of relevance for geography), a presentation of *global empirical trends* (Identities and changes in them - some ongoing trends), a *historical philosophical view* of the concept of regions (A socio-anthropological point of view) and a critical discussion on the *development of regions in Europe* (A place-network alternative). The aim is to try to link different aspects of identities to spatial aspects. These different points of departure are the unique contribution of this paper together with an attempt to develop definitions of central terms/concepts for the actual study area.

The formulation of a definition of identities of relevance for geography

This section is based on an interest in regional development, especially on humanistic aspects, focusing on local and regional identities. This terminology has long been in use and is still frequently used by geographers and regional planners, but what is its relevance today? The concepts are strongly rooted in people's awareness of their own history in relation to places and regions, but what do they mean today when the world is changing at a rapid pace, with increasing individual mobility and globalization of society? The aim here is to critically examine this terminology and try to develop it a little.

Identity itself as a concept can be discussed in philosophical terms but here there is an attempt to grasp it in a special way. As regards identities in social sciences, it is natural to focus on identities among individuals or among groups of people, but for a geographer there has also traditionally been an interest in the identities of regions. Identities are perhaps more frequently related to regions (often named regional identities) but the same could be argued with regard to both landscapes and places. It is also a matter of making a further distinction between physical and mental issues, but this is not easy. With regard to human beings and regions (or landscapes or places) there are links or relations between them that are of great interest here. Classic studies dealing with the individual in the local area or the region came with the emergence of human geography. Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974) work 'Space and Place: humanistic perspective' focused on places as 'public symbols' or 'fields of care' and was very much about place identities

(recently highlighted by Cresswell, 2008). Edward Relph's (1976) study 'Place and Placelessness' showed that identities of places can differ considerably and his contribution has been recently recognized (Seamon and Sowers, 2008). Kevin Lynch's (1960) classic work 'The Image of the City' has been recognized as a key work for understanding the experiences of a city as distinct from other places. Over the years more attention has been paid to the regional level and Paasi (1986) mentions the importance of regional identity in the region building process. Further, Paasi (2003) distinguishes between 'identity of regions' for regions and 'regional identities' for regional consciousness. Recently new ways of looking at this study area can be found and Paasi (2009) argues that 'it is suggested that the rise of relational thinking and the emergence of the city-region concept, for example, require broader conceptualization of regionality and the concept of region, perhaps even a search for a new 'geography of the region' (p 128)'. Jonas (2011) writes about 'Regionalism in question' and argues that 'progress on the regionalism question will require further examples both of relational thinking about territorial politics and of territorial thinking about relational processes' (p 8), but hopefully not taken so far as to a concept of 'phase space' as Jones (2009) argues, since scientists have always been aware that society is continually changing and that the only way to grasp it is to freeze it at a moment in time. Massey (2004) argues that identities are relational and constituted by practices of interactions and should be treated with responsibility in politics. Recently the demand has been voiced for more knowledge concerning what belonging to groups and places entails (see the issue of the journal 'Emotion, Space and Society': Wood and Waite (2011)). Relational thinking can be found to some extent in economic geography (Yeung, 2005) and often deals with different scales, networks or local and regional development. There are a number of other examples. Smith (2004) deals with relational thinking for regions and special economic sectors like economic practices in the European garment industry. Lagendijk (2007) deals with regions as entities and discusses a Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) where different structures and actors are of importance for the strategic development of a region. Prytherch (2009) has presented a case study dealing with region-to-region relational aspects, where the focus is on Valencia in the Euroregion of the Mediterranean. However, these examples lack clear definitions of relational identities as a broad description for individuals and regions in society. Here an attempt will be made to present a more general and distinct terminology closely related to real phenomena in a geographical perspective. The definitions are formulated around and with a *focus on people* and their relations to different regions since this is mainly humanistic geography. To facilitate the study of the problem, a *frame of reference* is necessary. In real life, people appear to be so much within regions

(or landscapes or places) that it might be impossible to take them out of the context. It is easy to relate the physical to both the individual and the region (or the landscape or the place), but more difficult to talk about a mental region (or landscape or place) in the sense that a region (or landscape or place) can have a mental construct/aspect. Here the mental region (or landscape or place) in people's mind is central and represents the relation between the individual and the region (or the landscape or the place). In the mind, all kinds of spaces are very blurred. In the following, there is a presentation of different kinds of identities as a *frame of reference*, which are termed: *person identities*, *region identities*, *spatial relational person identities* and *spatial relational region identities*, with examples from the author's life and study area Östmark in northwestern part of Värmland, Sweden. The use of the term 'relational' closely linked to 'person identities' and 'region identities' does not seem to occur in other texts. Separating the relational from the other identities does not mean that a person or a region cannot have both identities. In reality, an identity is a combination of both with the relational as just one part. The distinction made here is simply intended to facilitate an understanding of the contents of identities as spatial phenomena.

Person identities could be either individual or group identities and the division is interesting in itself since one can argue that different recognizable patterns or changes give priority to a person or group identity. Identities can be found ranging from deep cultural roots (e.g. religion), where the group identity is central, to a more post-modern strongly individually expressed identity that is impossible to identify by means of developed linguistic categories. Identities of this kind could be expressed or discovered by means of either physical elements or behaviour. The mental aspect of an individual is a huge research area and often impossible to grasp, due both to the fact that it is 'hidden' and to ethical circumstances. It is possible to make a distinction between a self-experienced identity and one experienced by the surroundings (the classical 'I' and 'me' from Mead (1974)). Person identities can be seen either as taken for granted or as socially constructed (Burr, 2003).



Photo 1. Kurt Eide makes the old Finnish culture alive at Mattila, Östmark, Sweden, for visiting professor Rana P. B. Singh, Banaras, India (person identities)
Photographer: Gerhard Gustafsson 2008

Region (or landscape or place) identities are basically identities provided by nature and culture, which are given some kind of geographic delimitation. Today we perceive these regions (or landscapes or places) as highly integrated with the surroundings (horizontally integrated) and it is often difficult to talk about one or the other. Almost all regions/landscapes/places throughout the world together with their natural base have some kind of human impact today (vertically integrated). It is perhaps possible to speak of a general mental region (or landscape or place) in the sense of people living in a region (or landscape or place) and sharing similar perceptions. Other common broad distinctions are made between rural and urban, developed and developing, local and global and political in the sense that regions/landscapes/places, or parts of them, can, for instance, be symbolic and represent intentionally expressed power. It is basically a question of what discourse we are using when we represent the region.



Photo 2. Juhola Finn Farm north-east of Mattila, Östmark, Sweden (old Finnish cultural landscape identity)

Photographer: Rana P. B. Singh 2006

Spatial relational person identities are here defined as the relations between individuals/groups and regions (or landscapes or places). Physical relations can be defined as all relations all over the world for individuals, in the spectrum from physical to IT-communication, in their everyday or temporary life. The focus is on the contextual. Of special interest, here is the mental aspect and how people relate to these complicated circumstances in their feelings for different regions (or landscapes or places) such as belonging to or identifying with a certain or special kind of region (or landscape or place). In an earlier work, there has been an attempt to grasp the ‘mental’ relationships between individuals and landscapes with the help of a picture test/analysis (Gustafsson, 1993). That study presented arguments for three different types of landscape perception: pictorial landscape, perception landscape and identification landscape. Here the concept of identification landscape could be transmitted to the region or to the place – identification region or identification place.



Photo 3. Stora Valla – a famous football arena in Degerfors, Sweden, the place where the author grew up (for the author, a mental aspect of spatial relational person identity)
Photographer: Gerhard Gustafsson 1990

A second way of treating spatial relational identities would be to focus on the region as a whole entity. Previously, a constructed model (Gustafsson, 1986) described the situation for a local society – ‘a relationship and dependence model for a local social environment’. The definition of the relationships and dependencies provides a basis for a discussion of the spatial relational situation for the local society or region, landscape or place. In the model, different systems of economic activity are presented with reference to Ingelstam’s (1980) terminology: white economy (the informal economy), yellow economy (the formal private economy) and blue economy (the formal public economy). Here the focus is more on the local social environment, the region, and the people living and working there and their *activities in different systems of economic activity*. Local life and work are related to the local resources and general social circumstances such as knowledge of technology, economy, culture, morals etc. and find expression through the different systems of economic activity. Identities can be said to have different expressions for the local social environment. An example if this is provided by a study area, Östmark parish in the north-western part of the county of Värmland in Sweden (Gustafsson, 2009). The white economy gives identities that are highly localized through the absolute delimitation of the local social environment, *region identities*, since people cooperate and help each other in everyday life in matters like hunting, repairing

buildings and social care. The yellow and blue economies are more closely connected with spatial relational identities since they are represented by a dominant forestry/agriculture sector and a public service, with relations and links to a broader spatial reality such as global economic activities and the politically organized services provided by Torsby municipality of which Östmark is part. Here we can talk about *spatial relational region identities*. Taking economic activities and the local social environment (e.g. region, landscape or place) as a basis for the definition of identities is interesting since it produces quite a different result than the one obtained by using single individuals as a basis for definition, as was the case earlier in this paper.



Photo 4. Sörmark recycling station in Östmark – a modern strategy for taking care of nature by Torsby municipality? (spatial relational region identity)
Photographer: Rana P. B. Singh 2008

Some (especially geographers) may ask whether there is not always a spatial relational identity for a person or a region. Perhaps it is rather the case that there is a continuum of spatial relational identities for persons or regions. A discussion of uniqueness or general identity may be of further help in this discussion. Taking human geography as a starting point implies that a human being is always involved, either mentally experiencing or defining the character of people or regions. There is a need to further develop the terminology and the definitions

with the aid of empirical investigations. It is to be hoped that this contribution may be of assistance in this. In another paper an attempt might be made to consider the following points in more detail: the definition of relational space in relation to the earlier use of relative and absolute space, the definition of identity in relation to inner mental and outer physical content, the definition of relations as physical nature or culturally expressed physical or mental content and, finally, various definitions of regions. These points, taken together, could represent an exciting experiment in cross-analysis in a new frame of reference.

It is obvious that taking identities of persons and regions into consideration is complicated and problematic, when arguing for regions as key factors for development.

Identities and changes in them – some ongoing trends

A further objective of this paper is to discuss stabilities or changes over time related to the concept of identities and ‘spatial’ development. This concept may be defined in different ways but here it means neutral changes rather than changes as normative goals for development.

The following is a summary of some of the trends related to the theoretical frame of reference concerning identities that have been experienced in the literature, in seminars and through discussions with people around the world. The different aspects could be verified with any number of references, but this is not the moment to examine these areas of knowledge in detail, a list of interesting trends is sufficient. Some ideas regarding the background to or reasons behind the specific trend are given in italics.

Person identities

- People in urban areas are the first to change

Free from cultural bonds/social control

- There is an increasing mixture of people

Migration and mobility

- Multiple identities (different roles) are now more apparent

Post-modern society with many life modes and roles for individuals

- A continuum of identities (instead of well-defined categories) is becoming increasingly common

A critical scientific discussion (complexities in the world) and new groups emerging in society related to, for instance, different sexual behaviours and new job structures

Region identities

- Rural areas have not changed so much; segregation in residential areas is now more common in big cities (old or new identities/diasporas)

The urban economy is the driving force

- Two trends: homogeneous CBDs (central business districts) in big cities and/or hybrids instead

Knowledge diffusion by economic enterprises and local adaption/resistance to globalization

- Multicultural society is developing – but what does it mean in physical attributes and life modes?

Migration and physical planning for residential areas and integration of immigrants in different societies

Spatial relational person identities

- The digital divide means that the world consists of those who have or do not have access to internet

Technological development

- Identification with several places instead of one home region is now more common

Migration and mobility

- Contextual identities are now more common and they change depending on from where you are in time, place etc.

Migration and mobility

Spatial relational region identities

- Many regions are likely to develop more relations and links with their surroundings; this is particularly the case between urban regions and between rural regions and regions located far away

The growth economy is highly concentrated to urban areas and, due to their natural resources and their exploitation, and foreign land ownership, rural regions have changed dramatically

- Communication is dominated by networks.

Today, a great deal is related to technological development and the world is increasingly connected through nodes and links

Given these trends, the implications for the spatial organization of society will be dramatic and the construction of regions in the traditional manner with one group of people in one delimited region will probably no longer be supported.

A socio-anthropological point of view

One important source for arguing against regions as key factors for development is to be found in social anthropology (see Björn Hettne. In Herlitz, 1984) and the ideas of Bronislaw Kaspar Malinowski, with support from the economic historian Karl Polanyis. All societies that have existed are economically organized according to three basic principles: the principle of reciprocal obligations, the redistribution principle and the market principle. Here, it is possible to recognize Swedish society today and the division into informal economy, formal public economy and formal private economy, as mentioned above. If these principles are adapted to the concept of regions, one can talk about functional regions and administrative regions but also focus on the concept of region delimitation with fixed or floating borders. The informal economy still recognizes its borders in local contexts or in informal networks and the same is true of the formal public economy. The dominant private economy based on a market economy is not defined in a region with fixed borders.

Supporting the market economy means supporting a region with fluid boundaries since the spatial pattern of capital flows is always changing in relation to good business. One good example of this is the company Scanmodule in Glava, in western Värmland, Sweden, which manufactures solar panels. The company decided to 'move to' or start up new production in Singapore, as labour costs are lower there (DN, 2010). Around 300 people will lose their jobs. The company is part of the multinational company Renewable Energy Corporation with its headquarters in Oslo and industries in Norway, the US and Asia. Thus, the conclusion here is that the dominated development force (market economy) does not support the development of regions.

Here one may maintain that identities might be termed region (or landscape or place) identities in the two first cases. In the third case, one can perhaps talk about fluid identities very much related to the definition of a delimited concept of region.

A place-network alternative

The concept of region can also be evaluated in relation to other spatial concepts, as Törnqvist (1998) does (see also Jönsson et al, 2000). He has identified two forces in Europe, one working against globalization and the other against regionalization. In this context it is possible to link the four spatial categories state, union, region and network (see figure 1). To complete the figure, two spatial categories 'Place' and the 'Globe', which fit naturally along the scale line,

are added. The conclusions imply that, when dealing with regional development in Europe today, it is perhaps more important to talk about networks between different places on earth than to talk about regions. The reason for this is that networks are based on nodes and links, which must be anchored at different places and be spread out over the surface of the whole globe.

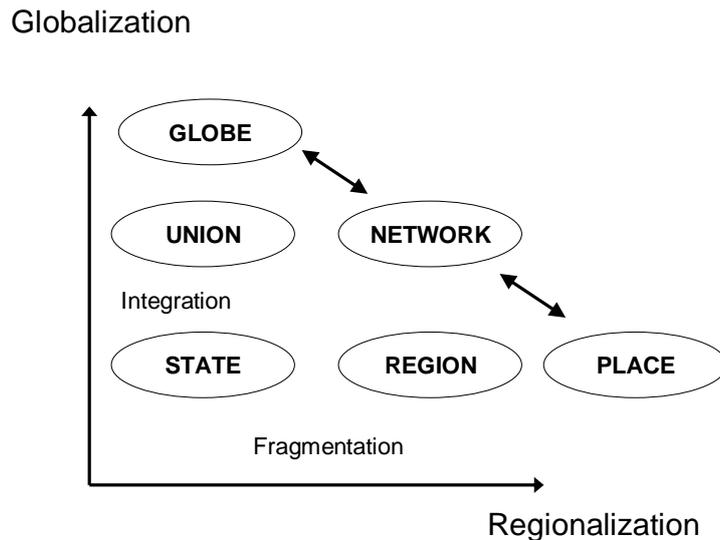


Figure 1. Spatial concepts and development forces
 Source: Developed from Jönsson et al, 2000, page 20

There are perhaps two different ways of expressing this, either in terms of places and the global level connected by different kinds of networks or as networks, the ‘digital divide’ and places as contextual spatial relations (relational space) in a globalized world.

Networks, as concepts, are of course not unproblematic. Different actors work together in new creative ways which give rise to special problems, in particular those related to informal decision making; the process can be difficult to follow and power can be hidden.

Here one can claim that there are many ‘place’ relational identities of interest, together with many other concepts.

Conclusions

Now it is clear that the different ideas and perspectives regarding the complexities of identities and spatial dimensions discussed above lead to a particular conclusion. It is indeed difficult to argue that the future of Europe is the future of regions.

However, if there is a future for regions in Europe (and in Sweden), in what way would it be feasible? There is always the possibility of developing cooperation across borders instead of changing them. Then one can maintain old identities related to older borders and regions and new kinds of identities can develop freely. Although this paper expresses scepticism about regions, there might be at least two ways of using the concept of regions as a factor for regional development.

The first way would be to use the concept to a very limited degree, just for the public sector. It is possible to organise service in the public sector on the basis of knowledge drawn from the old theory introduced by Walter Christaller (1966), the central place theory. This model was used in regional planning in Sweden during 1970s and was inspired by work done by ERU, Expertgruppen för regional utredningsverksamhet (Expert group for regional investigations) (Statens offentliga utredningar, 1974).

A second way would be to use a broader definition and try to reorganize society for self-sufficiency (regional sustainable development). This strategy would require consideration of the way the society is linked to nature and natural resource management would be the terminology to be used. Here identities might act as a reinforcing factor in a broader sense with basic links between nature and culture.

The discussion on global warming could provide arguments for the second strategy, but it is more realistic to believe in the implementation of the first strategy. Different identities will not be affected by this strategy to any great extent. Who want to have a deeply rooted identity related to an administrative body?

Identity and region is certainly a problematic concept or reality in today's society (see, for instance, Said, 1978 and believers in the idea of 'we and them') and it is unclear how it will develop in the future. Perhaps one should focus more on how people with different identities could live together side by side in many different regions overlapping each other for different purposes.

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Research during an Academic Career

Abstract

This account of my research is based on an attempt to classify the various studies. The significance of the works is not apparent from the descriptions of them and thus needs to be clarified. The presentation consists of many research areas and publications but the major or central works include my doctoral work in the project "Rural Areas as Development Potential" which resulted in a thesis entitled "Ethics and Local Development Strategies - Preservation or Change in Man's Living Conditions", the work in the international research team on the theme of "Planning Issues in Marginal Areas", my work in the project "The Changing Natural and Cultural Landscape - A Study of Goals and Consequences with Examples from Värmland" which resulted in a final report entitled "Landscape, the Individual and Society - Change, Meanings and Goals" and a study in the US "Ostmark – a Region Transformed into a Church".

The numbers after each text section refer to the list of publications at the end of the publication. Some of the publications are available to download on DiVA - Digitala vetenskapliga arkivet ("The Digital Scientific Archive").

Keywords: research, academic career, list of publications

Economic Geography/Migration Studies and the Effects of Structural Change

The project "Spatial Consequences and Societal Effects of Central Decision-Making" (Swedish Council for Social Research) concerned a study of the processes involved in the relocation of the company Uddcomb from Degerfors to Karlskrona. Comparisons were made with the administrative regional development model devised by Andersson and Dahlgren. The idea of the model was to see how decisions which are taken centrally are changed when they are implemented down through various decision hierarchies - the examples up to this point had been drawn from the educational sphere. The Uddcomb case led to the conclusion that there was a different decision hierarchy, that the criteria for regional development are more difficult to assess, that there is freer development and that to some extent Uddcomb is a special case (the company is partly state-owned) compared with the public sector. (3, 4 and 5)

This work provided an opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills gained from my undergraduate studies in human geography and essay-writing in the form of studies of the effects of the central decision to relocate Uddcomb Sweden AB from Degerfors to Karlskrona. This relocation was expected to result in a large number of problems, in particular extensive migration among the work force and socio-economic effects. These problems were of direct interest to me since I grew up in Degerfors and knew people who were "forced to move" to Karlskrona. Using a group of employees who were in Degerfors when the decision to relocate was taken, I carried out a migration study. Despite the seriousness of the situation, factors which could be expected to hinder migration affected the willingness of people to move (age, length of time in Degerfors, home-ownership etc.) There was extensive migration to Karlskrona from various parts of the country. As a result of the migrations from Degerfors and the investment the municipality had made in one-family housing, the "Uddcomb relocation" also resulted in immigration to Degerfors from the neighbouring municipality of Karlskoga. This had a major impact on income from taxation and purchasing power in the municipalities concerned. (1 and 2)

Transportation Geography/Communication and Regional Development

Together with the municipality of Forshaga I assessed the provision of local transport and devised a simple model for analyzing travel needs in the municipality with the aid of a questionnaire and a graphic analytical diagram. (6)

In the so called Karlstad-Tottori network research program I Was responsible for a meeting in Karlstad dealing with communication and regional Development. The focus was both on physical and IT communications as well as human relations in a new world. (44 and 45)

Planning Conditions for Forestry

Together with the LO district in Värmland (regional trades union organization) I became involved in the early 1980s in a discussion on the development of forestry. The bankruptcy of Vänerskog, a large forestry company, caused major problems for Värmland's forestry workers and owners. Attempts were made to start a research project on the future of the forestry industry and this resulted in some work on a program and a paper which I presented at a seminar entitled "Local Organization and Strategy" in Sunne on 19-21 August 1981. Some of the ideas were later studied more closely in the project "Rural Areas as Development Potential" (see below). (7)

Regional Development

Rural Research/Local Development/Environmental Ethics

In cooperation with Lage Wahlström, associate professor in human geography at Göteborg University, I started the project "Rural Areas as Development Potential" (Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences) in the early 80s. The objective was to study the conditions for local development. Common points of departure in the project included a critical attitude to traditional ideas on growth, a plea for territorially based geographical development, an emphasis on the idea of applying different approaches and values and on "critical" geography with a strong theoretical basis. The project resulted in my doctoral thesis, which was based on work on local geographical structure-oriented development strategies and the ethical justification of different social structures based on environmental ethics. The empirical material came from the parish of Östmark in north-west Värmland.

The thesis was concerned with the development of theoretical arguments on the importance of considering the future from the standpoint of a number of different philosophies of life. Ethical attitudes to social changes and, in particular, man's impact on the environment led to the formulation two main strategies: "Human egoistic planning in interaction with nature" or "A laissez-

faire attitude to the future of humanity". One major result of this analysis was that it showed that bonds based the history of ideas were weak and that there was considerable freedom to formulate a development strategy with respect to environmental ethics. As concerns local development strategies, geographically structure-defined strategies were devised in order to evaluate the long-term effects of various development measures with respect to the social structure that is constructed. The local development strategies were termed "Screening Strategy", "Strategy of Strengthening the Inner Structure", "Balance or Standardization Strategy", and "Strategy of Open Exploitation". The different approaches can be discerned in the names. If we examine the local development initiatives proposed for Östmark, we find the development measures are primarily of the open exploitation type and in principle entail an increased vulnerability to changes in the surrounding world. A significant conclusion to be drawn from this is that if local development work is based on the open exploitation strategy whilst the surrounding world is evolving towards an alternative society instead a growth economy, this might lead to the collapse of the local community. (8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 23 and 41)

As a continuation of the project on marginal areas, I participated in the evaluation of the project entitled "Rural Development in Värmland". Wahlström based his evaluation on the views of various local development groups whilst I evaluated the project "from above" and in line with the views of representatives of the municipalities and members of a central reference group. (13)

I returned to these studies of marginal areas later in connection with the offer to write an article for a Nord REFO publication on "controlling the reduction of population", in connection with the opening of the Torsby Finn Culture Centre and through an article which was published under the auspices of the newly established annual Research Forum on local and regional development in Östersund. (35, 36 and 39)

International Cooperation in Research on Marginal Areas - "Development in Marginal Areas"(DIMA) and "Planning Issues in Marginal Areas" (PIMA)

In 1987, as a further step in research on marginal areas, Lage Wahlström and I took the initiative in setting up an international group. We made a planning trip to the US in the spring of 1988 and a first symposium, for which I was the organizer (both as regards contents and practical matters), was held in the spring of 1989 at the University of Karlstad. I also edited the symposium report, writing both the prologue and epilogue. This gave me an opportunity to report on some of the ideas that evolved out of the project "Marginal Areas as Development

Potential". The symposium was mainly concerned with a "state-of-the-art" presentation of research on marginal areas through broad discussion and contributions on the following topics: "Theory and Practice - Marginal Areas: Processes, Planning and Research", "Top-down and Bottom-up Strategies in Planning and Research" and "Ethics and General Models for Development in Marginal Areas". The second symposium was held in the US in 1990, where I presented a paper and a panel report with views on and analyses of the work of the research group. The group then met in Ireland in 1991. In connection with this meeting I began a more detailed analysis of how the work of the group had been conducted up to that point and presented my views on how the group should proceed. This report was included in the conference publication. The next meeting was held in the summer of 1992 in the US in conjunction with the International Geographical Union's sub-commission for "Highlands and High-Latitude Zones": I presented a paper which marked the start of a new field of research "Future life modes and regional development, the use of natural resources, spatial organization and philosophy of life". After this, we met in Umeå in 1993, where I was a keynote speaker with a paper entitled "Theoretical Frameworks". Meetings have also taken place in the US in 1995, Karlstad in 1997 and Scotland in 1998. (17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34, 38 and 40)

Links with Third -World Issues

In connection with contacts with Banaras Hindu University in India and Rana P. B. Singh's visit to Karlstad in 1989 came the offer to publish an article in the National Geographical Journal of India. Together with Lage Wahlström, I wrote an article based on our experiences from research on marginal areas. The article was written as a discussion of the Swedish welfare model and its importance internationally. Later I wrote an article comparing developing and industrialized countries, primarily with respect to the importance of places and environmental conditions in an ethical context. The article represents an expansion of the concept of environmental ethics to cover the cultural environment as well. (23 and 33)

A study of an Indian Village (close to Banaras) together with Rana P. B. Singh, Kristina Lejonhud and Karl Ivar Vålvik resulted in paper presentations but later a Ph D thesis for Kristina Lejonhud. (43 and 48) The long cooperation with India resulted in a memory notion for the India cooperation and a 25 years anniversary publication at Karlstad University. (54)

The Role of the Medium-sized City in Regional Development

As a result of collaboration between the Regional Science Research Unit (GRF) at the University of Karlstad and Japan (Tottori), a symposium was organized in the summer of 1991 on the theme indicated in the heading. I contributed a paper where I defined the various conceivable roles of the medium-sized city in relation to traditional and modern theories from "Rank Size Rule" to "Theories of the Ethics of Development". (28)

It is interesting to know that Torsten Hägerstrand replied in a letter to Lennart Andersson that he had read my paper and the text "In summary, then, we may say that, as human beings, we are expected to move farther and farther away at greater and greater speed and when we are not traveling, we are expected to have more and more intimate contact with other areas, both in time and space – a struggle with time and space which I do not think can be analyzed even with the aid of Hägerstrand's time geography" and had liked it very much, but argued that here it was of course possible to use his theory.

Planning Ethics/Research Ethics

The work on ethical issues in my thesis eventually led to the insight that the thesis was in fact as a special kind of "study of the future". In his assessment at my public defense of the thesis, the opponent had maintained that it was difficult to say anything about the predicative capacity of the study. As from my standpoint it had never been a question of predicting anything about the future, this eventually resulted in ideas about attitudes to the future in relation to various planning ideologies - planning ethics and research ethics had emerged as a sphere of interest. It was now a question of ethics in the performance of different roles in the process of social change in contrast to the previous discussion on "environmental ethics" and "centre-periphery" which were more concerned with natural and social structures. (primarily 14 and 15)

Changes in the Landscape/Perception Geography

The mid-1980s saw a lively discussion in Värmland on the issue of changes in the landscape and what they might mean for the flora and fauna and, for instance, tourism in Värmland. This discussion also took place and is still taking place at the national level, particularly as concerns problems in various parts of the country. This led me to initiate the project "A Changing Natural and Cultural

Landscape" (Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences). One of the overarching aims of this project was to develop a theoretical frame of reference for the attitudes one can or should adopt towards changes in the landscape. The study objects were plains (Ölme), intermediate countryside (Askersby) and forest areas (Sörmark). The project resulted in several doctoral studies in human geography and research projects in tourism (Berit K Svanqvist and Sven-Erik Karlsson (sociology) and studies of changes in the landscape (Gabriel Bladh and Elisabeth Lipcsey). My role as project manager also involved the supervision of doctoral students and research assistants in connection with the development of new research ideas and projects, in particular "Finnskogen as a Local and Regional Development Factor", "Nature Tourism in Värmland" and "The Development of a Geographical Information System (GIS) for Värmland".

The work also entailed an attempt on my part to develop a theory on perceptions/meanings of the landscape and a method for testing this theory. This is a research field which has received little attention in Sweden. Even internationally the field has only attracted limited interest, basically in the form of limited studies of details. My research resulted in the generation of a theory based on the idea that the landscape had various types of mental meanings: "pictorial value", "identity value" and "perceptual value with all the senses". A pictorial test was developed to illustrate the various perceptions of the landscape. The test was used on both local residents in the various study areas in Värmland and on groups of students from the university. A major conclusion was that there seems to be a broad consensus in perceptions of the landscape irrespective of individual background factors. It is expected that there will be dramatic changes in the landscape in the study areas. (26, 27 and 32)

Together with Lennart Andersson and Karl Ivar Vålvik, I presented a paper at the international conference on "Disasters, Environment and Development" in Delhi in 1994 which was in part based on this research and which concentrated on land use. (37)

Tourism Geography

During the years there has been an increase in research on tourism in Karlstad. I have made some contributions. One concerns culture communication within the framework of studies of the Finnskogen area in north-west Värmland and the significance of this for highlighting concepts of culture with, among other things, different geographical meanings. Another field concerns transport and tourism. A third study forms part of a comparison of tourism planning in the Netherlands,

Sweden and Canada and has been published in a Dutch report series on the tourism industry. (16, 19 and 30)

The History of Geographical Ideas and Human Geography in Karlstad

My work as editor of a jubilee publication in connection with the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the discipline of geography at the University of Karlstad can be placed under this heading. My own article consists of my reflections as head of department on the development of ideas in the discipline. I put forward some critical views on the development of knowledge in society and recent ideas in geography: I ask whether we should not pay more attention to the classical theories in geography. In the introductory and concluding sections of the publication I comment on the development of research and teaching in geography in Karlstad, both historically and in terms of vision. (20, 21 and 22)

Ten years later I also contributed to another jubilee publication “Arvegods och nyodlingar – kulturgeografi vid millenieskiftet” together with Lennart Andersson and Bertil Lundberg. (46 and 47)

After retiring I wrote my memoirs “Besatt av kulturgeografi I 40 år – en berikande resa i tid och rum”. (52)

Ostmark – History and Identity

As a follow up study of my thesis, dealing with the development of Östmark in northern Värmland, I studied the people who, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, left Östmark in Sweden for America and settled down in Meeker county, Minnesota. Research issues were related to both colonization and cultural heritage. Later I also studied identities in the Ostmark area in the US as well as in Östmark in Sweden. This work also had a focus on identities theoretically and different kinds of spaces, like absolute space, relative space and relational space. (42, 49 and 51)

Sokrates intensive program on peripheral regions in the EU

Together with geographers at the universities in Greifswald, Utrecht and Joensuu Karlstad University was engaged in an exchange program during 2003-2008 dealing with the development of peripheral regions. Only parts of the work were

documented, but it resulted in some reports, also because of linked research meetings. (49, 50 and 53)

Urban Geography

After being retired a couple of years I got the offer from an old friend and colleague, Bengt Dahlgren, to participate in a study of the development of the university and its neighborhood we both have had a close contact with – Kronoparken (suburban area of the city of Karlstad). We came to study this area, which was a so called one million program area (during the years 1965-75 one million apartments were built in Sweden) with socio-economic weak citizens and many immigrants. The study period was from the beginning of the exploitation during 1970s until today's situation (read 2015). (55)

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”Still Alive”