Identities and Life Worlds

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The terminology ‘Local and Regional Identities’ has been used and is still frequently used by geographers and regional planners, but what is its relevance today? In the first paper both personal experiences and ongoing trends in the world are used in an attempt to theoretically discuss what it refers to, or what it could refer to. The focus is on the term ‘relational’, frequently used by other authors relating to space in different ways. The definition here is delimited to people and identities based on their relations to different regions, since this is mainly humanistic geography. Three different kinds of identities are defined: person identities, region (or landscape or place) identities and relational identities.

The second paper is based on a field trip to a study area in Sweden, Östmark in the province of Värmland. Here life worlds and identities are communicated within the region and between two geographers from different parts of the world (Sweden and India).

The third paper is based on a field trip to ‘Ostmark region’ in Meeker County in the US with a pilot study on identities. This region represents a region with inhabitants with ancestors from Östmark in Sweden. Many people from Östmark migrated to the US, beginning in the 1860s and continuing to the 1920s.
Gerhard Gustafsson (ed.)

Identities and Life Worlds

– with Examples from Östmark and Ostmark

Karlstad University Studies
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Foreword

This report is a collection of different texts on projects I have been engaged in during the last few years. The oldest project dates back to 2003 when I made a field trip to one of my favourite study areas in the world, ‘Ostmark region’ in the US. At that time a growing interest in identities was important for the study of the different groups of the people living in the area. A pilot study on identities was on the agenda. In 2006 I presented some ideas concerning identities and geographies in a jubilee lecture (20 years since I published my PhD dissertation) at University of Greifswald in Germany, which brought me forward in my thinking. The pilot study from the US in 2003 gave me many ideas. In the same year (2006) I made a field trip to my old study area in Sweden, Östmark, together with my old friend and collaborator professor Rana P B Singh from Banaras Hindu University in India. This was a chance to test some ideas about life worlds and identities. A recent short visit by the two of us to Östmark, in the autumn of 2008 made it possible to take more photos of the area.

Together with a reconsideration of the two study areas with the aid of other materials, the field trip experiences and the ideas are now brought together in three different papers: the content of the first paper is a tentative theoretical frame of reference concerning the identities of people and geographies, the second paper is entitled ‘Östmark revisited and represented’ and the third paper deals with Ostmark in the US and its identities.

It is essential to point out that the presentation here must be seen as a report on ongoing work, but I think it is important to publish some of the tentative results now to stimulate scientific discussion. My ambition is to carry out further research on the two study areas presented here together with another study area, the village cluster Chamaon in India, in a comparative manner. Included in that research, the analysis of identities, together with other variables, will be important research areas.

Many thanks to Michael Cooper for correcting the English of the main texts once again.

*Karlstad, September 2009*

*Gerhard Gustafsson (editor)*
Abstract

This report is a collection of various texts on projects related to identities and life worlds. It consists of three papers: one theoretical and two dealing with special geographical study areas.

The terminology ‘Local and Regional Identities’ has been used and is still frequently used by geographers and regional planners, but what is its relevance today? In the first paper both personal experiences and ongoing trends in the world are used in an attempt to theoretically discuss what it refers to, or what it could refer to. The focus is on the term ‘relational’, frequently used by other authors relating to space in different ways. The definition here is delimited to people and identities based on their relations to different regions, since this is mainly humanistic geography. Three different kinds of identities are defined: person identities, region (or landscape or place) identities and relational identities.

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Key words: region, identities, relational identities, life worlds, Östmark, Ostmark
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Identities of People and Geographies – Some Tentative Ideas

(Based on a jubilee lecture at The University of Greifswald 2006-03-29 – earlier version published in Gustafsson 2006)

by Gerhard Gustafsson

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Introduction – a theoretical frame of reference

Having an interest in regional development for a number of decades, I have found it interesting to partly focus on humanistic aspects. The terminology ‘Local and Regional Identities’ has been used and is still frequently used by geographers and regional planners, but what is its relevance today? These aspects are strongly rooted in people’s awareness of their own history related to places and regions, but what does it mean today when the world is changing at a rapid pace, with increasing individual mobility and globalization of society? Here the ambition is to critically use this terminology and try to develop it a little. Both personal experiences and ongoing trends in the world will be used in an attempt to theoretically discuss what it refers to, or what it could refer to.

As regards identities in social sciences, it is natural to focus on identities among individuals or 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 I maintain that the same could be argued in relation to both landscapes and places. It is also a matter of considering both physical and mental issues in a further distinction, but it is not easy to make this distinction. With regards to a physical human being and a physical region (or landscape or place) there are links or relations between them that are of great interest here (see figure 1). I have been influenced by the term ‘relational’, used mainly related to space. The term has often been used to describe the situation for regions as entities (see, for example, Smith 2004, Lagedijk 2007 or Prytherch 2009). Here I delimit the definitions and focus on people and their relations to different regions since this is mainly humanistic geography.

A frame of reference is primarily constructed to make the problem area possible to study. 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 (I do not mean in the way researchers today talk about the problem of representation). 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). Probably you can talk about a mental region (or landscape or place) in the sense of people living in a region (or landscape or place) and sharing similar mental perceptions. In the mind, all kinds of spaces are very blurred. To sum up, we can talk about three different kinds of identities which I term (representing the arrows in the figure): person identities, region (or landscape or place) identities and relational identities.

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 to stronger individual or group identity. Identities here can be found between deep cultural roots (e.g. religion), where the group identity is central, and a more post-modern strong individually expressed
identity that is not possible 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 not possible to grasp, due to both the fact that it is 'hidden' and to ethical circumstances. You can make a distinction between a self-experienced identity and one experienced by the surroundings (the classical 'I' and 'me' from Mead (1974)).

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 very integrated with the surroundings (horizontally integrated) and it is often difficult to talk about one or the other. Almost all regions/landscapes/places and their natural base throughout the world have some kind of human impact today (are vertically integrated). 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 intentionally expressed power.

Relational 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 single individuals or groups, in the spectrum from physical to IT-communication. The focus is on the contextual. Of special interest here is how people relate to these complicated circumstances in their feeling 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). I have earlier tried to grasp the ‘mental’ relationships between individuals and landscapes with the help of a picture test/analysis (Gustafsson 1993). In that study I argued 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.

The idea behind this paper is also to discuss stabilities or changes over time related to the concept ‘spatial’ development. This concept can be defined in different ways but here it means more neutral changes and not changes as normative goals for development (for which I have argued at different times). There is also a focus on different kinds of regions (or landscapes or places) with individuals and groups. First there is a presentation of some personal experiences of the identities discussed here.

Some personal experiences of identities

In this section I will present some personal experiences from my academic life from the early 1980s up to today. Here are experiences from the town where I grew up, Degerfors, located in south-eastern part of the province of Värmland, my field study areas in the US, especially in Pennsylvania and Minnesota/South Dakota and research done in India, especially in Banaras and the village Chaman Gram Sabha. Together with Östmark in north-western part of the province of Värmland in Sweden (not presented in this paper but in next paper), these areas have become my reference study areas in the world and represent important areas to return to for an evaluation of what is taking place in the world, to see both similarities, differences and the effect of globalization.

Degerfors

I grew up in Degerfors with parents who had moved a couple of years earlier from two provinces to the south-east of Värmland: Närke and Östergötland. That gave my childhood a feeling of being linked to other areas than Degerfors. Often during weekends and holidays we travelled to the south-east to visit my grandparents. Degerfors is a border region and it belongs to two different administrative regions overlapping each other, the county of Örebro and the province of Värmland. Politically, the county is today more important, but the province is used for cultural issues like tourism organizations and football associations. In this respect, when I grew up, I always asked myself “where do I belong?”. I remember we used to think and talk about people from Örebro (the capital of the
It was not until I came to Karlstad and began to lecture on regional identities (in the mid 80s) that I became aware that regional identities are strongly related to provinces, not counties. I recognized that “I’m a Värmlänning”. Characteristic of Degerfors is that it is an old iron and steel town and it has a famous football team, Degerfors IF (Degerfors sports club) which is known for its red and white coloured dress (see photo 1). Another cultural characteristic is the regional dialect which is recognized by outsiders as a very ugly dialect. People who migrated to Stockholm have witnessed how they had to change their dialect to be accepted in the big-city culture. Related to identities, Degerfors local municipality, as is usual in Sweden, has slogans for promoting the municipality “Offensive Degerfors” which refers to offensive football and, freely translated, “We have more than football, we enjoy life all year around”. Having inside experiences from the town, I can say that the images are very reductionist in their character and, in this case, very stable over time, although the town has changed a lot during the last few decades, e.g. a reduction from more than 2 000 people employed during the 70s to around 500 today. The day after tomorrow I will go to the next football game in Degerfors since it means a lot to me to keep in contact with my roots.
The US – Pennsylvania
The next example of experiences comes from the US. Here I focus on Pennsylvania and the Amish people. In an area close to Indiana, they took over some land for agriculture more than 30 years ago. As a result of their knowledge and life modes, they have succeeded where earlier farmers failed. The people and their farms represent here one homogenous region and a people with a strong sense of belonging to the region. Typical features are the use of horses and black buggies (see photo 2), white wooden houses and dresses in blue, black and white. Their culture is very stable over time and progress/change are not of interest to the group, although some individual have began to be a little apart from the local farming culture, e.g. women are working in a wine yard.

Chamaon
Another area in the world that represents a different culture is the village Chamaon outside Varanasi in India.
Here traditional agriculture is very important but there are strong forces for change in the region. It is both market forces and political development that influence the region. Here the main question is survival and, from my point of view, belonging to the place is more a question of physical realities than a special feeling for the region. There is, of course, a religious form of identification that is

Photo 2. An Amish horse with buggy
Photographer: Gerhard Gustafsson 1990
hard for me to understand. It is even difficult to ask questions like: What do you feel about your home region and can you think of leaving it? or what identity do you think your region has?, when many people are fighting for survival (see photo 3) and would surely migrate out of the region if this would improve their living conditions. A central question here is whether there are other ways of arguing for a local or regional identity related to the mental dimension (some kind of ‘relational identity’ based on religion).

The US – Ostmark

The Ostmark region is an informal region west of Minneapolis-St.Paul in Minnesota, United States. The people in this area settled here during the period 1880–1920 and came from Östmark Parish in north-western Värmland in Sweden. From the beginning, the people gathered around the Lutheran church (see photo 4) as a strong symbol of community. The cultural heritage also consists of ‘The Stockade’, a fort from the Indian war and a memorial to a victory for the white man. You can also find souvenirs from Värmland in Sweden that strengthen the historical links. Here old people have a deep feeling for the Swedish heritage and for that the church is an important symbol. This feeling of belonging to a Swedish region is not so important for young people in the area.
today. When they meet other young people they do not primarily ask “where do you come from” but ask “what are you, what do you do for a living”. Old European national heritages are nowadays becoming weaker and weaker. It is interesting to see a tendency that the recently immigrated Mexican minority in the neighbouring areas see the old heritage as more important and make a distinction between us and them. It seems that the country (America) level is the only uniting level since all people in the US have different backgrounds.

The US – Black Hills/South Dakota

In South Dakota you can find both important history (early settlements) and major American symbolism. In the Black Hills there is Mount Rushmore with heads of early presidents carve in the rock. This is a national memorial site and as a reaction against the colonizers, there is now a project in progress on another mountain not far from this place in Black Hills to carve the Indian Chief Crazy Horse (see photo 5) as an alternative symbol for the US. Much money has been spent developing these symbolic places as tourist sites. In contrast to these places is Wounded Knee, where the last great Indian massacre took place. This site has not been developed to anything like the same extent for tourism. There is a small memorial sign and a small place to buy some simple souvenirs. These places can be seen as representing the political ambition or lack of it to develop some kind of sense of belonging to a region, in this case the nation or the Indian territory.

The examples and the theoretical frame of reference

The first example from my home town is a little special and is important as a result of my own experiences. Personally, I had a problem with my own identity when I grew up and felt more sure when I started to teach the subject. But today when nothing is certain in the way one might classify identities (I have been intellectually disturbed by work) in the world, I am now unsure again. There is no doubt that I have some kind of relational identity related to Degerfors, but my personal identity, I believe, is today more related to my work as a professor at Karlstad University. I have also a growing relational identity to the place where I live and a place in Dalarna province where I am building a summer cottage for the moment. My experiences concerning my home town’s identity is that identities can be very reductionist.

The second example, the Amish, is interesting because this culture has strong identities in all three ways: a homogenous people and region with a strong link between the people and the region. This culture represents a strong solid culture that has maintained its features within ordinary American society, a society where there is much interaction and the pressure on this society to develop in the way other areas are is very strong.

The third example, Chamaon, is interesting because I feel that this area in its
culture is as far away from my society as I have experienced. Coming to Chama-
on led to embarrassing situations as I wondered about the people’s identities
while knowing that many of the inhabitants were fighting for survival. The local
people and the place are also very homogenous with a strong link between them.
Interactions with the surroundings are very weak and the pressure from the sur-
roundings to change is not very high, but the situation will change rapidly. Here
I have to learn more about religion and inside knowledge.

The fourth and fifth examples come from the US and represent the Ostmark
region in Minnesota and the Black Hills in South Dakota. These are examples that
represent very complex identities related to the old immigration and to the sym-
bolism of the US in so-called modern society. The US is supposed to be the most
powerful nation in the world, both economically and militarily. Here there is no-
thing like homogenous identities. Perhaps you could speak of a homogenous
American identity, but what would it be related to? – the physical characteristics
of people and regions/the nation? All Americans may perhaps be said to have a
relational identity related to the US, but the individuals and different regions (or
landscapes or places) represent many identities and relational identities in a so-
ciety characterized by high mobility. This may well be the place on earth where
you can find most complexities concerning identities.

After having experienced these different regions of the world, I ask myself or
maintain:
Are identities like ‘belonging to’ primarily a Western phenomenon, related to something we can think of as luxury?

Some identities are now changing a lot (Chamaon) whilst others are more stable (the Amish).

Dead old identities can become alive when new people with new identities come into a region.

Politically strong symbolic meanings can be developed with the aid of identities.

**Identities and changes in them – some ongoing trends**

Here I would like to sum up some other trends related to the theoretical frame of reference concerning identities that I have 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. I just present a list of interesting trends and give references only in special cases. These can either be found all over the world or they have at least been discussed as being in progress and widely dispersed in the world in one or another way.

**Person identities**
- People in urban areas are the first to change
- The mixture of different people is increasing
- Multiple identities (different roles) are now more apparent
- A continuum of identities (instead of well defined categories) is becoming increasingly common

**Relational identities**
- The digital divide means that the world consists of those who have or do not have access to internet
- Identification with several places instead of one home region is now more common
- Contextual identities are now more common and they change depending on from where you are in time, place etc.

**Region identities**
- Rural areas have not changed so much – Segregation in living areas is now more common in big cities (old or new identities/diasporas).
- Two trends: homogeneous CBDs (central business districts) in big cities (see Hough 1990) and/or hybridities instead (see Knox & Pinch 2006).
- Multicultural society is developing – but what does it mean in physical attributes and life modes.
End notes

My primary standpoint would be that identities probably destroy society more than they build it up. For example, different religious beliefs bring war, an immigrant cannot identify with a local old cultural identity, and on the micro level, it is now impossible to identify a person more exactly than a human being belonging to the earth. I think this means that the humanistic point of view in the discussion of identities is that the only way to claim identities would be to claim understanding and acceptance of all religions, life philosophies in the world and to live side by side in any region, just on the surface of the earth. I think territorial strategies are not possible any longer. Otherwise development/changes will bring crises.

We can perhaps distinguish between some positive and negative aspects of identities:

Positive
- unity and harmony among people
- security for individuals
- strong cultural heritage can survive

Negative
- barriers between people
- extremes not possible in a multicultural society
- barrier against the development of new ‘things’

If we use identities as concepts for development, we should be aware that identities work as reductions of people and regions/landscapes/places. They are also difficult to grasp, are related to complexities and are partly hidden in people’s minds:

There are places I remember all my life,
though some have changed,
some forever, not for better,
some have gone and some remain.

All these places had their moments
with lovers and friends I still can recall.
Some are dead and some are living.
In my life I’ve loved them all.

But of all these friends and lovers
there is no one compare with you,
and these memories ..............

(John Lennon & Paul McCartney 1965)
References


Östmark Revisited and Represented – Life Worlds Communicated

by Gerhard Gustafsson & Rana P B Singh

INTRODUCTION

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY AREA AND ONGOING TRENDS

VOICES FROM BELOW

REPRESENTATIONS AND RESULTS

REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1 FIELD REPORT

APPENDIX 2 QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW RESULTS
Introduction

Today there is an ongoing discussion on the problem of representation. The discussion is probably most frequent among so-called poststructuralists, but was also of interest earlier when Gerhard Gustafsson, together with Lage Wahlström, began studies (see Gustafsson 1986, Wahlström 1984 and Gustafsson/Wahlström 1990) in Östmark at the beginning of the 1980s. At that time the focus was on the representation of so-called peripheral areas carried out by centrally (in Stockholm) located politicians and researchers. This was often a representation characterized by problems based on a multitude of officially recognized statistics. In the research it was soon found out that there are quite different stories to be told if you focus on representations based on stories told by the local people living in Östmark. At that time, the work was imbued with great inspiration from humanistic geography and an attempt to see the peripheral areas as potentials for development, in its normative meaning, based on the wishes of the local people.

In this paper there is an ambition to discuss Östmark to a greater extent in this humanistic sense, but related to a more global level. The reason for that, or what made it possible, is the fact that we, Gerhard Gustafsson at Karlstad University and Rana P B Singh from Banaras Hindu University visited Östmark for a number of days, 7–9 of June 2006. During that visit we tried to get in contact primarily with people, either living close to or involved in agriculture, in the open arable land in the old valley settlements. The questions were primarily formulated by Rana P B Singh and were very much focused on people’s everyday life and life philosophies. They were very close to questions formulated by Gerhard Gustafsson and his colleagues Kristina Lejonhud and Karl Ivar Vålvik when, together with Rana P B Singh, they paid several visits to the village of Chamaon in India (see, for example, Gustafsson et al. 2000). Now it was time for the reverse situation. Rana P B Singh was here and asked questions of people in the Swedish home study area. Here there is a special interest in seeing what interesting results and reflections might emerge from such a situation. At the end of the paper there is a discussion, very much based on these circumstances, reflecting on question and result representations.

Apart from this interest in representation there is, of course, a desire to see what the actual situation is today in Östmark, based on statistics and other materials (photos), as an example of an area characterized as a peripheral area in Sweden. Gerhard Gustafsson was also interested in focus to some extent on identities. Some key questions may then be formulated:

- What is the situation today, concerning population development, job opportunities and landscape changes in Östmark?
- What is the situation for people now living in Östmark and how do they look upon their life situation and the situation in the world? What about identities?
- What can we, as researchers, add to the theoretical discussion on representation and other matters, being together in a study area with different ‘cultural’ backgrounds?
Presentation of the study area and ongoing trends

Östmark is located in the north-western part of Värmland in Sweden (map 1). It is an area that was colonized rather late, first by people settling in the valleys (see map 2) and later, beginning during the 1640s, with the immigration of Finns (see map 3) from the Savolax region in south-eastern part of present-day Finland. The Finns settled down in the hilly, heavily forested areas, a requirement for their far-
ming based on burn-beating. The last map clearly indicates the nature of the Savolax settlements as forest area settlements in that the symbols marking the settlements are concentrated to forest areas.

Population development has been very dramatic. After colonization, the population started to increase slowly, but the speed of growth continued to increase and followed at first the general demographic cycle of Sweden. It reached its peak around 1870. Then there was decrease in population. This was due to changes in population components (decrease in both death rates and birth rates), but more importantly to structural changes in society, such as economic weakness with poor life conditions (see Gustafsson 2000 and the major emigration to the US) with a decline in jobs in agriculture and forestry and, later on, urban growth. It seems that the population is still decreasing but more slowly than previously. The region has developed into a so-called peripheral or marginal region in Sweden (see photos 1–12 for a story of decline and local development activities). In figure 1 the population trends for the municipality of Torsby (consists of the northern part of Värmland – see map 2: all regions except Ekshärad in the southeast) and the parish of Östmark are given. The statistics for the municipality of Torsby indicate that the population was 12 960 as of 31 December 2005, compared with the parish of Östmark where there were 1 103 individuals at the same

Map 2 Settlements in the northern Source: Nilsson 1950

Map 3 The Savolax colonization of central part of Värmland in 1640:s Sweden from 1570s until 17th century Source: Broberg 1981
Map 4 Östmark region – the old local municipality
Source: Gustafsson 1986
Note: KM-SKALA= kilometre scale
Östmark = Östmark church village
— = the border of Östmark parish
— = the Norwegian border

On the map important place-names mentioned in the text are indicated: Sörmark, Lämbacken, Östmark (=the church village) and Lämbacken. Mattila is located north of Röjdåfors
Photo 1 Saw mill in Sörmark (one of the few small industries in the area)
Photographer: Ran P B Singh 2008

Photo 2 Sörmark landscape – bushes and trees take over. See the planted spruces behind the house
Photographer: Ran P B Singh 2008
time. This represents a decline of 11.0% for the municipality of Torsby and 12.7% for the parish of Östmark in the years 1996–2005.

If we consider the different parts of Östmark, we find the decrease is smaller for Östmark church village (the only area in the parish classified as urban) than for the rest of the parish. Östmark church village had 201 inhabitants on 31 December 2005. 200 inhabitants is the minimum number for a place to be classified as an urban area (tätort) in Swedish statistics.

Job opportunities changed dramatically in the second half of the 20th century. Historical statistics show a big decline in jobs (see Gustafsson 1986 and Statistics Sweden 2004). The results are presented in table 1. The development follows the major trends in Sweden with a decrease in the agriculture and forestry sectors and an increase in the service sectors. The agriculture and forestry sectors still provide as many as 21.0% of the available jobs. The public sector is also important (49.5%). Jobs outside the area are primarily in industry, building and the ser-

Figure 1 Demographic trends in the municipality of Torsby and the parish of Östmark from the 17th century to the present-day
Note: The figures are based on isolated observations (marked by dots). The areas of the present municipality of Torsby and of the present parish and previous municipality of Östmark have been kept constant over time in an historical sense
Source: Developed from Gustafsson 1986 and Torsby municipality 2006
Östmark revisited and represented – life worlds communicated

Photo 3 Sörmark – closed petrol station and modern ensilage balls in the field
Photographer: Ran P B Singh 2008

Photo 4 Sörmark – old shop, now used as a ‘Loppis’ (second-hand shop)
Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2008
vice sector, more like a general picture for Värmland or Sweden. During the period 1965–2004 the decline in population was 48%, the decline in people living in Östmark with a job anywhere was 47% and the decline in jobs located in Östmark was 72%. These figures show that both population size and jobs for people living in Östmark keep pace with each other, which means that unemployment might be stable and high. But the statistics (Statistics Sweden 1967 and 2004) show that in 1965 54.0% of people in the 16–66 age group had a job compared with 69.9% in 2004. This is an unexpected increase, but one explanation is obviously the age structure (older people today) and the fact that more women are in work today. In 1965, 150 of the 794 people in employment (19%) were women, which may be compared with the figures for 2004 191 women out of a total of 424 (45%). It is not possible to obtain statistics for Östmark for 1980, but for the municipality of Torsby the figure is 39% women (Statistics Sweden 1984).

There are today relatively fewer men and more women in the labour force so to speak. Another uncertain reality is the problem of definition. For 1965 a person is defined as having a job if they work at least half the normal working hours, compared with 2004 where there is a special level of income that defines if a person has a job or not. It is likely that as a result the figure for 2004 is about 10% higher. The most dramatic change is the number of jobs within the Östmark region.
Most people commute to areas outside the parish. Out of the 424 people who live in the area and have an occupation, 302 commute to other areas (263 within the municipality of Torsby and the rest, 39 individuals, commute to other municipalities). 122 people have a job in the area and 40 are commute into the area. Some individuals commute to Norway, but there are no statistics on this. Kåpe (2006) claims that people working in Norway are registered as not employed in the statistics. This may be as many as 100 individuals or more. Of course, even if the number of people not employed is high, the informal sector is very much alive in the area, although it is difficult to measure it by any scientific means.

As regards the agricultural landscape, it is interesting to note that the total amount of arable land on farms of at least 2 hectares has decreased from 871 hectares in 1970 to 547 in 1999 (see Gustafsson 1993 and Statistics Sweden 1999). This decline can primarily be seen as an expression of the decline in farming. It is difficult to examine in detail the structural changes in land ownership and how this affects the statistics. When travelling in the area at the end of the 80s, many observers thought that the open landscape would have disappeared within a few years. Driving through the area in 2006, and again in 2008, we saw that this has not happened. The overgrown landscape seems to slow in coming but it is surely coming. In fact, people are nowadays very much aware of keeping the landscape open.

**Voices from below**

"We are now on the road again. We are travelling by hire car from Karlstad to the Östmark region in early June 2006 (see travel report in appendix 1). The weather
Photo 6: Lämbacken – shops that closed a long time ago (about 30 years)
Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2008

Photo 7: Shop close to the Norwegian border – just Norwegian costumers due to lower prices in Sweden
Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2008
is good and it is our ambition to meet several local people and conduct in-depths interviews with them. We meet many individuals and there is no problem making contact with them regarding an interview.” We selected a qualitative sample representing the variety of people living or working in the area and succeeded in interviewing all together seven individuals within three days. Most of the interviews took place in the respondent’s home and in a very relaxed situation. The questions were formulated around the research question: What is the situation for people now living in Östmark and how do they look upon their life situation and the situation in the world? This was very much about their life modes and life philosophies (see appendix 2).

In the following the results of the interviews are presented. First each interview is presented with a focus on their family situation and personal relations to the area and how they feel about their job. A special section presents their differing opinions about life and the world around them ‘Lifeways and life philosophies’. Here the individuals’ voices are more anonymous. We have chosen to present the answers as voices from below and think of them as important representations. We have just tried to summarize and highlight them in this part of the work.

When the text is noted with “—” it means that the answer is in English. The language has been adjusted in places to make it more fluent. If the text is noted in italics the answer is in Swedish. Then the text is directly followed by a free translation in
Family structure and job structure

Interview 01. Thursday, 08 June 2006. 10.35am – 12.35noon

Gerhard Gustafsson interviewed people in this local area during the 80s, but none of the earlier respondents is still alive.

We are now visiting two young farmers who own a dairy farm north of Östmark church village.

Family situation
The farmers took over the farm since the earlier owner died and had no relatives who wanted to take over. One son who had initially taken over the farm together with one of them, is now living in Torsby together with his wife. Both farmers were born south of Torsby, and have no family relationship to Östmark. They were neighbours down there. One of them started to work on the farm, then the other joined him about five years ago and he is now living on the farm. Both are unmarried and live alone. They feel that this particular job demands lots of time and a family would not be possible.

Relation to the area
In total they have 120 hectares of land. 26 of which they own themselves and the rest, 94 hectares, is held on a free rent basis. They have 70 milk cows and 60–70 calves. The cows feed only on grass, not grain. Food for the cows is also purchased from the market. According to Swedish legislation the cattle (cows and calves) must out in the open landscape for at least for 6 hours. All the cows are looked after (cleaning, milking, etc) with the aid of machines. European Union (EU) and Swedish government agricultural policies provide support for farmers and farming is only possible with government support and subsidies. However, they feel that the bureaucracy is quite complicated in this process with regard to the EU and the Swedish government.

The farmers provided more information about other people in the area. Most of the people in this area work in Torsby and nearby townships. Some also work in nearby areas in Norway. Most of the people living here were born in the area and there are few immigrants. There is only one exception in the neighbourhood, a man who came from Gothenburg and lives here in a special life mode. There are some people living on farms, but only to enjoy the natural environment and the beautiful landscape, no one is farming. They have houses here primarily for fun and pleasure. This is a problem. No one cares about the grass, and trees are spreading in a natural process.
Feelings about their job

One of the farmers claim:

Det är väl bra, även om det är jobbigt är det roligt i alla fall. En skulle aldrig kunna håll på med det här om en inte hade väldigt intresse för det. En lägger ner hensikt mycket tid. Det är ju inte 7 till 4, det blir ju en livsstil, kan en säga. Ingen semester heller. Vi har visserligen en avbytare, men det är mycket jobb ändå. (It is good, even if it is hard work it is still fun. You could not keep on doing this if the interest was lacking. You put down a terrible amount of work. It is not 7 to 4, it is more like a life style, you could say. No holiday either. For sure, we have a person as a substitute worker on the farm, but still it is a lot of work.)

The other gives briefer answer but says more or less the same:

Ett bra jobb på ett vis .. långa dagar – varje dag. (A good job in one way – long days, every day.)

Interview 02. Thursday, 08 June 2006. 03.10pm – 4.40pm.

Gerhard Gustafsson remembers his first interview with the same individuals in 1991. Earlier he had interviewed the father and mother of the husband who lived close to the interviewee.

Interview with a middle-aged couple living in Sörmark, in an annex to the farm, earlier owned by the parents of the husband.

Family situation

The husband’s parents lived here on the farm a few years ago and they had cows and sheep. Now they are both dead.

The couple’s oldest daughter (22) works part-time in Toria Store, Torsby. She is also studying at Karlstad University on a distance course. She has no plans to take over the farming. She lives alone in her grandparents’ old house, with a pet cat and a pet horse. And the youngest daughter (ca 18), a student at Torsby Gymnasium, lives here with them but in a summer cottage. She lives with a boy friend. Both the daughters having their driving licenses and are mobile in the area.

Relation to the area

Both are commuters to work outside the area. The husband earlier worked in Torsby on a timber machine but is now a truck driver with the whole Sweden as his place of work. His wife works as a nurse at the hospital in Torsby.

The fields of the old farm are used for horses and sheep; however, sometimes they lend them to others. They have some thoughts about keeping cattle for slaughter but this not possible in a full-time tight working life. A lot of people in
the area have horses. Most of the fields are used here. There is no fallow land. Children like horses; now it is more popular to have horses for pleasure. Earlier horses were used for forestry and in the agriculture.

There is very little service in the area and for the purchase of general goods Torsby is the only market. It is cheaper and there is variety.

Feelings about their jobs
The husband’s feelings about his job:

Jag trivs bra, faktiskt. Det jobbet som jag har nu är väldigt omväxlande. Man får åka över hela Sverige. Nackdel är att man inte har några bestämda arbetstider. Jag vet ju inte om jag kommer hem på kvällen eller nästa dag. Det är ju det som är nackdelen. Går bra tack vare att barna är så stora som de är. Inga planer på att byta jobb så länge en har hälsan. (I really feel good about my job. The job I have now is full of variety. You travel all over Sweden. One disadvantage is that you do not have fixed working schedules. Actually I do not know if I will be home in the evening or the next day. That is the disadvantage. It works as fact that the children are grown up now. No plans to change job as long as my health is good.)

His wife has another opinion:

“I am jealous of my husband for his travelling. I just travel between Sörmark and Torsby.”

Jobbet har blivit lättare nu inom vården. (The work in health care has become easier now.)

The couple provides information about the farming in the area. The dairy farm north of Östmark church village is the only one in the whole area, but there are some poultry farms. In the southern part of Östmark there are a few cattle farms. Everything now depends on the support of the EU, otherwise it would not be possible to continue with farming. The EU also provides support for removing bushes and cutting the grass in order to clean up and maintain the landscape.

The husband has got some information from the Farmers’ Association about starting up a modern cattle farm. It will cost about SEK 2 million, at least, to establish one. But the husband has back trouble and does not have the strength and energy necessary to start such an investment. He said: “I’m conscious of my body, and am unable too.”

Interview 03. Thursday, 08 June 2006. 09.35pm – 10.48pm (late evening/night)
We are now interviewing a middle-aged male owner of a tourism site related to the Finnish cultural heritage. Gerhard Gustafsson and Lage Wahlström met him for the first time in 1985. At the very beginning the respondent noted: “I remember the first Indian, Rana P B Singh, who visited this place in late May 1993, took
“In 1981 I came to this place, Mattila. Before I was a school teacher in Grums, about 45km south-west of Karlstad. I have already spent 25 years of my life here, so we will have a special celebration this year. I came here in search of a good life, close to nature, and have a better return on my money/investment – not only in terms of work, but also in terms of satisfaction.” “I married my wife in 2003; she is my lovely wife and supports my programmes.”

“Here work is ‘worth-paid return of money’ – you can fulfil yours wishes without having to spend a lot of money. Through mistakes I learnt in my 25 years here that, of course, I have not earned so much of money, but learnt to enjoy another way of life here. It is a privilege to be here. Life here is not like that of the big cities.”

“I am very satisfied, having good life here, and sometimes I work too much. I also help some companies to promote their health products based on natural products; in fact, I help them with distribution, supply and advertising. There are hundred of such health products which need to be distributed by supplying shops – sending them to Norway and Finland. I work as a consultant for them.”

“Living here and being involved in such activities is what interests me. Earlier I trained sports, and that is how I became interested in nature, making friends with those who love nature and sports-related exercise. I try to have good network of nature associations. The Finn culture here attracts me a lot. I have a keen interest in health care services, mental, physical and psychological as well as nature-based.”

“People should understand and experience life by coming close to nature; this gives you a deeper feeling, a better sensitivity for happiness and satisfaction. Here we can enhance our feelings through seeing, smelling, feeling and fragrance.”

“Many people go to look at nature and find nothing, because they have not an open sensitivity. In a natural setting you can have a wonderful experience. The real education of human understanding can be only achieved in a natural setting. People feel strong here. Here, making things genuine – through being in touch with nature, you feel its calm message. We don’t like to do anything that does not fit into nature and with the landscape, e.g. this coming Saturday, we have arranged for a smoke-cottage evening. Next week a church group is coming to experience the forest walk. Let the young people learn how to behave in nature and with nature. They do not have this
feeling for nature. We try to give them training and awaken their instincts to learn how through self-realization and self-help. We do have to compromise with matters that do not accord with our ideas. Of course, sometimes we lose money. But, remember whatever we are doing here is not merely for money. It is a way of living, even without more money. It depends upon your mental fitness and self determination.”

“To celebrate the 25 years of my stay here, I invited some companies to hold and sponsor the celebration: I also want to make this as an object of school education. Restaurants should also be promoted to make things better for visitors, with better kitchens, better sitting, and a better setting. This year we are making this plan feasible and attractive. There are also specific plans on which we are working too. The extension of schools and some market areas near this settlement need to be promoted but without destroying the beauty of the landscape and nature.”

“I have some different types of plans. But I like to have this place, Mattila, as a ‘base’, from where I can do other things. So, I certainly will keep Mattila as a base. Naturally, in different periods different kinds of things will be needed, but a better economic base and stability are important to me. Some more residential cottages will also be developed, but not more than four, because more pressure is not required. In fact, I never thought of this idea earlier, but now there is a demand of time, especially with reference to supporting a better economic base. In the nearby lake area some houses will also be constructed as cultural and heritage tourism resorts; this can easily work in this area, and there are many good places to walk while living in such resorts.”

“I’m working alone. There are two people working in the kitchen, and two more work in winter time, when people come here for skiing and snow games. This is the present situation. But in future, after additional developments, certainly more people will be required. Repairs, renovation and the re-organization of the restaurant together with retaining the old settlement and its style and the old hearths will certainly attract people. Even new buildings should also always fit into the older tradition. Let the old traditions survive and people should learn and adjust to these settings and also teach the coming generation. Such work needs to be done as we all like this, and not only for financial benefits. Motivation and devotion are essential for the development of such areas.”

“Living in the forest, you are far away from the centre. Therefore a special network is required. Networking is quite important for maintenance and attracting people. The web (world wide web – www) is good if it goes in right direction. Of course, sometimes it goes wrong. Learning by interaction and mutual exchange of knowledge is a very important process.”

“Every action must form a continuous process. Even those left the area, every year come here to become alive and close to nature. This is an indication that this place is not going to die at all. Living and working in a special place like this makes you stronger. It gives you good feelings, a good view on life, good thought, a good sense of preserving nature and respect for life, tradition and place.”
Interview 04. Friday, 09 June 2006. 02.15pm – 04.45pm
Here is an interview with two people, a young woman who lives on a farm in the eastern part of Sörmark and a young man who is her neighbour living in a small annex on his father’s farm.

Family situation
The woman: “I’ve lived here since 1992 with my husband and my son. My mother and father came from Lysvik (south-east of the town of Torsby). We have no Finn connection; as far as I know. This house has been inherited from ancestors to my husband. Of course, most of the families living here have Finn ancestors.”

The man: “I live here with my boyfriend who works in Stockholm in a transport company. I have no relatives in this area. I am a weekly commuter. My father settled here, that is how we came and also got settled. A small house near the main house is my base. The farm is the base for my father who bought this land from his brothers. My great grandfather brought the family here at the beginning of the 20th century. All the lands are owned by my father (72 years old), and my brothers live 8 km away. My father feels that I cannot have any children (due to my homosexual life), therefore I am a big problem for him. Restoring the house and developing the farms etc. are frustrating things because they are not profitable. The majority of people think about monetary gain.”

Relation to the area
The woman: “Earlier I worked in Torsby in a video store from 1993. Now I am studying at Karlstad University as a full-time student for a period of two years. My husband is a truck driver for a forest agency. He has lived here for several years. My son is studying in Sörmark School, nearby. I have been engaged in establishing that independent school too.”

The man (has a bachelor’s degree in the integrated conservation of the landscape and buildings – also includes cultural heritage): “Presently I am working as a consultant for a firm in Norway and commuting each week to Norway. My place of work is about 160 km from here and it takes two hours to get there. I have worked there before. At present I am also dealing with Finns in Norway, i.e. Finn heritage and buildings. To work on the land, you have to depend on support from the EU. Two years ago, without even cattle, you could get grants to continue farming. My father produced ‘hay’ fodder. The EU funds stimulate and encourage you to continue farming and farm work. My great grandfather went to Hälsingland and worked in winter. We commute but have less friends in the area, but would like to have more here locally. But, what is a friend? A cultural difference?”

Feelings about their job
The woman: “We don’t farm, but we own land without farming. For the last two years the land we have has not been used; rather it is kept as fallow. Land is given free to be
maintained and kept productive. One farmer in Sörmark runs all the farms in this area. This is due to the fact that we have no time and opportunity to farm. In fact, there is no income in farming. My husband’s father earlier looked after the forest. We have also solar panels to supply electricity inside the house. This is a unique example, and the only one in this area.”

The man: “For me preservation of the landscape is more important, no matter how much money you get out of it. Farming has always yielded little income. My father owns about 150 hectares. It is to be noted that there is a small variation in the size of farms. Most of the farms just cut the grass and keep the landscape open. Tourism is also a new resource today – encouraging people to see the different landscapes and also earning money. This may be taken as one of the alternatives for future development in this area. People from other parts like Norway, Germany and the Netherlands come here and also to Lekvatnet (nearby parish, on the other side of the mountains). Many of them have learnt Swedish too. This clearly shows that this area is very attractive. In the nearby area there are no emigrants. However, several of the houses, especially in more peripheral/forest areas, those earlier built by emigrants, are now vacant. Here you also find more new immigrants.”

**Differentiated family structure and job structure**

It is interesting to see what kind of people we have found in the area. We looked for people in the old farming areas which were earlier dominated by family farms, often consisting of husband, wife and children and agriculture dominated the work.

If you look at the statistics in table 1, you see that there are only 34 individuals involved in agriculture (forestry included) in Östmark. Probably most of them are working in forestry. Our respondents had different relations to agriculture and forestry. Two of our respondents were directly involved in agriculture, two owned agricultural land and lived on it and used the land for leisure horses and sheep, one person lived on agricultural land but did not use it (lend it out), one lived in an annex to a farm with little direct involvement in farming, but had interests in cultural heritage and the last person lived in the forest and used the land mainly for tourism based on both cultural heritage and nature.

The family structure consisted partly of nuclear families; two of the families had husband, wife and children, but one husband and wife lived together without children. Other structures were represented by two persons lived as singles without children and two men living together without children.

Out of seven people just two worked on the land they owned. Four of them commuted out of Östmark for work and one commuted into Östmark for work.

Altogether this provides a much differentiated picture that probably reflects today’s Swedish society more than a traditional farming society. It is interesting to see that Östmark is in no way isolated from the world around in its family structure.

Why then is the situation as it is today? It is clear that being a farmer means a lot of work, and it is more of a life style than anything else. It seems as if it is both
enthusiasm and heritage that keeps the business or the land in agriculture. All the people interviewed have reason either to keep the farm going or to maintain the open farm land for its value as a cultural heritage.

**Lifeways and life philosophies**

The original interviews on questions regarding lifeways and life philosophy are presented in *appendix 3*. Here we provide a summarized and analysed version of the results.

**The main aim in life and the good life**

It was interesting to see the reactions from the respondents when we asked about the main aim in life and the good life. Some were very unsure what to answer, probably because you do not usually ask yourself such questions in everyday life. All the respondents had difficulty in giving clear and long answers about aim of life, but expressions like ‘good health’, ‘family care’ and ‘having an interesting job’ predominated.

They were more able to express what they meant by the good life. It seems as

*Photo 9 Sörmark recycling station – a modern strategy for taking care of nature?*

Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2008
if most people are ‘very down to earth’ and do not have any special guidelines like religion or politics. Having a good job and having time to be at home more and having more time for travel were common answers.

At the same time as they say that they have no special ethics (based on religion or politics), they are very much aware of the importance of good relations with neighbours and visitors. There is variation, some are working in their own businesses whilst others are engaged in local development projects.

The only sceptical ideas from the moral standpoint are related to the state. One person argues that, due to high taxes, cheating the state is acceptable, which leads us to bad things.

**Bad things**

High taxation and bureaucracy related to the Swedish state are examples of bad things in Swedish society. Other examples of domestic problems are unemployment, environmental pollution, criminality, drugs, greediness, consumerism and drunk driving. Child abuse is mentioned by some respondents.

On the global level most respondents mention war and international conflicts. Here there is the first example of reaction to religion as something bad for the world. But on the local level the idea of developing the local church to fit a ‘modern’ society was put forward.

One interesting idea was presented by one respondent and deals with representation in the mass media: “You are fed with all these things so in the end you almost do not care.” Another interesting comment about problems deals with self-confidence: “Every problem has some solution; the thinking process is the most important”.

**Attitude to nature**

All the respondents think this area is very beautiful, although one comment was that it is very much taken for granted and that it was earlier more used for winter activities, like skiing. One respondent claims that it is the summer time which is most beautiful. Many respondents also think that agriculture is fundamental for maintaining the open, beautiful landscape as an attraction for people to move here or to visit the area. It was suggested there should harsher restrictions regarding the overgrown landscape.

**Local mobilization in the area**

Here there are different levels of interest. Some respondents talk about their own house or farm that they want to preserve and develop. Concerning the local area, one can say that communications between neighbours have decreased over the years but some special activities have taken place. Some people have been engaged in a local development group. The work on a ‘house of handicraft’ in Sör-
Photo 10 Juhola culture reservation area – modern culture conservation (located in the north east)
Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2006
mark did not work out well. The view was expressed that new people are needed in this process. The Sörmark independent school is an example of success based on local initiative and efforts by some of the respondents. This was carried out on a neutral political party basis.

The Finnish culture is of special interest in the area. All the respondents know about it and think it is important to develop it, but just a few are engaged in this process.

**World views**

Globalization can be related to agriculture and would in that case lead to a future with bigger farms but, as one respondent said: “imagine 1000 cows here. Then you have no contact with animals at all”. The introduction of broadband in the periphery, available in Östmark, is essential for adapting to the global world. It is difficult to evaluate globalization says one respondent. Another claims that it is relatively bad if large parts of the world would look the same, like the US and Canada.

The world would be a better place if there were no war, say some of the respondents. Here religion is mentioned several times as something leading to war. They mention many good ideas about commitment and local development,
such as “If we could all start accepting each other, irrespective that we have different coloured skin and so on.”

Recycling systems, helping those who suffer and persuading people to leave the big cities and return to the countryside and an alternative life mode would also lead to a better world.

There were not many messages to farmers in the world, or India. It was more a question of what we eat in Sweden compared with India. And here cultural circumstances are the main explanation of the difference.

**Identities**

There are different identities in the region to be discussed. Gustafsson (2006) has recently divided identities into three groups: person identity, region identity and relational identity.

Person identity can either be individual or group identity. Within the area you can historically differentiate between the following group identities: Swedes (start before 1640s – see map 2), Finns (start after 1640s – see map 3), tattare (vagrants/gypsies – first recognized during the first part of 19th century – see Måwe 1958) and the recent immigrants from Germany and the Netherlands.

Today it is not easy to recognize these identities, except the Finns (see below). Some voices from some extended interviews:

– Nationaliteter – nej! Ingen pratar om tattare. Fäderna pratade om att det fanns “sköjarsläkt”. (Nationalities – No! No one talks about ‘tattare’ (vagrants/gypsies). Our parents talked about the existence of ‘sköjarsläkt’ (swindlers).)  

– “Concerning German and Dutch identities: No! And nothing on ‘Tattare’. Just as jokes today”  

– “I also feel that the regional dialect, as a cultural heritage, should also be promoted as a regional identity; of course, we are Christians.”

Region identity can be mainly described as the physical characteristics of a geographically limited area, and here are of course Östmark = parish = old local municipality and the different areas within the parish like Sörmark (the southern part of the parish), Östmark church village, Lämbacken, Metbäcken and Röjdåfors. But you might also add a region with a strong link to the old immigrant group of Finns, the proclamation of Finnskogen as a local cultural heritage area to be developed is an example of a recent living region identity (see Wahlström 2000), which includes the old group identity (Finns) as person identities.

The characteristic features of Sörmark can be defined in the following way: Jämt söder om Kläggen. Jordbruksbygd. När det gäller vi och dom så är det en stark sammanhållning i Sörmark. (Just south of Kläggen. Agricultural land. Concerning us and them there is a strong sense of unity in Sörmark.) Another voice says that: “Earlier there was a feeling that Östmark and Sörmark had separate identities; but now no one thinks this way; they feel that they are one.” A third young voice says that “There has been competition between Östmark and Sörmark: with dif-
ferent opinions and different viewpoints. Here we call it the ‘Sörmak’ spirit (sörmarksanda), referring to a good feeling and involvement in the development programmes. But we need young and new people to improve the chances for further progress. Our generation is more open to everybody. We want this kind of feeling and opinion to continue. Finns (frontier) in Norway are recognized as a minority; that is a critical issue in Norway, but not in Sweden. The National Museum of Finn Culture (in the Forest) at Kirkenäs (close to the border of Östmark) in Norway is a good example of the sense of heritage and its preservation. Norwegians have a somewhat different way of dealing with ethnicities and identities than we have. Swedes are more urban, therefore the approaches vary in terms of regional versus local planning. It is difficult to explain.”

An example of relational identity, which deals with both feelings for a region and relation to a region (contextual in its character) is seen in this woman’s comment, which is an example of the contextual character of the relational identity: Om man täffar någon i Stockholm skulle man säga att man bor i Värmland, men träffar man nån i Karlstad skulle man säga att man bor i Sörmak som ligger norr om Torsby. Känt genom Kjell Åke Nilsson. (If you meet someone in Stockholm, you would say that you live in Värmland, but if you meet someone in Karlstad, you would say that you live in Sörmak which is located north of Torsby, known by Kjell Åke Nilsson.)

Among the questions concerning relational identities that might have been
added are: Where do you feel you belong? What do you feel about different regions? However that must wait until a future occasion.

**Local development strategies**

The development in Östmark today may be analysed with the aid of Gerhard Gustafsson’s theoretically devised local development strategies – see figure 2 (Gustafsson 1988a or 1988b). Here he defined four different kinds of strategies based on relationships and dependences for the local social environment: The Screening Strategy, The Strategy of strengthening the Inner Structure, The Balance or Standardization Strategy and The Strategy of Open Exploitation. Comp-
red with the theory, sparsely spread life modes are far from providing the prerequisites for a screening strategy. They fit rather the open exploitation strategy. The earlier plan for a house for handicraft would have been an example of ‘the strategy of strengthening the inner structure’, but it is now too late.

Representations and results
Here is a presentation of a dialogue between the two of us, Gerhard Gustafsson and Rana P B Singh, based on some reactions found in the texts and in our minds. In particular there is an attempt to make some comparisons between Chamaon in India and Östmark in Sweden. We are trying to apply questions and answers from the local level to the global level.

Representation
a)  
Gerhard:
Some unexpected findings come to mind, such as the different life and family situations. It is interesting to see that Östmark is in many ways a Sweden in miniature. At the other end of the scale, it was also surprising to note the increase of the job opportunities during the period of 1965–2004. Of course, the main reason was the rapid increase in job opportunities for women, and at the same time the decrease in jobs for men.

Rana:
During 1977–2008 the life-philosophy and lifeways (genre de vie, i.e. geographical interpretation of livelihood and associated environment) changed substantially in Chamaon, like in most parts of village India. Earlier the villagers were attached to their land and there were no strong desires for economic prosperity (in materialist terms). But today, the situation has changed in terms of the tough competition for jobs, the improvement of life through the support of more earnings for which good and technical education and training is necessary, and the increase in individual endeavour. This has led to fragmentation of the joint family system, the acceptance of corruption as a common arena, the loss of common initiatives to check the social evils, and associated and consequential issues which together have further reciprocally intensified the problems. This is a common scene in the traditional villages in India, especially those that are close to large urban centres, like the case of Chamaon, which lies near Varanasi city. India is a country of villages. According to the 2001 Indian census, 72.22% (i.e. 829 million) of Indians live in 638,365 different villages. The size of these villages varies considerably; e.g. 236,004 Indian villages have a population less than 500, while 3,976 villages have a population of 10,000+ inhabitants. Most villages have their own temple, mosque or church depending on the local religious following.
Gerhard:
Rana, to sum up, in Sweden village life in the countryside is very much under urban influence today, but in India it is just the villages located close to bigger cities that face such influence.

Rana:
You are right that in India the villages near to urban areas have suffered drastic influence as regards land use, life philosophy and the farming system. Those which are far away and do not yet have good accessibility to main roads still continue with the old values and traditions, subsistence farming and are least concerned about their high aspirations.

b)
Gerhard:
Rana! You said something during the field trip about the result if the questions had been asked in India. For example you said: “In India the issues of bonded-labour, malnutrition and ill-treatment are the major issues related to children.” I remember when we asked about people’s relations to the place in Chamaon, the common concern was earning money, and attachment to place was not important. That is due to poverty, perhaps? It would have been difficult to ask the Musahars (belonging to the untouchable and low-caste landless group) what they felt about belonging to their neighbourhood, other than that they need food for survival. What do you think about this, Rana?

Rana:
Yes, you are right that in many traditional Indian villages still the issues of bonded-labour, malnutrition, ill-treatment are the major issues related to children. This is mostly due to the form of economic support for the poor family. Attachment to place is not an important issue; and, slowly, the degree of sense of attachment is decreasing. Being a semi-nomadic tribe still, the Musahars community does not have a strong desire to change their life. ‘Eat, drink and be merry’ is the motto of their life. However, it is also to be noted that there were no rational and befitting programmes or schemes run by the government for their progressive development together with befitting means of providing their livelihood. There is no such NGO (Non-Governmental organization) in this region that deals with such people. They believe that as a result of a curse by God, their destiny is marked in this way. It is also to be noted that throughout history they have never been directly attached to the land and farming at any level. Making bamboo-baskets, leaf-plates (mostly females) and doing manual labour (mostly males) are their main occupations. Still they have not been perceived as hard labourers and honest people devoted to the jobs allotted to them, therefore in the first instance people avoid hiring Musahars for any sort of work. Contrary to this, Musahars feel that they were the roaming people who had control over the land, but, in the long span of time, other settlers occupied the land and they were bound within a limited territory without having alternative means of subsistence.
Gerhard:
Yes I can see this speciality about tribal groups. Earlier in Sweden we had gypsies and people said they were nomadic in the sense that they travelled around a lot. But I think this behaviour was mostly due to the fact that settled people forced them to move as they did not like them. What about the Musahars, nothing similar here? But what about poor people in low castes in general? Do they have sense of attachment to place?

Rana:
In India, there are semi-tribal and pastoral communities those moving according to season and availability of the farming jobs, especially manual labour for field preparation and harvesting. A group of semi-nomadic tribe is dealing with stone-work and making iron-tools used for peasant society and farmers. But very rapidly they are going out of scene, because of the modernization, changing lifestyles, expansion of economic pace and urban encroachments. Naturally, even a semi-tribal community like Musahars has certainly a distinct sense of place attachment, but it is more like acceptance of their destiny as mercy of the god.

Cultural differences and life-philosophies in research and society

Gerhard:
I am not sure about the differences between the two of us as regards research. We have worked together for such a long time (at least the last eighteen years), so I think we have so much in common in understanding, vision and reflections. We have visited our home study areas several times and think that there are big differences in the two societies; however, there are some similarities in the context of inherent human behaviour and life-philosophy. The only thing now that I can think of is the fact you probably raised more questions about life-philosophy than I would have done. This is perhaps due to your cultural background in India, where spiritual life is more important. What do you think, Rana?

Rana:
At this point in human development with the forces that are binding people from different corners of the world together, it is important that we should think of cross-cultural comparative studies. In both the cases we are studying the common phenomenon is ‘life in the countryside’, especially with respect to the changes that have occurred in the last three decades pertaining to the economy, society, culture, and more specifically life-philosophies and the lifeways. It would be better to see these changes in the light of ‘lifeworld’, the cultural connotation and reflections of the spatio-temporal setting of everyday life. The term lifeways encompasses the totality of an individual person’s direct involvement with the places and environments experienced in ordinary life (cf. Buttimer (1976).

These issues have recently been taken seriously by some geographers, e.g.
Anne Buttimer (Ireland). And, more importantly, there has been rich tradition in the community of Swedish geography to understand these human issues, e.g. the studies carried in 1980s by Gerhard Gustafsson and Lage Wahlström (Gothenburg).

In the case of India, the country that once had a rich, long continuity of spiritual traditions and a variety of belief systems inculcated in the life-philosophy and lifeways of people slowly turned towards the path of materialism, consumerism, individualism, etc., which we sometimes metaphorically call the consequences of the globalization. One can say that the lifeways and lifeworld have changed direction. However, even during the time of the ancient Vedic culture, ca 1000 B.C.E., the Charvaka’s philosophy of ‘materialism’ was in practice continued and predominates even more strongly today. Of course, in talk and exposure to others the people (villagers) refer to high morals and spiritual values but, surprisingly, rarely they practice them in their own life. Additionally, with the passage of time the ritualistic system becomes a popular scene in the name of ‘spirituality’ and ‘religion’. Benefitting from such changes and the quest to create one’s own identity in a wide arena of crisis, ‘ritualistic shows’ are accepted as the ways and means to create ‘identity’ and popularity. This may also be interpreted as one of the ways and processes for upward mobility and representational security for the low caste people (relatively poor) who are in the bottom of the purity-pollution hierarchy of the social strata. One can say that ‘expressing life-philosophies’ is different from the ‘doing life-philosophies’. The poor only think of filling their belly; what can they say about their ambitions or life-philosophy? The greatest loss India faced in the colonial era was the transformation of the educational system and related values through the superimposition and destruction of institutional autonomy (cf. Baber 2002).

It is a sad part of village life that the old uncritical spirit is replacing self-realization day by day in spite of the growing modernization in and around the region (Singh and Singh 1981: 60). This is a common scene. An intensive case study of the inside story shows that the philosophy of the villagers’ attitude toward the true value of life is ‘a sordid love of money’. Therefore, they say that “money is everything, so everything should be done for money. Money becomes the basic means of affection or negligence. … The family members only need the money without any limit, because they have no budget to follow” (ibid.: 61–62).

The country is facing a cultural crisis in most of its sectors. The great mystery of this crisis is that, in this phase of transition, at one end of our lives we are maintaining the uncritical taboos of the past in the form of superstition, rituals, cas- teism, communalism and fundamentalism, and at the other end, consumerism, individualism and globalization. In fact, the root is to be found in the remote past. Charvaka, in the first to second centuries, propounded the materialistic philosophy (atheism) of life, prescribing: “While you are alive, enjoy the pleasant life even at the price of getting into debt; if you have no means, take loans from others, because after cremation your dead body will not return to see this world”. In contrast to other religions and cultures, Hinduism has had a tradition of welcoming heresies into its fold. That is why Charvaka and his followers are accep-
ted in the pantheon of Hindu philosophies despite their repudiation of rituals and faith in the message of the Vedas.

In fact, without critical appraisal and re-evaluation of the age-old traditional values, they have been now accepted as part of life, reflected mostly in the form of superstitions and rituals. The cultural and ethical crises that the country faces today are more dangerous than any other pollution.

In a very similar way Indian society carried the out-dated traditions of the past and additionally borrowed the value-free Western approach in the name of modernization. However, there is an invisible spirit keeping the nation alive. Says the novelist Shashi Tharoor (1997: 6), “the reason India has survived all the stresses and strains that have beset it for fifty years (after independence), and that led so many to predict its imminent disintegration is that it maintained consensus on how to manage without consensus”. This is difficult to understand, but not impossible. We face a clash of cultures in the purview of ‘Reflections on the life: East and West’ as narrated by Hari N. Dam, Professor of Philosophy at Brigham Young University (as quoted in Raine 1997: 10):

You live in time; we live in space.
You’re always on the move; we’re always at rest.
Religion is our first love; we revel in metaphysics.
Science is your passion; you delight in physics.
You believe in freedom of speech; you strive for articulation.
We believe in freedom of silence; we lapse into meditation.
Self-assertiveness is the key to your success;
Self-abnegation is the secret of our survival.
You’re urged every day to want more and more;
We’re taught from the cradle to want less and less.
Joie de vivre is your ideal; conquest of desires is our goal.
In the sunset years of life, you retire to enjoy the fruits of your labour;
We renounce the world and prepare ourselves for the hereafter.

Gerhard:
I agree with you that it is important to focus on ordinary life in research. In fact I am now working on the notion of making comparative studies between Cham- on, Östmark and Ostmark in the US (which I have studied earlier – see Gustafsson 2000). One important idea to be used here is the fact that there are more factors/circumstances that unite the farmers all over the world than separate them, when it comes to similarities and differences.

I do not know very much about ethical values in earlier village life, but I know that life was very much based on a circular time concept related to the four seasons (Frykman and Lofgren 1979). People lived close to nature and its variations during the year in accordance with changes in the environment. When Christianity came around 1000 A.D., the villages slowly became integrated into a more moral life, whilst earlier Nordic mythology had dominated the place. In Östmark after the 1640s the Finns brought their special ideas, but life at that time was also very much focused on survival.
I do not know if it occurred to you but our respondents did not talk about earning money as the main goal in life/development. I think this is a result of the social welfare state. People have such a high material living standard that they can easily think of other things.

We may believe that society develops through a number of phases: traditional, modern and post-modern. I do not think we have reached post-modern society. If we had, then we would have a better society where people were closely linked to their environment, region, landscape, place or whatever spatial expression you want, at the same time as they were linked together globally with the aid of, for instance, IT.

You mention “the value-free Western approach in the name of modernization”. Over the years I have constantly been thinking more about the concept of the West. What is the West? Is it mainly colonialism, multinational companies or modernization? I think colonization and multinational companies can be blamed for many bad things in India and other countries in the East (or South), but I am not so sure about modernization! Although technological developments often come from the West I am not sure that it is as simple as that. When some technological development occur, they also affect farming as well as other areas, and bring modernization, but knowledge and technological development are free to move all over the world. Sweden was also once a relatively balanced society and later village life was affected by technological developments. These changes are like natural laws for us. We have noted that when changes come, they come in the same way all over the world. Can we compare Östmark and Chamaon?

Rana: Comparison in a strict sense is difficult and also not feasible because of the different cultural and historical settings. However, one can safely say that changes in political economy and technological transformation have very strong impacts in both the regions, Östmark (Sweden) and Chamaon (India). Of course, the degree, intensity, speed, adaptability, consequential changes in lifeways and social structure, and other associated attributes of such change and transformation would certainly have disparate reflections in the two settings. With the notion that the technological developments and innovations that come from the West may not suit the indigenous conditions in India, there is always a debate about what appropriate and indigenous technology is suitable to the local conditions.

Family structures

Gerhard: Rana! I remember you reacted to the possible family situations, like living together officially as homosexuals and living alone. This is quite a different situation compared with the situation in the Indian countryside, or in general Indian society.
Rana:
In Indian culture, homosexuality has never been accepted by the social code of behaviour. Moreover, sex is an issue of ‘secrecy’ and never to be discussed publicly. Of course, there are cases of homosexuality everywhere, but never openly accepted or exposed. India, mostly in the villages, is known for creating rumours and funny stories about the instances where homosexuality, for instance, is not practiced invisibly. I have heard about some cases of homosexual relationships in many villages but in no way can one discuss or openly refer to such people. The females talk about homosexuals as psychologically and sexually sick (deviant) people who have lost their religious sense and cultural norms. Similarly, there are cases of masturbation everywhere but publicly no one can accept it or expose it. The issue of the bonded labour of children also has strong links to homosexual behaviour. The employers and aged people involved therein promote homosexuality.

Gerhard:
Rana, I remember that the situation in Sweden during my childhood was very much as you describe India today. Today society is more open for all kinds of people, like HTB-persons (homo-, trans- and bi-sexual), but many people would claim that they suffer discrimination today in Sweden because of their sexual disposition. The big open discussion today is whether or not homosexuals can get married. There is an opportunity to enter into a so-called registered partnership. The other question under discussion is whether homosexual females may be inseminated in order to have their own children.

Structure of society

Gerhard:
I remember during one interview you, Rana, asked if they are lacking something in the house “No. They have too many things” they answered. My impression is that you reacted, or I expected you to react to the wealthy materialist society, as I do by myself I ask myself what is good and what is bad in the life modes in Östmark compared with Chamaon in India. In a global perspective what is important to keep and what should societies try to get rid of? In what way have developments gone too far in Östmark, in Chamaon? Is this a good question to raise? At the same time you said: “I come from a very long cultural route, and here I see openness.” What did you mean?

Rana:
Most of the older people in village society in India commonly remember their old days when many members of the extended/joint family (brothers, brothers’ wives, cousins, aunts, sisters, uncles, mothers, grandmothers) lived together and helped each other, but in at least the last sixty years (after independence in 1947) a major changes has occurred with the acceptance and growth of the single/nuclear or isolated family (husband, wife and young children), and constant com-
petition among the brothers and cousins for economic prosperity. This leads on occasion to a form of rivalry, where they beat and wound each other, in some cases resulting in court cases. Where there is a situation of internal conflicts in a nuclear family on issues like social, psychological, individual freedom, personal relationships, nurturing children, etc., there is now no way soul-healing, social pressure and psychotherapy be sought from the closest part of their extended family as they are now living separately. There is a popular saying that 'No member of the separated family would be well-wisher for the other' (pattid?r kabahi apn? pattid?r ke bhal? n? ch?hi). This is the extreme example of materialism and individualism. In comparison with Indian villages, I can see how 'open' and harmonious society is in Östmark (Sweden) where neighbours maintains friendly relationships and help each other. I feel that in their own context Swedish society is, of course, rich in having material goods, but also in maintaining brotherhood. This sense of brotherhood was once the symbol of Indian culture, with the life-philosophy and tradition of treating the 'whole world as one's own family' ("va-sudhaiva kutumbakam") by serving the neighbourhood. This is reminiscent of the great idea of our past to ‘think universally and act locally’; however, those days are past. Today, everything has to be dealt with as a market commodity judged by its economic value rather than its social value, as it was in the past.

Using religious celebrations as tool to show supremacy and gain high status in society has become common among the newly rich, resulting in a multitude of celebrations on a mass scale. Metaphorically, this process used to be called ‘Gobarisation’, using the connotation of ‘Gobar’ (cow dung) that is used for cleansing the sacred area prepared for various rituals and rites in the Hindu community. Hindus still use that term without questioning or critically examining the present relevance and context in the modern celebrations; in addition to using chemical colours and modern costumes in decorating Indian gods and goddesses like film stars from Bollywood (Mumbai). Some scholars say the infrastructure and resistance to globalization in rural areas are issues that may limit India’s ability to grow.

Gerhard: Rana, here I think I have to say something critical about Sweden. I agree with you about the openness, but I think that individualism and competition exist here as well. Much pressure is put on people as individuals to be well-educated in order to get a good job. The growth economy is predominant throughout the country. But you can probably find some tendencies towards the development of alternative life modes in the countryside. One interesting thing is that landowners who are not using their land lend it out for free to farmers who want to farm. Both can gain from it, with economic profit and an open landscape (cultural heritage).

Consciousness of time and the Crisis

Gerhard: Lack of time is mentioned by many respondents. Is this a modern social phenomenon, now to be found even in the countryside?
**Rana:**
Even in village India, life is now becoming more and more competitive – a constant struggle for better subsistence, better life through modern means, appliances, amenities and facilities. Today people always compare themselves with those who are better-off and try to make their life much better by hook or by crook, which encourages the use of corrupt means to satisfy their ends. Also, jealousy is always uprooting the village culture. The consciousness of time has increased social distance as people have no time to meet each other and to share their experiences. The *Upanishadic* philosophy (5th century BCE – 5th century CE) refers to the fact that ‘everything originates in Time, everything is lost in Time, Time creates, Time controls and ultimately Time finishes’. Everybody knows that we all have to leave this world, but we always commit mistakes and enjoy it.

Democracy in India has failed to provide stable government, a balanced economy with a consequent loss of cultural traditions and moral social values. The cry of the masses in India is expressed explicitly in a poem, *The Road of Life* (cf. Singh 2000 b: 78):

This side and at the other end are countless people, But people are victims of isolation. From dawn to dusk carrying oneself as a load, But becoming the burial of one’s own corpse. Everywhere running, vanishing paths, But everywhere people are victims of people. Everyday being alive and everyday dying, But having hope and waiting for a new light. Life’s fate is to run from one end to another, Till the last breath in search of solace.

(Based on a tape of a popular song: *Sajda–STHVS–852109*, side B:2, 1991, sung by India’s two most famous singers, Lata Mangeshvar and Jagjit Singh).

**Gerhard:**
I think time is the only resource that is equally distributed among people but, of course, different people have different opportunities to use it in the way they want. I think some people, like myself, are beginning to think in a new way (or perhaps old way). This is the feeling that we are becoming prisoners in our materialistic world. The really free individual is one who is released from materialistic relations. 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 the respondents think I am joking. In fact, I think that we need to stop and think about 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 be come more effective, all political parties support a growth economy. This is also a question of the quality of life, a better life.
Globalization

Gerhard:
Globalization is ‘traditionally’ described as something very bad, but (it depends on what definitions you are using – I think). It can probably also be seen as something good, as through this process people come closer to each other. Of course, this must not occur at the cost of the loss of local identity. Globalization also promotes ‘multiculturalism’ through interaction and learning. Earlier I was very much against globalization, but the European example has inspired me to think differently, where the expansion of the EU to the East, in particular, can be seen as a peace project. Otherwise I am basically sceptical about global capitalism and what it does for the world.

Rana:
Globalization in the context of Indian villages is perceived as an obstacle to the growth and development of local area, indigenous resources, interdependent functional relationships, nature-based farming and herbal medicine, and cultural values which bind people of different groups together. More specifically the loss of indigenous seeds and plants due to gene control and manipulation is a sad story. The controversy of claims for patents for the margosa tree ‘neem’ (*Azadirachta indica*), turmeric ‘haldi’ (*Curcuma aromarica*) and basmati rice (*Oriza Sativa indica*) by Americans is well known even to the villagers in India. These plants have been used in India since at least 2000 BCE. This resulted giving Americans a bad image. Many villagers see it as a result of ‘globalization’. People are afraid that globalization means that slowly the hegemonic control over resources and culture would pass to the Americans, of course indirectly, which would deplete the biodiversity and individual culture of poor or low-income countries like India. In contrast to this, the rich, industrial and metropolitan people think globalization is a good process that helps them enjoy world-wide resources and products in more equitable manner. If globalization could ensure the promotion and preservation of the local culture and resources, then it would easily be accepted by the masses. Of course, it is commonly said that globalization promotes ‘multiculturalism’, however, at the same time, it corrupts the local culture, as in the case of cultural tourism. In the Banaras region one can see how globalization is also detrimental to cultural traditions – materialism and cheating are now rapidly increasing.

Think of a description of the effects of foreign tourists and globalization as described in a novel set against the background of the Assi area of Banaras (Singh 2004: 322):

Banaras is dying, but not by the factors supported with data as presented by that foreign woman. She has data for the whole city, but I’ve details of Assi. It is obvious from the data that as to how much imported heroin, brown-sugar, hashish and morphine consumed near the ghats! Everywhere the sex stimulant drugs are now on sale. The innocent older people are the victims. … In all the inner lanes smuggling of US Dollars is growing rapidly. Drug addiction is becoming common among the youngsters because of the impact of Western tourists. These youngsters are unemployed loafers, al-
ways run around beautiful girls for sexual enjoyment. They mostly sit at the tea stalls and try to cheat the visitors.

The foreigners under the name of local people have purchased many houses and pass their lavish life here. They spent a lot of money in repairing and extension of houses. They have managed false marriages to arrange visa. At every nook and corner they started ‘cyber café’ to be used for their communication. We think of this as the process of ‘globalization’.

It is also to be noted that today’s encounter with global discourses encompasses new potentials as well radical doubt. “Whilst it is essential to probe the role of transnational (multinational) corporations, it is also important to embrace the positive aspects that globalization could offer, such as education and exchange. … This is not to say that globalization presents no problem. Fears of the McDonaldization of the world, or ‘global blending’, first emerged in 1989. … There is no reason why cultural values should be eroded in a global world” (Foster 2002: 176–177).

Gerhard:
I agree with you, Rana, that so far globalization has a lot of negative implications, but my hope is that when people come closer, they can get a better understanding of each other. In this sense I think IT is very important. But there is also a need for a grassroots movement. No politicians or entrepreneurs can save the world.

Religion

Gerhard:
Here in Sweden we talk about religion as a new threat for the future (partly verified in this study) but in India religion is the basis for everything and very much integrated in the everyday life. But what are the real differences? Do you think in the same way, Rana?

Rana:
When ‘religion’ is defined in the Western perspective as an order or sect maintained by churches, then in the contemporary world it is to be considered an obstacle for development. In India religion is considered and practiced in the past ‘as a way of life, especially a moral code of conduct’. At present, the most crucial crisis in this context is the acceptance of ‘rituals and festive celebrations’ as representations of ‘religion’. And, in addition, the sense of ‘spirituality’ has been hijacked by ‘religious celebrations’. This, in fact, is the great pitfall of Indian culture.

“A religion is something that teaches respect for the dignity and sanctity of all nature. The wrong religion is one that licenses the indulgence of human greed at the expense of non-human nature” (Toynbee and Ikeda 1976: 324). We need a religion (dharma), which promotes pantheism, a variety of forms and a variety of inherent meanings. Hinduism is an example where all forms of nature and its objects are manifested with distinct sanctity and, at some point, to some extent accepted as a part of worship. This is an ethical issue along the lines of the spirit of sustainability. Reverence – the deeper vision of the sanctity of life; responsibility – the con-
necting link between ethics and rationality – frugality grace without waste; and eco-justice, all form the minimal core of intrinsic values for the correct conservation and preservation of the spirit of sustainability (cf. Skolimowski 1990: 100–102). The philosopher Skolimowski calls it ‘reverential development’, a unitary principle which combines the reverence and sanctity of life with contemporary economic, social, moral, cultural and traditional premises to bring peace and harmony with nature (ibid.: 103). That fact that they may be difficult to implement in practice in no way negates their importance and desirability. The idea of reverential development is an exposition of the integration between dharna (moral code of conduct) and karma (right action), which ultimately results in peace (Singh 2000a: 454).

In late 1960 Lynn White (1967: 1204) rightly warned the coming generation: “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink the old one”. This challenge may be taken seriously if ‘religion’ is re-defined as a ‘moral code of conduct’ (dharna).

The main crisis mankind faces is the crisis of ‘thought-pollution’, but this can easily be resolved, to a certain extent, by an awakening of the spirit of ‘Self-realization’. Remember, “if nothing in all the universe is as frail as man, nothing likewise is so divine as he!” (Aurobindo 1979: 14). The feeling of this reality can promote global humanism (‘the whole world as one family’, vasudhaiva kutumbakam), the inherent force of ecological cosmology (cf. Singh 1999b: 84–85). A 10th century BCE text, the Atharva Veda (3.10) has very clearly expressed this realization:

Of one heart and of one mind, Free from hatred do I make you, Take delight in one another, As the cow does in her baby calf.
Loyal to his sire the son be, Of one mind, too, with his mother; Sweet and kindly language ever, Let the wife speak to her husband.
Brother shall not hate the brother, And the sister not the sister, Of one mind and of one intent, Speak ye words of kindness only.

Gerhard:
I think I behave like a Christian in a more pure sense compared with many of my colleagues from the US, who go to Church every weekend (I do not go at all). For me it is also very much integrated in my everyday life – in the culture.

Concerning relationships between man and the environment, I recall when I wrote my doctoral dissertation where I discussed religion and major political ideas concerning the relationship. It was clear that it is a question of interpreting the Bible and other texts if one wants a guideline for behaviour. Despite even a religious or political background one can find many good reasons for developing society in harmony with nature (Gustafsson 1986).

The future
Gerhard:
Rana, I think you had expected to find more people ready to help the world living in the area, remembering one additional question to a nurse, but is the
explanation that people are living in their own contexts and do not care? Perhaps the hope for the future is raising people all over the world with humanistic values to get rid of, for example, poverty, war and environmental pollution? You said during the field trip: “Do locally, plan regionally and think globally!”

Rana:
Describing the future prospects and feasibility of a traditional village Majhanpur in the Bhojpur region (to which Chamaon also belongs) in 1981, we presented an internal reality that is worth quoting here (Singh and Singh 1981: 72):

The ongoing tendency of individualism and selfishness and the attitude to get more and more without proper work and devotion are the great hindrances in village-development. Even in an individual family, if two generations are living together, the one who has the physical powers and support from his fellows always try, directly or indirectly, to capture the share of other. For such gain they can easily sacrifice their morals and social behaviour. But on the other hand they always talk about their glorious heritage and high morals. Such drawbacks have caused unhappiness to everybody. They say that they are perfectly happy, but in appearance one can easily observe their sorrow and sufferings. This tendency has become part and partial of their life.

In most cases villagers cite the prosperity and worthiness of their forefathers, but personally they never follow that. The local proverb that “Neither I eat, neither allow anybody to eat, rather using wood-sticks I will throw it” (N? Kh?ib, N? Kh?i Deb; Lâkari Lag?k? Chhit Deb), is really true to this society. Moreover, it may be noted that this proverb is very popularly used in underdeveloped and traditional villages like Majhanpura. Like primate sense of perception most of the older persons of poor and low castes attempt at their best that the younger group will never know the activities of the outside world and with such values they never believe in higher education. Due to such a tragic situation, it is not easy to predict the outcome of planning programmes in lack of people-participation and mutual cooperation.

“Let us hope we will have the sense to seek, the wisdom to listen, and the patience to learn” (Devereux 1990: 216). Let us hope that the coming generation would follow the path of ecological cosmology and serve the cause of understanding, thus serving the humanity in a better way. The words of African ecologist poet Babu Dioum is a great warning (cf. Singh 1995: 215):

> In the end
> We will conserve only what we love.
> We will love only what we understand.
> We will understand only what we learn.

Gerhard:
Nothing to add!
– Checked and updated by Rana: 01 September 2008.
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Appendix 1 Field report

Field Study Trip to Östmark, Mattila, (Värmland, Sweden) 07 to 09 June 2006

Prof. Gerhard Gustafsson (KU, Karlstad, Sweden) & Prof. Rana P.B. Singh (BHU, Varanasi, India).

Wednesday, 07 June 2006.
Cloudy, light rain, Temp. 14° to 16°C. Hired Car: mileage three digits at start: 232 km (= 00 km). Karlstad to Torsby (118 km), Torsby to Östmark (22 km), Torsby to Mattila (23 + 4 = 27 km): 167 km.

10.15 am Started by car: G Gustafsson and R P B Singh (from Fagottgatan 5, House 6, Kronoparken, Karlstad).

Photo 13 Finnkulturcenter in Torsby (The Torsby Finnish Culture Centre)
Photographer: Rana P B Singh 2006
12.45 am Stopped at Pizzeria in Torsby and took a pizza, cost each SEK 55.

Proceeded to see Finnkulturcenter (see photo 13), entry fee SEK 20 each. This is a research centre. Many rich collections were donated by Richard Broberg, a great personality of Finn heritage. There are computer facilities and collections of research materials. A small exhibition in another part of the building shows paintings of the slash and burn farming culture, rye fields, Finn log houses and their style of construction by model and their expansion by the Swedes.

At Östmark we stopped to meet an old friend, a farmer whom GG interviewed in 1991 and further fixed a time for interview on 08 June at 03.00pm. We saw how he was cleaning his dung tanker with pipe water. He owned three houses.

03.10 pm Arrived at ICA shop, Östmark Church village, and purchased food items for cooking, cost to SEK 270.

04.10 pm Arrived at Mattila (see photo 14), and settled in the cottage owned by a colleague, Gabriel Bladh; relaxed.

06.02 pm By car to the Norwegian area (9 km). Stopped at Finnskogstopen (therapy house), and walked around, guided by a lady; a wonderful place for a great
experience, costs ca NOK 1200 p/n, including all meals (only vegetarian food; now fish and egg included), massage, meditation guide, swimming, etc. It has capacity for 60 people, and also has a Conference Hall.

At 5 km from the above Centre is Mullikkala (Norway), a traditional Norwegian/Finnish Restaurant.

07.05 pm Further 7 km, while returning, we went to Purala Finnård, an old Finn house that was established around 1650, but several repairs were made and in 1920 it received its present form. During midsummer this house serves as a traditional Finn Restaurant.

07.19 pm We returned to Mattila, after taking around 1 1/4 hrs, covering 29 km and stopping in three places.

07.30 pm Cooked food (Chinese rice, mixed vegetables, boiled eggs, tuna fish, bread, butter, biscuits), cider juice. Self cooking, self understanding, co-sharing of enjoyment, watching the serene natural landscape.

08.15 pm Walked in the Mattila area (see photo 15); to our great surprise there was nobody about and all the houses were unlocked. As you look at the houses,
APPENDIX 1 FIELD REPORT

grass, sun light, greenery, small flowers coming to the surface in such an isolated place, you come closer to nature and can hear its messages through the silence that is always interrupted by the sweet sounds of the small birds flying everywhere.

09.00 pm While returning, we met Mr Kurt Eide and his new wife Raga. Rana met Kurt in May 1993. Kurt fixed a time for a meeting and dialogue on 08 June late evening.

09.15 pm We returned to our cottage; Rana cleaned the dishes, and GG prepared the beds; at 10 pm we took tea, relaxed. Talked and finally went to bed. In the night the temperature was 11 degrees C outside the cottage.

Thursday, 08 June 2006
Interviews all the day in Östmark:
10.35 am – 12.35 noon
03.10 pm – 4.40 pm
09.35 pm – 10.48 pm (late evening/night)
Friday, 09 June 2006
10.15 am – 11.25 am Temp 23°C

While walking in and around Juhola Finnish settlement (see photo 16), we met the following scholars and architects: Dr. Árpád Sailo Kotipolku and Dr. Aimo Nissi from Finland, making detailed architectural plans of the Juhola Finn houses, sauna and store houses. They promised to help and send us some of their drawings and keep us informed about their launch of the website at the end of 2006.

01.12 pm Mattila to Karlstad

While returning from Mattila, close to the road we stopped to see a beautiful shining black grass snake, about 70cm long. This is a rare chance to see a snake. Going further in Östmark we stopped at Kläggen Lake and saw ‘houses for the lakeside’, a wonderful scene. After stopping 25 minutes, we continued our journey.

Interview:
02.15pm – 04.45pm

06.30 pm Back in Karlstad
Appendix 2 Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Interviewing Farmers and other People

Prof. Gerhard Gustafsson (KU Sweden) and Prof. Rana P.B. Singh (BHU, India)

[A] General Information
1. (a) Name ................................................. (b) Age ...... (c) .... M/F ............... 
2. How long have you been here/and Identity (Finn, Swede, Norwegian/...)
   ...................................................................................................................................... 
3. Married ... If Yes ............ When ...... Wife/job ...................................................... 
4. Children (M/F; age/their job) .............................................................. 
   ...................................................................................................................................... 
5. How much land do you own: (a) own ...... (b) rent ........... (c)free ................ 
6. What type of farming/farming related activities you do 
   ...................................................................................................................................... 
7. What is your income structure: monthly...... yearly, and subsistence levels 
8. How you feel about your job (satisfaction, pleasure, challenge, boring/part-
   time job) ........................................ 

[B] Lifeways and Life Philosophy
9. What is your main aim in life? ................................................................. 
10. What will be the best way/s to have a good life? .............................. explain it ................................................................. 
    (a) in terms of facilities, (b) in terms of ideals and ethical values, and (c) level of satisfaction 
    ...................................................................................................................................... 
11. What are the bad things one should not do? ... explain your views. 
12. What do you feel about your home in a natural setting? How close do you feel to nature; what do you do to preserve nature and its beauty? 
13. What do you do/or plan for the societal development of the area: agricult-
    tural development, nature preservation; idea of heritage and its preservation and use? 
14. World views. Describe your idea of making the world happier and more peaceful. Describe the impact of globalization, and urban pressure on the natural landscape.
Appendix 3 Interview results
(freely translated by Gerhard Gustafsson)

Main aim in life

_Va ska en svare på då? Jag vet inte vad en ska svare riktigt. Bare en klarer sig och har häl-

san._ (What should I answer? I do not know what to answer, really. As long as you can manage and remain healthy.)

Skrattar! Visoner har jag väl int na. Mer tid för resor. (Laughs. Visions I guess I don’t have any. More time for travel)

_Hälsan, familjen. Nu arbetar jag full tid och kan ge barna en liten slant. En önsker att en inte behövde jobba så mycket utan kunde vara hemma lite mer och pyssla lite grann på gården. Jobba halvtid är den största önskan egentligen._ (Health, the family. Now I work full time and can give the children some money. You wish you didn’t have to work that much but could be home more and work on the homestead. Working half time is in fact my greatest wish.)

_Hälsan, familjen._ (Health, the family.)

“My son is the purpose of my life (15 yrs old); to raise him and make him great.”

“I am not so sure about my answer. It is important for me to have a family but I don’t know how to get a family, due to my sexuality perhaps, (as I have a boy friend and we have a homosexual life.) I am fully involved in my work and it is becoming a lifestyle. Getting and developing the farm which I want to pass on to coming generations is perhaps an aim.”

Good life

APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW RESULTS


(What should one answer? I don’t know. I have lived in this, I have been doing this all my life. It is probably in my ‘backbone’, or what should I say? Religion is surely nothing for us. As I have a business, the impact of politics is important. Sometimes you think it is going in the right direction, sometimes in the wrong direction. It’s a little back and forth. The Swedes are a people that can put up with many things. If you look at foreigners, they really say when something is wrong, but we do nothing. Religion brings almost more bad things than good, really. It divides people terribly. Look at French farmers – they complain and show they are dissatisfied. Take the pictures published in Denmark (Mohammad), they impact they produced, ARLA (a milk company) is an example of the reduced demand for milk, a boycott. You respect private individuals, their properties, their things. You learn how to compromise. In that you have a farm, not everybody likes it when you transport cow dung on Sundays close to their house. You have to take some consideration in that respect, you might say. It is the same concerning land. Tenancy, for example. Nobody says that you must farm in this or that way, instead we can farm as we like. Since this is the only big farm here, most people who some farming come here when they need help. If you them, they will help you, so to speak. Then it is not so difficult if you want to do something. I can just say that I think we have such a high level of taxation that if I can cheat the Government I will. Ha, Ha!! It is difficult to find a business in Sweden that has not done so.)

Ekonomiskt oberoende och hus på Kanarieöarna säger han och skrattar. Varma vintrar. Klar vad en gör, klar sitt själva. (Economically independent and house in the Canary Islands, he says laughing. Warm winters. Manage what you are doing, look after yourself.)

Engagerad i varken religion eller politik. Jag var sjukskriven en månad, det var semester. Inga andra intressen utom jobbet. En skulle ha mer fritid. 4 dagar i månaden har vi avbrytare. (Engaged in neither religion or politics. I was on the sick-list a month, which was a holiday. No other interests except my job. You should have more free time. 4 days a month we have a substitute worker.)

Jag trivs ju ganska bra, tycker om att ha lite runt omkring mig. Är inte den person som tycker om att sitta still. Jag har ju ingen utbildning direkt heller. Jag slutade direkt efter
9:an i skolan. Det är min far som har lärt mig allt om jordbruk och maskiner. Detta har alltid varit mitt intresse. Läsning har aldrig varit mitt intresse, har haft svårt i skolan, läraren sa Du kommer aldrig någon vart i livet. (I feel quite good, like to have things to do. I am not the kind of person that likes to sit still. Nor do I have any real education. I stopped after 9th grade in school. It is my father who taught me all about agriculture and machines. This has always been my interest. Reading has never been my interest, had difficulties in school, the teacher said: you will never be anything in life.)

“I would like to travel more.”
Det tycker jag är lite svårt, har varit, skulle vilja se lite mer av Sverige. (That is, has been, a little difficult, I think, would like to see more of Sweden.).

“India is far away. In September we have booked a trip to Croatia. Stockholm and Gothenburg would be good.”
Vi har varit i Italien och Spanien. (We have been in Italy and Spain.)

Inga djupa värden kring religion eller politik. Barna varit med i kyrkans barntimmar. Han har jobbat länge för bygden med lokal utveckling och tycker att andra borde kunna ställa upp. Ofta ringer de och vill ha hjälp. Hantverkshuset som planerades blev inget av utan huset som skulle användas såldes. De som ägde det såg att det fanns pengar att hämta. Norrmän och holländare kommer hit. Tidigare köpte tyskarna allt. Jag säger inget om att de köper ett hus och bosätter sig här, men om de köper ett hus och kanske är här 3 veckor per år. Det är lite ledsamt om en tänker på skolan och bygden här. Vi hade ett åttiotal elever men är nu nere i 50–55 elever nu. Det är väldigt mycket folk som pendlar till Norge varje dag, främst byggnadsarbetare. Tjänar en sjuksköterska 20 000 kr i Sverige motsvarar det 60 000 kr i Norge. (No deeper values as regards religion or politics. The children went to the “children’s hour in the church”. He has worked for a long time with local development in the area and thinks that other people ought to be engaged. Often they call and want help. The “handicraft house” which was planned came to nothing since the house to be used was sold. The owners saw they could make money by selling. Norwegians and Dutch people come here. Earlier Germans bought everything. I don’t say anything about them buying houses and settling down here, but if they buy a house and maybe stay here three weeks per year. It is a little sad if you think of the school and the area around here. We had around eighty pupils, but now it’s down to 50–55 pupils. There are a lot of people commuting to Norway every day, primarily building workers. If a nurse earns SEK 20 000 in Sweden, comparable salary in Norway is SEK 60 000.)

En skulle vilja vara ute mer i naturen. Man kanske skulle umgås mer. Vi var mycket engagerade i Sörmarks friskola. (I would like to be more outdoors in nature. Perhaps we should see each other more. We were very much engaged in Sörmak’s independent school.)

“I think I have a sort of a good life. I have a husband and a son, together with food and education. I don’t have views based on moral values or ethics. I haven’t de-
veloped any dogmatic beliefs. I hope I’ll have a good job in this area after graduating. I believe in incarnation. (Rana: In India Karma!?) Not karma, but I don’t know.”

“It’s tricky! I think I have a very good life, but I lack time. To me a good life means more time at home, but the job is important. I can’t find that kind of job around here. In that sense the farm is in the totally wrong place, but our farm is uniquely located in the nature setting, and leaving here and returning again itself produces a good feeling: a more relaxing easy setting, a natural environment. I would rather have a life where I could spend more time at home. My work now makes it easier to sit at home and work (a project)”

Bad things


Hela världen – krig är väl en dålig sak. Krig ställer till så mycket svält, barn dör, sånt är ju inte roligt. På så sätt har en ju det väldigt bra – inget att klaga på. Bara en sän sak som dricksvattnet. En kan gå in och ta sig ett glas ur kran. Jag har aldrig varit utomlands faktiskt. Det är nog inte många länder som kan göra så. Miljöförstöringa – den är en ju lite i kontakt med i och med att en håller på med jordbruk. Fiskevårdsföreningar och älvarna går ju kring äkrarna. Vi har ju en växtodlingsplan som en måste följa. Det är ju vad mycket gödsel en ska lägga på en äker, när det ska sås och hur det ska göras. Där är vi väl styrda från något håll. Jag vet inte riktigt vad det är som styr.” (High level of taxation we have in Sweden. There is nothing to be said about that. The question I ask myself is – do we really have a good situation in Sweden, compared with what we pay for it? Very much is paper work. You can see in agriculture, a great deal is just paper work. Is fact we should farm more instead of dealing with lots of paper every day. The whole world? War is then a bad thing? War brings so much starvation, children die, that is not pleasant. In that sense we have a real good life – nothing to complain about. Just think about the drinking-water. You can go inside and fill a glass from the tap. I have never been abroad, really. There are probably not in many countries where you can do that? Environmental pollution? – we have some contact with that here because of agriculture. The fishing development association [this is important – author’s addition.] since the rivers flow around the fields. We do have a plan for growing plants that has to be followed. It is about how much fertilizer to put on a field, when to sow and how it’s to be done. There we are probably controlled from somewhere. I do not really know what it is that controls us.)

Terror och USA, Nord Korea, Burma …. Jag följer med i massmedia en hel del! Intresserad av historia, hur allting har hängt ihop en gång, British Empire. Han skrattar! (Terror
and the US, North Korea, Burma etc. I following the media a lot. Interested in history, how everything was once been related, the British Empire. He laughs.)

Rattfylla, barn som far illa. Man kan inte köpa en tidning idag utan det står om problem i Sverige. Också Irak. Man blir så n出厂 med allt så en nästan inte bry sig till slut. Motorcykelgäng, Bandidos och Hells Angels är välorganiserade. Arbetslöshet ett problem. Droger också för den delen. En tycker att religion skulle kunna bli bättre men den försäm-rar världen i stället. Man går i kyrkor och ber till samma gud. Men det är bara några få människor här som går i kyrkan. Det beror också på prästen. I grannförsamlingen Lek-vattnet har de en präst som är som en vanlig människa, får stor dragningskraft. Kyrkan måste hitta på nya grejer för att få folk till kyrkan, t ex allsångskvällar. (Drunk driving, children suffering. You can’t buy a newspaper today in Sweden without reading about problems in Sweden. Also Iraq. You are fed with all these things so in the end you almost don’t care. Motorbike gangs, Bandidos and Hells Angels, are well organized. Unemployment is a problem. Drugs also! You think religion could make things better, but it just makes the world worse. People go to church and pray to the same God. But there are only a few people here that go to church. It depends on the priest In the neighbouring parish, Lekvattnet, they have a priest who is like an ordinary person, attracts a lot of peoples. The church must develop new things to get people to church, like community singing.)

“Every problem has a solution; the thinking process is the most important. There is no problem, without solution. The greater the problem, the more interesting and challenging it is to find a solution; this is the great thing in life. In fact, there must be self-confidence, self-realization and a strong will to solve problems. Hard work will certainly provide solutions. Take the challenge in good spirit.”

“I hate not having my father and my husband’s mother in life. It is unfair that they went too soon. Bad deeds or the ill treatment of children are the bad things in life, as I see it. Children learning violence and living in a bad family situation are also very bad for the whole society; this also includes abusing children. As a Swede, I feel that the worst thing is to stop children growing and progressing in the right direction.”

“Care of children is not the only issue alone. If I buy clothes that children have produced also. War, disrespecting people, greediness, lack of an ethical sense for work, consumerism – but you are able to control it a little, and can’t we recycle T-shirts?, and the misuse of resources, especially nature are the bad things in life. There must be an ethical sense behind the use of resources (nature). The Farmers’ Association should also propagate and advertize the ethical issues with respect to maintaining farming and the natural landscape. It is bad that now we only think in terms of consumerism. I don’t think that the solution for the world is to consume more.”
Appendix 3

Interview results

Attitude to nature


Naturen är vacker, utan storstadsstress. Att leva här ensam är en vanesak, en är ju född i trakterna, infödd nät om jag säger. Förändras det så är det skogen som tar över. Bevara området som det är, inte möjligt utveckla. (Nature is beautiful, without the stress of the big city. You get used to living here alone, you were born in the district, born with it, so to speak. If it changes, it will be the forest that takes over. Keep the area as it is! It is not possible to develop it.)

Det är viktigt att det inte växer igen och så. Osäkra på om det går att få stöd för detta, ej dikeskanter. Det är ett välvalt jobb. Det har faktiskt varit en grupp här på 5–10 personer som har hållt på med detta i tre-fyra år. Du ser vattnet där. Där har man röjt fram lite. Men vissa markägare tycker inte om detta utan vill att det ska va som det är. För min del tycker jag att det skulle finnas en lag som reglerar detta, att en inte skulle få släppa upp träd intill vatten. Många har eldplat och har eldar med ved men sätter nu in jordvärme (kanske 50%). Vi har vedpanna. (It is important to avoid overgrown landscapes. It is not possible to develop it.)
Not sure if you can get support for this, not for ditching. This is heavy work. In fact a small group of 5–10 people have been working on this a three-four year period, you see the water over there! Some clearing has been done. But some landowners do not like it, but want it (the landscape – author’s note) to remain as it is. Personally I think there should be a law that regulates this, not allowing trees to grow close to water. Many have used and do use wood as firewood, but are now putting in “ground heating systems” (50%). We have a firewood boiler.

“The sense of natural beauty always inspires me; it’s a beautiful life to experience the beauty of nature. … This (summer) is the most beautiful time of the year, in winter it’s not so good, because I have to travel a lot and the roads are not good, but we can find something positive in the negatives too. Many people are away from home now; summer is too short.”

“In an earlier period people enjoyed and loved skiing, but now it has decreased. I feel the same as my neighbour, but it’s because we don’t use the winter properly. We should go skiing. We have perhaps so many perspectives now that we do not see the local beauty? The local is taken for granted. So many prospects and perspectives are promising, in both contexts, i.e. old traditions and new traditions. Now everything is expanding but there’s a lack of a deeper understanding.”

Local mobilization in the area

They have a community association dealing with lots of things, you could say. This is nothing we are directly engaged in. I have taken part in meetings. We are the people that keep the arable land going. If we should stop doing that, it would surely not be good for Östmark. Those who take part have something to do with the driving force in the area. I was involved in the agricultural part, the woman who owns the store etc. The fishing development association, for example, tries to preserve the fish here, they have established a salmon ladder, they also cleared some forest areas, landscape preservation. The family is important. Co-operation with my father on agriculture. Finnish culture? Actually, I don’t think about it. People talk and of course I know, I think my heritage is from Finland in one or another way. I am not that interested.)

En har ju kontakt med grannarna och så och allting tycker jag är normalt. Vi kommer till
APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW RESULTS

dom och de kommer hit. Inget engagemang i lokal utvecklingsgrupp. (We have contact with our neighbours and so, and I think everything is normal. We come to them and they come here. No engagement in local development groups.)

Det här med Finnbygden tycker jag är viktigt att bevara. En hör att de pratar om det men är själv inte med. (This Finnish Settlement area I think is important to preserve. You can hear people talk about it but I am not involved myself.)

Tidigare mycket med i lokal utvecklingsgrupp. Skulle behövas nya personer som drar igång saker. Att ta det tunga ansvaret själv är svårt, men hjälpa till okey. Mycket trevligt om en kan träffas och sitta ett gång. Umgången har minskat med grannar, men mer under sommaren. Annars en ganska stor umgångeskreter, arbetskamrat, grannar och folk som vi träffat på semester (i Spanien). Ofta camping på västkusten, med husvagn. (Earlier engaged in local development group. There is a demand for new people who take initiatives. Taking the main responsibility yourself is difficult, but helping is okay. It is very nice if you can meet together in a group. People come together less now but more during summer time. Otherwise a fairly large circle of friends: from work, neighbours and people we met during our holiday (in Spain). Often camping on the west coast, with a caravan.)

Heritage issues: Det är inget som vi är i kontakt med men det är väl bra att det finns folk som sysslar med det. Det är först nu folk vaknar till, det är mycket som är förstört. I stort sett alla här är ifrån Finland. Gården? När farsen dog kom den frågan ganska snabbt. Han har ju byggt upp huset, men det är svårt att svara på den frågan. Om en måste sälja ett hus, vilket hus ska man sälja? Barna kanske är intresserade (en bor ju i föräldrhemmet nu). Men det krävs ju en hel del underhåll. (This is nothing we come into contact with, but it is good there are people involved. It is just now that people are waking up, much has been destroyed. Virtually everybody is from Finland. The farm? When my dad died this issue quickly became rather important. He had actually built the house, but it is difficult to answer that question. If we have to sell a house, which house should be sold? The children might be interested (one is actually living in their grandparents’ house now). But it demands a lot of maintenance.)

“In Östmark many groups are involved in development activities, but not in this area. In 1991 Torsby municipality declared it was closing the school. Later funding from the state provided opportunities/funds for schools also. Independent schooling is a rare example in this area. Sörmark school here is a good example of area development at a cooperative level and the maintenance of social relationships. Political alliances, like left or right, do not matter. The independent school is good for community development, and also for bringing people together. School always serves as ‘development tool’ for the community. There are two schools in Östmark. Sometimes they have conflicts but mostly cooperate.”

“It is our responsibility to preserve traditions – heritage consists of the memorial
symbols, material and immaterial both (i.e. tangible and intangible). I’m working in Hamar (Norway, 1 hrs north from Oslo). There is a preservation plan for a lot of buildings which are in the process of preservation by the initiated owners. Of course, it is a difficult task to motivate and convince them that these are the heritage resources that need care. For me personally, taking care of my neighbour is the only good thing I can do in the community.”

“I’m involved in the nearby school to promote the idea of community development. I have also a preservation and repair plan for my house, which was built in 1964; in fact, this site is the site of the old house. In the renovation plan, we thought we would add a veranda (extension).”

World views

Globalisation? Vad betyder det?: Det är väl både för- och nackdel. Jag tror det kommer att bli väldigt svårt för jordbruket att hänga med i detta. En kan inte drive ett jordbruk som ett stort företag, det funker inte, djura måste… Såg att en skulle ha tusen kor här, då har en ju ingen kontakt med djur över huvud taget. Det är ju mycket tvekligare som det är nu, måste jag ju erkänna. Det håller ju på att gå dit, de drivnet ju dit, stora enheter. Det är ju ingen som har sett än hur det påverkar miljön till exempel, att en koncentrerar det så på en plats. (Globalization? What does it mean? I guess it has both advantages and disadvantages. I think it is going to be very difficult for farming to adapt to this. You can’t run a farm like a big company, it doesn’t work … the animals must … Imagine 1,000 cows here! Then you have no contact with animals at all. It is much more pleasant now, I admit. It is moving in that direction, they are pushing for bigger companies. No one has yet seen how it will affect the environment, for example, that concentration in a single location.)

King of the world – What to be done?


Message to farmers

“Till och bli större helt enkelt, för att kunna leva på det.” Andra djur? Rana säger att det teoretiskt är en bra idé att äta kor och gris i Indien men det kan han inte säga, då skulle han bli utesluten ur samhället. ”Jag tycker det är väldigt svårt att förstå detta! Vegetarier i Sverige – ökar? Ja. Svårt säga någonting om indien(eftersom han aldrig varit där – författarens anmärkning). Första gången han möter en indier ‘live’. (”To become bigger and bigger, simply, to be able to live off it.” Different animals? Rana says that it is theoretically a good idea to eat cows and pigs in India but he can’t say it aloud, then he would be excluded from society. “I think it is very difficult
Appendix 3 Interview results

to understand this,” says the farmer. Vegetarians in Sweden are growing in number? Yes! Difficult to say anything about India (since he had not been there – authors comment). This is the first time he had met an Indian ‘live.’

A better world
Vinner en så förlorar en annan. Sänkning av fattigdomen. Va ske en göra för Israel och Palestina, det finns ju ingenting att göra, en stor bomb möjligtvis. Bättre matproduktion i världen. Har de ingen olja de kan sälja? EU kunde väl ha lite projekt, har redan skulle jag tro. Själlevrållat, krigar, kan inte sticka in nåsan, vad ska man göra? Nord-Korea, de svälter men släpper inte in mat. (If one is a winner, another is a loser. Reducing poverty. What to do about Israel and Palestine, there is nothing to be done, a big bomb possibly. Better food production in the world. Don’t they have any oil to sell. EU could have some small projects, I think they already have. Self-inflicted, Somalia at war, no one can get involved, what is to be done? North Korea, they are starving but don’t let food into the country.)

Globalization
Det är ju inte bara fördelar med. Fördelar att folk kan fastna i passkontroller. Att de bygger ut bredband ut i landet, det är bra. Här finns det bredband. (Globalization? There aren’t just advantages with it. Advantages that people can be stopped in passport control. It’s good that broadband is being installed out in the countryside. We have broadband here.)

Har inte träffat indier tidigare. Korna är heliga i Indien så man kan inte göra som här. Ville de ha mat skulle de ha kor från Europa. Pengar måste fram. (I have never met Indians before. The cows are holy in India so it is not possible to do the same as here If they wanted food, they should take cows from Europe. Money must found.)

Om all kunde börj å acceptera varandra, att man är olika, oavsett färg eller vad det är. Man känner sig maktslös. Jag tänker på det där med vattenproblem. Det hjälper ju inte att bara skicka kläder, så de kan bygga upp. (If everybody could start accepting each other, that you are different, independent of colour or whatever. You feel powerless. I am thinking about the problem of water. It is not enough to send clothes as development aid.)

“I know little about it and think it is a question for politicians.”

Impact of globalization
Svårt svara på! (It is difficult to answer!)
Urban Pressure

"By helping suffering people you can make the world happy. The money should always be transferred directly to the poor and suffering (neglected, poor, sick) at global level. Direct involvement is necessary. These are good thoughts, but they need serious attention and action too. There must be some other projects to support such noble works. We, my wife and I, are content here. In fact, living here is a gift from nature. Remember, time needs proper use; it is equally distributed to all, but how people perceive and realize it matters and makes a difference."

"Humanity does not need any religion (in a strict sense). There should be ‘No War’. We have to teach our children to be more open and respectful to others; there must be a sense of local development in mind."

"We are facing the problem of generation gaps, and a dilemma of materialism vs. human/spiritual. Firstly, we have to start with local plans and development, and also to share with the whole world. We should also learn to eat organic products. Consumers’ strategies should be kept in mind; we need less GNP growth and more recycling. We need a world that takes care of society through our common actions and activities; we should generate opportunity (by giving possible examples), not create problems."

"The impact of globalization is relatively bad; a large part of the world would look the same, like the US and Canada."
Ostmark and its Identities – Some Initial Reflexions

by Gerhard Gustafsson

CONTENTS

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OSTMARK AND ITS DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITIES

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Foreword

Now in the year 2009 as I sit writing my report on the visit to the US in 2003, I think back to this trip with special memories. This was the first time I travelled together and alone with my oldest son Tobias. As a student at Karlstad University, he benefitted, I think, from seeing how field work in human geography could be conducted, with both successful and depressing aspects. Professionally this trip was very much about identities among the people living in the US. I remember especially Tobias’ smile when I proclaimed to some people that my personal feeling about my identity was ‘världsmedborgare’ (citizen of the world) rather than Swedish. As an extra trip, apart from visiting Minnesota for one week, we travelled to Chicago, to Duluth and the Black Hills. This trip also came to be an attempt to grasp a little of the Indian culture and its status today. I would like to thank Tobias’, in particular, for the way he helped me to keep on track during the trip and also for a great life memory. I also want to thank Edwin Hallberg, again, for his invaluable help and pleasant meetings during our stay in ‘Ostmark’.

I must say that there are many things in the paper I would like to develop, but will not. It is perhaps interesting to see how my interest in identities once started and was expressed.

Introduction

This report is the result of a visit to the ‘Ostmark’ region, Meeker county, in the US, in the year 2003, between July 28th and August 12th. This was an extension of the project ‘Glesbygden som utvecklingspotential 2’ (Marginal Areas as Development Potential 2) which I reported on earlier in Ostmark – a Region Transformed into a Church (Gustafsson 2000). This project was a follow-up study of the Ostmark region in Sweden, which was earlier studied by Gustafsson and Wahlström (the original work was published in Wahlström 1984 and Gustafsson 1986 in Swedish, a summary in English can be found in Gustafsson and Wahlström 1990). During the project we found different kinds of identities were of importance for development issues. In the Swedish case the region was, in an historical sense, a rather homogenous rural area, but during the 1640s many ‘Finns’ migrated into the area. Later on, when conditions in the area become very adverse, many people from Ostmark (starting in the 1860s and ending during 1920s) migrated to the US. One small group of people from Ostmark, in particular, settled down in Forest City and Kingston townships in Meeker county (starting during 1880s) and established a church, Ostmark Lutheran Church. The church was built in 1895 (see Gustafsson 2000). Meeker county was from the start dominated by Swedes, but in neighbouring counties lots of Germans settled. Before the Europeans came, this was, of course, land occupied by the native Indians. Looking at the ‘Ostmark’ region today, we can then establish that the people living there have many different backgrounds. Here there is an attempt to investigate what kind of identities you can find today among the people in the area and what kind
of materialized identities you can find. I have especially focused on identities re-
lying to ‘people’ and ‘region’ and what brings them together, such as belonging.

The report is structured as follows: first there is a presentation of today’s situ-
atation in Ostmark, described with the aid of statistics and some observations from
different texts, statistics and photos relating to identities, mainly conducted
during the year 2006. The results are then linked to a small pilot study based on
the visit in 2003 and some interviews conducted in 2003. Some reflections on
further research are also presented at the end.

Ostmark and its development and identities

Presentation of the study areas

In the research report ‘Ostmark – a Region Transformed into a Church’ (Gustafs-
son 2000) I presented a study focused on the region in the US where people from
Östmark in Sweden settled from the 1880s onwards and established a church,
Ostmark Lutheran Church. There are different geographical levels of interest in
the research. Sometimes there is a focus on Meeker County and sometimes on the
two townships, Forest City and Kingston, but to achieve my research objective it has
been necessary to define smaller study areas where more in-depth studies could
be carried out. The core study area consists of an area that surrounds the church,
but with the centre of gravity to the east. This is mainly because it is obvious that
there is a tendency for more church members to be found on the eastern side of
the church compared to the western, especially if one takes into account the
members living relatively close to the church. But it is important to note that this
area has been mainly defined to facilitate the research as a tool or instrument. The
study area is presented in map 1. The area has also been chosen with respect to
the fact that it is possible to drive around by car and make field observations.
Further, the area has been adapted to the quad pattern in the sections that make
up the townships. This quad pattern is common in large sections of the mid-west.
To be able to grasp the beginning of the colonization in the area, it has also been
necessary to define an extended study area, also shown on the same map. It was in
the south-eastern part of the extended study area the first settlement was estab-
lished during the 1850s.

Population development

The population development in historical time has been described earlier (see
Gustafsson 2000) as a process of both growth and decline, especially if you focus
on the arable land and the countryside. In more urban areas, like Litchfield City,
growth has been continuous. Now the region is facing another development,
perhaps with more dispersed growth – see table 1. The reason for this is primarily
economic growth in the surrounding urban areas.

For Kingston and Forest City townships it is interesting to see that the develop-
ment follows a growth trend from the beginning but then a decrease in population
Map 1 Meeker County 1876 and the study area and the extended study area

Source: Smith 1877

Note: The county consists of 18 townships named on the map. Kingston means both Kingston and North Kingston

- = border of the core study area
- = border of the extended study area
staring in the 1900–1920s. This is probably due to many factors like demographic development and push and pull factors such as improvement in agriculture and urban growth but has not been investigated. It is also worth noting that the ‘Ostmark’ region now has new inhabitants but who are working at other places, as shown in the statistics from Census 2000 and from field observations in 2003 and information from Edwin Hallberg (my local contact person since 1997) in 2006.

Employment

The US Census on employment for Meeker county shows that in the year 2000 a total number of 11,176 individuals were employed. This is a big increase from 1990 when 9,299 persons were employed. Compared with the growth of population in the same period, 8.6%, it is bigger, 20.2% (US Government 1990 and 2000). The explanation can probably be found in the growth corridor to Minneapolis/St Paul. My impression is that just a few new businesses have been established in the area but that many people probably commute to other areas, like the twin cities, but also to cities like St Cloud in the north, Willmar in the west and Hutchinson in the south. There are no statistics on this but the information has been provided by oral sources and partly proven in the pilot study further on in this
paper. This development is also balanced with the well-known decline in the agricultural sector. The total number of people employed in ‘agriculture, forestry and fisheries’ has changed from 1153 in 1990 to 849 in 2000, a decline of 35.8%. This sector is very locally based and integrated. All other sectors, broadly speaking industry and service, are increasing.

The regional differences within Meeker County follow this pattern in general. There are small differences. Of course the decline in agriculture affects people more in the countryside than in the city.

Statistics (US Government 1990 and 2000) on how people travel to work show that of people living in Meeker County 1990 82.7% used cars compared with 88.4% in 2000. Public transportation was just used by 7 people in 1990 and 26 in 2000, representing just 0.2% of the total. The rest walked or worked at home. These statistics reflect the development of a mobile society and the US, in particular as ‘the homeland of the car’, but it also reflects the situation for a region in the countryside within a common labour market where it is possible to commute to work on a daily basis.

Ethnical composition

It was a big surprise to me, as a Swede, to see that the term ‘race’ was used to categorize people today (=the year 2000 in the text, the year 2006 in my reading) in the US Census (US Government 1990 and 2000). To use the label ‘race’ for different individuals is not easy or politically correct in today’s Sweden. Since the statistics are there, I have chosen to write a little about them. In the year 2000 out of a total number of 22,644 individuals 22,043 were characterized as ‘white’, 44 ‘black or African American’, 41 ‘American Indian and Alaska Native’, 90 ‘Asian’, that is to say of ‘one race’ and the rest 316+109 as ‘other races’ and ‘two or more races’. In 1990 out of a total of 20,846 individuals 20,583 as detailed as ‘white’, 23 as ‘black’, 29 as ‘American Indian’, and 92 as ‘Asian’, with 119 given as ‘other races’. The share of other than ‘white’ has increased from 1.3% in 1990 to 2.7% in 2000. In 1990 228 people were given as ‘Hispanic origin’, which had increased to 487 ‘Hispanic or Latino (of any race)’ in 2000. This is the group also mentioned as fast growing in the pilot study from 2003.

If we focus on regional differences, we see that races other than ‘white’ are virtually only almost found in Litchfield city.

In the census people were also asked about their ancestry. In Meeker County the following ancestry was given for the year 2000: German 47.2%, Swedish 17.2%, Norwegian 14.4% Irish 8.6% English 4.7% and the rest 30.1% for many other countries (all together 122.2% was reported as single or multiple answers). Regional differences mean that Kingston township and Forest City township reported more Swedish (17.1% and 20.4%). The Swedish share indicated by people living in Kingston City is 25.3%. The historical development of the Swedish population is clearly expressed here. It is not possible to get comparable information for the census in 1990, but it may be interesting to see the numbers for the whole state of Minnesota in the year 2000: German ancestry gets most 36.7%,
Irish 11.2%, Norwegian ancestry gets 17.3% and in fourth place comes Swedish ancestry with 9.9%. A total reported 125.7% ancestries means that the dispersion of ancestries is bigger in the state as such, compared with Meeker county.

**Materialized identities preserved today**

**Swedish identities**

*People's home have symbols like tourist souvenirs*

On my first visit to the Ostmark area in 1997 it was obvious that different families had decorated their homes with material symbols like tourist souvenirs from Sweden (Dalhätt=Dalecarlian horse) and Ostmark (a special wooden clockmap). In cooking they still make potato-sausage (Värmlandskorv), rice pudding (risgrynspudding), a special dried fish (lutfisk) and meat balls.

At Christmas and Midsummer old Swedish traditions are still alive, especially the food, mentioned above, eaten at Christmas and the opening of Christmas presents on Christmas Eve. There is also a ceremony in the church (Julotta) early on Christmas morning. The celebration of Midsummer still takes place but not as much as in earlier times. Still it is celebrated with food (potato salad, small sausages and herring) and a ceremony outside the church, but the Midsummer pole is not used any longer. Most people today celebrate Midsummer in their own gardens.

**The church**

The most visible symbol of the Swedish heritage in the region is, of course, the church, Ostmark Lutheran Church. It was established 1893–94, just a few years after the arrival of the first Swedish settlers (see Gustafsson 2000). Unfortunately the church burned down in the year 2000 but has now been rebuilt. It has changed its architecture from a wooden church to a stone brick church (see photos 1 and 2). In 1996 around one fourth of the names in the Membership Roster were old Swedish names (Ostmark Lutheran Church 1996).

**Swedish place names**

Swedish place names in North America are recognized by Landelius (1985). In Meeker County he presents six names. In alphabetical order the first to be mentioned is Andrew Nelson Lake, a small lake on the borders of Darwin and Litchfield townships. It was named after a Swedish settler, Andrew Nelson, from Påarp in Halland. He was a farmer, banker and a state senator and came to the Litchfield area in 1869. Another place is Beckville, a small place with a Lutheran church in Greenleaf township. This name was taken from the first pastor Peter Beckman who came from Sweden, Enånger in Hälsingland, in 1856. The next name is Lund Lake, a small lake in Acton township. The lake is named after a settler there (around 1859) from Skåne in Sweden, Peter J Lund. The fourth name is Ostmark, well known in this research project, and located on the border between Forest City
and Kingston townships. It consists primarily of a Lutheran church. It was named after Östmark Parish in Sweden, from where people came and settled from the 1880s onwards. The church was established in 1893: Ostmark Lutheran Church. “… the name was later applied to the whole community.” (Landelius 1985, page 134). Another name is Peterson Lake, a lake in Swede Grove township, named after the Swedish settler Hans Peterson who settled there in 1857. The name, Swede Grove, the name of the township, comes from the nearby post office, Swede Grove, which was established in 1866, mainly located in Acton township; the name today is Grove City. The name Swede Grove was kept for the neighbouring township, since there were many Swedish settlers there.
It is obvious that there is little evidence of the old native population today in the area, but there is one exception, the Stockade. Between the Ostmark area and Litchfield City, in Forest City township, there is a fort, the Stockade, preserved from the dramatic meeting between the native Americans and the colonizers in the Indian war of 1862 (the Sioux Uprising) – see photos 3 and 4. This is also a place where young people can learn about outdoor activities practiced by people in earlier days as they trekked westwards.

The Sioux Uprising started in Acton on Sunday, August 17, 1862, where five men were killed by the Indians – see photo 5.

Today it is very difficult to see any Indians today or materialized Indian heritage in the region. At the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) hall there is a small exhibition of Indian culture. I have seen some Indian ‘look alike’ people working in restaurants, otherwise none. But I am fully aware it is difficult to use this as a method of observation, both as a means of grasping the problem and in ethical terms.

The most recent Native Americans in the region were the Sioux Indians led by the Indian Chief Little Crow. Earlier the Ojibway Indians probably lived in the
region (see below). There is a statue of the Indian chief Little Crow in Hutchinson City south-east of Litchfield in McLeod County (see photo 7). This was not far from the place where he was killed, just across the border of the county to the north, in southern Meeker County, Ellsworth township.

North Fork Crow River
I thought earlier that the name of the river was related to the Indian Chief Little Crow, but found a special source that argues for something else. The river was probably named by the Ojibway Indians (a rival group to the Sioux Indians who dominating the territory before the Sioux Indians came) after the bird they called ‘the marauder of newly planted corn’.
(http://www.manannah.com/CrowRiver2.html - 20006-11-22)

Sioux Agencies
The Indians were driven back to special reservations and this became a way for them to survive. From the beginning, special agencies (here Upper Sioux Agency and Lower Sioux Agency, for example with education in agriculture) were esta-
lished to assimilate the Indians into American society. Today it is possible for the Indians to establish casinos, now also with hotels added – see photo 6.

At the Agency it is also possible to find heritage centers, as in Lower Sioux Agency, where they have kept buildings from historical times and tepees – see photo 8.

**Identities visualized in some texts**

It is interesting to see where the above mentioned identities are to be found in written materials. Searching for Ostmark on a global level, what do you find on the internet?

Ostmark can be found together with, for example, German place names and currency, but of interest here the name of Ostmark Lutheran Church. On the website there is nothing about the Swedish heritage, just information about the services in the church.

Another link is to Litchfield via ‘Litchfield, Minnesota Church Directory’ (http://www.litch.com/church.htm).

Litchfield, Minnesota… on Lake Ripley…
We’re located 65 miles west of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.
On quiet summer days… you can hear ‘big’ bass jumping in Lake Ripley…
and hear corn growing in the fields just outside of town.

This message tells us about the importance with the location in nature with a living agriculture, close to a big urban region. Nothing about other identities than a modern rather neutral development identity is presented here. On the home page there is also a shifting photo with lake Ripley and a boy fishing.

On the website for Meeker County (see photo 9) you can read on the home page (http://www.co.meeker.mn.us – 2006-11-23):

Meeker County boasts a wonderful combination of rolling farmland and over 100 swimming and fishing lakes. We are home to some of the state’s largest dairy and poultry operations as well. Our residential population is steadily growing with many new development and housing projects in the works. We also offer excellent health care facilities including the Meeker County Memorial Hospital, which is also located in Litchfield. Area lakes, combined with many interesting historical sites and fun-filled small town festivals throughout the year, provide numerous recreational opportunities. Meeker County is a ‘family-minded’ community that invites you to come, establish your roots and enjoy all that we have to offer.

This message focuses on the area as a living area and a recreation area, more than an area with economic growth in expanding economic sectors, like high tech and the information society. There is also a profile including the agricultural sector and many historical sites.

If we look at maps of the area, it is natural to focus on Meeker County. There are some maps, for example on the web, of Litchfield City (the urban area) but these maps are mainly just orientation maps with streets and information about the localities. The paper map of the county ‘Meeker County, Minnesota’ on one side and the city ‘Litchfield, Minnesota –on lake Ripley’ on the other side is an
interesting map (Cloud Cartographics, Inc. 1996). The Meeker map includes a special notation of ‘Historical sites’ and it is interesting to see that all of them (9) mark happenings around the Sioux Uprising of 1862. There is also a notation of five ‘Attractions’ including an old windmill, a farm, two museums and the ‘world’s largest ball of twine’. Otherwise this map shows hydrology, roads and the administrative divisions of the county. The city map is a simple orientation map with roads and different places to visit in the city.

Pilot study
Planning and conducting interviews
The aim of the study is to see what kind of identity awareness can be found in the ‘Ostmark’ region. The approach is empirically inductive, based on interviews with a number of individuals with different backgrounds. The questions asked (see appendix 1) were related to how individuals could give identities to the area where they live, like name, location and character. I also asked what identities could be found among the different nation groups, or other groups. Assuming that it would be difficult to ask individuals about their own so called ‘low value’ or biased knowledge/attitudes, the question was formulated around what ideas could be found in the surrounding area. This is an indirect way of grasping identities, but probably a way of grasping relevant ideas. The main thing is here to see what kinds of identities are alive today, not to determine exactly if and how many individuals really think the identities are ‘true’. I also asked about the personal sense of belonging to the place and different social groups.

All together seven people were interviewed with the help of a tape recorder, but unfortunately one interview could not be transcribed due to bad recording quality. Two individuals answered together, where one was a kind of co-respondent. This was a somewhat disturbing event and that person’s opinion has sometimes been integrated in the text, mostly to strengthen the answer. This extra respondent did not contradict the other to any great extent, thus did not really affect the result in any significant manner. These people were well known for me and I am convinced that I got very true answers from them both. Among the respondents (where interviews could be transcribed) one was an old male farmer in the area, one was a middle-aged male working as consultant on the international level, one a young girl working on a farm in the area, one a young girl student now living outside the area and two older women working in Litchfield. All of them except the last two have family relations to Ostmark and the Swedish heritage. The respondents in Litchfield have German and Irish background.

Questions and answers
Here the answers are presented, question by question, with all the respondents’ answers together in a form of list.
Naming of the area
The respondents had clear answers on this issue and gave the following answers that differed a lot between them:

- Kingston
- Rural Kimball
- Litchfield/Litchfield area
- Minnesota

Some respondents said that it was difficult to answer without thinking about who you are talking to and where you were when you named the area.

Location
People mentioned different things about location of the Ostmark area:

- In the Litchfield area
- Half way between Kimball and Litchfield
- Close to the metropolitan area
- Central Minnesota
- Minneapolis people know
- South of Canada

Character
Different kinds of character are mentioned and they can be grouped in more absolute characters and changes in progress in the area:

Absolute characters
- farming (has been)/at the edge of a good farming area
- agriculture/dairy farms
- open country
- quiet, very peaceful
- just houses where people live and work in other places/a dormitory community
- a growth corridor

Changes
- has been farming
- people are rapidly moving away
- stagnation
- unchanged/status quo
Belonging to a place

It was very difficult to get answers to this question about belonging. One answer from an older man who lives and works on a farm in the area was: “I belong to Ostmark church – the area influenced by the church. Also a sense of belonging to Sweden – very close to Ostmark in Sweden. In that relation there are lots of friendly people. I am proud of seeing me, a sense of making a connection between me and my ancestors – much older people”. Another voice from a middle-aged person working in different places in the world, among them Singapore: “I feel a sense of community in two places (here and in Singapore)”

Belonging to a group or not

Few answers were given, but the few answers were focused on family groups, church groups, work relationship groups and leisure groups.

Existing identities

When the question of identities was raised, the reaction was different. One older woman claimed directly that she knew people’s identities from their name. Another reaction was quite different and expressed seriously in this way: “This is very biased. Not a good thing to talk about”. A third reaction was that this is very much about jokes about different nationalities in general.

A list of nationalities and identities can be presented from the answers (the double slash, //, marks the distinction between different respondents):

Scandinavians Good cooks, Better music
Swedes Swedish meatballs // Heart-blooded // We like to tell all jokes, like the dumb Swede
Norwegians Jokes about them // Self-deprecating things (even for Swedes) // They will not change their mind
Finns In themselves/closed community/They just want Finnish people // A little more melancholy // Quiet, stoic, independent, clustered/they make no move to be friendly
Germans All Catholics. Different! // You can tell a German but you can’t tell him much/hard working // Hard working people
Afro-Americans One in our church // none here
Native Americans Reservations/casinos, but they hire someone to drive it // none here // alcohol
Mexicans Not good in fixing cars – they have poor cars that don’t run // little income/fighting and drinking/they treat their women terribly (example: a man has the right to bring in his mistress to live with his wife) (but also a matriarchal society??(??=note the author) – we will never understand them and they will never understand us/they have their own subgroups/they work at Willmar (food processing plants)
Irish Like to drink // Worthless, sing, dance/lazy
Asians – none here
English people Are dry
Identities and regions
It was difficult to get answers on importance of regions for identification. Since the Ostmark area is located in between different places (towns and cities) and has no territorial name, the closest region would be Meeker county, but it seems as if Meeker county does not mean anything as regards identity. One respondent mentioned Litchfield – has a strong identity (but what region is that?=authors note). In Ostmark there are just two place-names: Kingston and Forest City and they are both small hamlets and townships but probably not so important to relate to or identify with. Minnesota, Wisconsin and South Dakota together, mentioned as perhaps a homogeneous region. Another response was that New England, Mid West and South West people are generally different. It is interesting to find the response that there is a strong American identity. All the different groups can be covered by that level of region. One of the respondents claimed that “In the US America is the uniting level”.

Other findings from the interviews
eside what has been presented above related to the specific questions asked, the interviews gave lots of interesting answers/ideas about identities. These ideas will be presented below under different headings.

The function of identities
In the answers it is clear that both unconscious and conscious functions of identities could be found. Two voices: “I think identities have huge impact, but we seldom understand how – if we look back a long time we can see.” and “For identities people pick what they want/what suits them from national identities”.

Changing identities
The cultural factor
In older times, when today’s older respondents were growing up, there were different communities and languages in the area. It is argued that concerning identities “there’s less and less of that. There were earlier segregated nationalities in the countryside”.

It is claimed that over the years interactions between groups have been different as regards marriage: “Finns marry each other, Germans and Irish marry each other and Scandinavians marry each others”. That is one reason why “Scandinavians have kept their character best, and they are proud people”. And for others “Identities today are very mixed. You can’t see it in the names any longer”.

Different groups have different histories, especially “Germans had a tough time during the war, they had to go through two wars”. People today are free from old national bonds and “people go church to shop like they go into the
mall”. Another voice says that “It is more important today to accept all nationalities – there was a time earlier when you did not look back”.

It is claimed that there is a strong relation between age and identity: “The heritage interest – it grows with age” Another voice: “Identities are more for older people”

The geographical factor
Some respondents mention that the geographical location of the Ostmark area is important: “The location far out is important in that it means that the area is not affected by developments”. Together with this there is the comment that there are “very few negroes”. The same respondent says: “This is the last area to be affected. Problems in the census. What is your race? Impossible to answer.”

Changing the cultural mix through movement
Immigration in recent decades is mentioned by some of the respondents: “Spanish Americans are coming now”, “400 immigrants in Meeker county perhaps”, “There is a strong identity here in the Ostmark area, but Litchfield has Mexicans” and “In Willmar there are lots of Hispanics. Here people have more an American identity.”

Multicultural society
The term multicultural society was discussed during some of the interviews and interesting answers can be noted. Here it was claimed that it was a question of “group problems”, but the most interesting finding was that “The old group will band together to form a new front against the new group”.

Identity – individual or related to regions
During the interviews some respondents spontaneously argued for an individual identity before a region identity. For one of the older women individual character was “to be honest most important for identity”. She likes being here in Litchfield, where she always has lived, just moved from the southern part to the northern: “I like to say what I think: I think abnormal is normal, be like yourself instead of be like me”.

The younger girls put an interesting point here and explain what happens when you interact with people: “When you meet a person you ask: What are you? What do you do for a living? Not: Where do you come from? Just if people have an accent (like the interviewer), they ask from where.” One of the girls, she is proud of what she does, not being an Ostmark person, says: “America is more important than Minnesota. The church (‘and the church is non territorial’ – authors comment) is also very important.”
Generated findings and some reflections

Naming of the area, location and character

The naming of the area reflects who you are, especially what age you represent and what life you live. The context is also very important. It is of great importance who you are giving the information to and where you are, when giving the information. To sum up, if you are older and live and work in the area, you name it and describe the location with local, geographically narrow, names and local relational geographical locations. If you are younger and/or more mobile with experiences of areas far away, you choose a bigger geographical area for naming and location relations. As regards character, it is interesting to see that the answers give both absolute character and the character of changes. The impression is that there is a predominance of neutral aspects and negative aspects, especially the changes. Very few optimistic voices can be found. One exception is the expression quiet, very peaceful. It is interesting to see that this looks very much like ‘peripheral area traits’ that can be found in Östmark in Sweden. It is obvious here that Question 2b and 7 came very close to each other and need to be distinguished from each other in another study.

Belonging to a place

The feeling of belonging depends on age and activities in space. If you have had a local life for a long time, it is natural that you feel you belong to that place, compared with a person with stable activities in several places. If you have a few places, you may perhaps feel you belong to a couple of places, but if you have many, maybe it means that you do not feel you belong anywhere, or perhaps just to the place where you were born or grew up/lived before your mobile life began.

Belonging to a group or not

Whether a person belongs to a group or not was a difficult question to answer, but the few answers were very much focused on family groups, church groups, work relationship groups and leisure groups. The result shows that the first group to be mentioned is the family, then work and last leisure. The church comes in a different order for different persons.

Existing identities and changes – cultural and geographical aspects

It is interesting to see that ideas about identities exist. Another result is that they are also different characters for different nationalities. Many identities have the character of jokes. One question to be asked here is the importance of the European background, e.g. Norwegian stories in Sweden, especially in Värmland. Here there is a long tradition of Norwegian stories in Värmland. Is this something that has been culturally transmitted by migrants in earlier days?
rastic stories about Finns can also be found here in Sweden today, I think. This is perhaps a parallel phenomenon.

Another result of the interviews is that young people do not think about belonging to the personal sense to the old nationality in the same way as older people. Maybe this is because they mainly interact with young people whose families have been born and lived in the US for several generations. Over time the old characters have become weaker and weaker, but there is perhaps a growing interest in identities today. This is probably due to recent immigration. Some of the respondents claim that new immigrants can be seen as a threat to the people living in the area. One possibility is that this will unite the old groups in a new ‘European’ nationality instead of an American identity.

**Identities – between the individual and the region**

It is difficult to argue for one or another clear tendency concerning where the strongest identity can be found. It is likely to find individuals with a sense of belonging at both an individual and a group level at the same time as you can find geographical relations in the sense of belonging to either a place or a region.

**How to identify identities?**

It is not easy today to determine people’s identities from their names, as it was in older times. Cultural mixes also make the notion of race difficult and today often ethically impossible to focus on. The identification, if any, can perhaps be found inside people’s bodies, in their minds.

**Identities – good or bad?**

As we have seen in one answer, identities are very biased and not a good thing to talk about. At the same time the insider’s identity can give people a feeling of security and belonging, or not. It is clear that if there is great difference in culture, people cannot understand each other. This then is a reason for conflicts, especially if there is competition for space or other resources. Society is becoming increasingly multicultural, especially in urban areas, and that gives room for new kinds of identities: individuals in focus, hybridities where local culture meet global culture or a mix of different cultures, or different cultures existing side by side. Maybe identities related to regions will become weaker and have a new kind of content.

**Further research**

Some ideas for further research, consisting of a major study, might be the following issues:
One hypothesis to be tested would be whether there is a stronger geographical identity among older and more locally life-oriented persons compared to younger and more mobile life-oriented persons.

Another question to be tested would be whether recent changes are leading to a greater feeling of belonging to a small number of places rather than just one resulting from the fact that society is more mobile with an unsecure location in space.

Another interesting issue is whether people are more focused on individual identities in the US compared with, for example, Sweden.

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Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Karlstad University
Department of Geography and Tourism

1. When you refer to the area where you live – what name do you give it?
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Depending on whom you are talking to, or where you are, do you use different names for it?
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2. When you describe where you live to a foreigner– what do you say?
a) About location?
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b) About character?
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3. Can you name a place on the earth where you feel you belong?
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Or are several places more relevant? Please order them if possible!
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How would you describe it/them – its/their character(s)?
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4. When you refer to your relations to other people – what groups do you belong to? (begin with the smallest closest group and then present bigger and bigger groups)
   Group 1 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 2 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 3 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 4 ..................................................................................................................................

And what do you name these groups?
   Group 1 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 2 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 3 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 4 ..................................................................................................................................

And what about the character of these groups?
   Group 1 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 2 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 3 ..................................................................................................................................
   Group 4 ..................................................................................................................................

5. What other groups in your surroundings do you not belong to?

6. In your surroundings you often meet or have ideas about people with different backgrounds. How would you like to characterize:
   – Norwegians?
   – Germans?
   – Finns?
   – Swedes?
   – Other groups you are thinking of?

7. If you attempt to be a geographer – what about the regions around your home area? A homogenous region is a region with similarities throughout the area included in the region. Can you define different regions in that sense? And how would you characterize them?
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This report is a collection of various texts on projects related to identities and life worlds. It consists of three papers: one theoretical and two dealing with special geographical study areas.

The terminology ‘Local and Regional Identities’ has been used and is still frequently used by geographers and regional planners, but what is its relevance today? In the first paper both personal experiences and ongoing trends in the world are used in an attempt to theoretically discuss what it refers to, or what it could refer to. The focus is on the term ‘relational’, frequently used by other authors relating to space in different ways. The definition here is delimited to people and identities based on their relations to different regions, since this is mainly humanistic geography. Three different kinds of identities are defined: person identities, region (or landscape or place) identities and relational identities.

The second paper is based on a field trip to a study area in Sweden, Östmark in the province of Värmland. Here life worlds and identities are communicated within the region and between two geographers from different parts of the world (Sweden and India).

The third paper is based on a field trip to ‘Ostmark region’ in Meeker County in the US with a pilot study on identities. This region represents a region with inhabitants with ancestors from Östmark in Sweden. Many people from Östmark migrated to the US, beginning in the 1860s and continuing to the 1920s.