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Protesting against the Consequences of Welfare

Emerging Ethnification in Marginal Areas of Sweden

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In this paper I intend to discuss certain political aspects of constructing local and regional identity, more closely, to grasp the ways these processes are related to different fields of power in society. By using a marginal area of inland Sweden as an example, I want to show how local and regional identities are shaped in relation to state politics as well as to local traditions in concrete places.[1] In my research, I found that there is a marked and definite difference between the local and the regional when it comes to identity construction: on the local level, identity is formed through shared everyday practices and reflections, while on the regional level, identity construction is part of a conscious and organized political process. Even if both types of identity may be interpreted as expressions of opposition, local identity in my field material seems to be of a *refractory* kind, while the more consciously organized regional identity may be viewed as an expression of *resistance*. In this second case, regional identity is undergoing a process of *ethnification*, creating a mythology of a people with rights to a specific territory.

The Overall Setting

Geographically, the province of Jämtland is located in the middle of Sweden but in all other respects it belongs to Norrland, the northern part of the country. The province borders on Norway, to which it belonged until 1645, and on other Swedish counties in the south, east, and north. The sparsely populated, mountainous area of Jämtland stretches to approximately 37.500 square kilometers. More than half of the population of 130.000 live in the only town, Östersund, located in the middle of the county. Outside the town, people live in municipal centers or small hamlets. As the province is mostly covered by woodlands, villages are often separated by large forests. For the past hundred years, economic life has depended upon stockraising and dairy farming, tourism, forestry, and the production of electric power. In the national economy of Sweden, Jämtland's role has been to produce and supply raw material and energy for

1 The article is drawing on field-material and discussions being developed in my forthcoming thesis.

various industries in other parts of the country, therefore, there is very little industrial production in the province itself.

In Jämtland, as in most Swedish provinces, people have been conscious about their regional identity for a long time. Until fairly recently, there had not been any contradiction in assuming a double identity: being a Jämt and being a Swede at the same time. This, I believe, was due to the 'double equality' that characterized Sweden at least from the 1920's until the early 1980's: a cultural and economic equality that developed in the context of the Swedish welfare state. On one hand, during this period, Sweden was to a large extent a monoethnic society,[2] but more importantly, it was conceived as such. Not even the massive immigration of laborers from southern Europe during the 1960's changed this self-image in any manifest way. The prevalent conception was that everyone was fundamentally alike – that is, Swedish – and, consequently, that the Swedes were all equal. On the other hand, the ideology of Swedish welfare policies also strongly emphasized (economic) equality. The state thus used a progressive system of taxation to redistribute wealth from those who earned more not only to those who earned less, but to all citizens, regardless of their income status. The redistribution was managed by the omnipresent political and administrative apparatus, which reached out into every corner of society. Through the practice of the welfare system, equality came to mean likeness: the same measures and solutions were implemented regardless of the specific circumstances of the recipients.[3]

The idea of economic equality, however, eventually contributed to the development of local and regional identities in Jämtland: the likeness-by-equality discourse of the welfare state in practice led to the marginalization of the inland population, which, in turn, challenged the very foundation of the cultural-ideological idea of equality-by-likeness. In the following, I will use the example of housing policies to demonstrate the process on the local level. I found that although the villagers generally regarded welfare policies as nonsensical state interference into their everyday lives, these policies were not openly resisted: instead, they were countered by refractory actions.[4]

The Welfare Policies of Housing

In the context of the present analysis, state political measures are regarded as means to transform the preconditions for local activities, relations, and interactions. Local life is thus conceived as series of encounters placed in a dimension of space-time. 'Place' will

2 Since the beginnings of history, there has existed a Saami minority in parts of northern Sweden, and at least from the 16th century on, a Finnish immigrant population in different areas of the country. By and large, these groups, together with others, like Gypsies and Jews, were not considered to break the monoethnicism of Sweden. Thus, the collective rights of ethnic groups were not recognized officially until new groups of immigrants settled in the early 1970's.

3 The system, in its similar Norwegian variant, is described by Ottar Brox (Brox 1988). He also points to the problematic aspects of the combination of equality and likeness in welfare state policies, from which I have developed the idea of 'double equality'.

4 'Refractory action' here stands for the reluctance to accept the measures people not originally approve. It is similar to the notion of the 'resistance of the weak' as described by Scott (Scott 1985), and does not involve open or organized opposition. It is thus a partial acceptance of being overpowered by the authorities, or rather an acceptance of the authorities' right to exercise control. On the other hand, the term also implies an aspiration to do things one's own way, as long as it can be done without a direct challenge to the authorities. As opposed to other types of resistance, refractory behavior can easily be taken as willfulness or obstinacy.

be comprehended as an expression of the way social relations have been shaped at certain points in space and time. The politics of welfare can thus be conceptualized as establishing new social relations, which can be realized within already existing circumstances (Massey 1994). To be more concrete, the hamlets I visited during my field-work may be regarded, from the researcher's point of view, as expressions of social relations developed through time and extended in space. Natural and material resources – from houses and roads to state subsidies – are realized only when they are inserted into social relations. The village is thus seen as the concrete expression of the organization of relations between people living there, and also their common and individual relations with the world outside of the village.[5] This, of course, makes it impossible to view any village as an isolated unity. On the contrary, every local community must be seen in its connections with the surrounding world.[6] On the other hand, there can hardly be any doubt that the growing spatial and social integration – the ever growing extension of social relations – has led to an increasing consciousness of the questions of local and regional identities.[7] 'Local identity' in this connection is regarded as the result of common reflections upon the way social relations are shaped, and as an expression of the development of social relations in a particular place. This conception has several implications. The woodlands of northern Sweden provide a good example, where – as part of the evolving modernity – the former unity between the social and cultural space dissolved through the increasing disembedding of social relations.[8] Another implication is that social relations always contain a dimension of power. This dimension is, of course, not new, and it is not connected solely to welfare policies. Instead, it is mostly accentuated by the increased presence of 'absent others' (cf. Giddens 1990).

On the individual level, marginality becomes meaningful through understanding one's own, 'placed' conditions as experience and structure. Political marginality, thus, is not an objective factor, but rather a subjective, though locally shared, knowledge. The concept is used here to describe a situation in which the inhabitants of an area share the experience of having (too) little influence on the workings of politics. In principle, two kinds of reactions are possible: one may actively resist, that is, combat the system of rules itself through political actions. The other type of reaction is to attempt to confine the influence of the political system on one's own everyday life by choosing refractory behavior as a strategy. Interpreting behavior as expression of reluctance is, however,

5 The term 'social relations' is thus used here in a rather vague and imprecise sense. My main point is to underline that only those things/events will matter in the formation of the villagers' lives that are made part of their social relations. Experiences are personal and become social when communicated to others. Experiences become part of the social relations only to the extent they affect other people's lives or apprehensions. Of course, it can be argued that in this way anything can be made part of a group's social relations. On the other hand, this does not mean that things can be excluded from social relations as a matter of free will.

6 This was pointed out as early as in the early fifties, when the British social anthropologist John Barnes introduced the concept of 'field' to characterize these relations on the basis of his fieldwork in a small Norwegian community (Barnes 1954). His views were elaborated upon by, among others, Robert Redfield (cf. Redfield 1989). The Swedish ethnologist Börje Hanssen reached the same conclusions through a somewhat different track (Hanssen 1953). For a more recent research elaborating on this point, see the work of Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi, who have shown how the small community of Värtsilä, on the border between Finland and Russia, formed its identity in the encounters between the local, the national, and the transnational (Paasi 1996). The anthropologist John Knight's critique of Anthony Cohen's ideas on the symbolic construction of community is also relevant here (Knight 1994).

7 Cf. Cohen 1982, 1986, 1989. The logic of this apparent paradox has been noticed by quite a number of researchers. See, for example, Barth 1969; Ekman 1991; and Kleivan 1970.

8 Cf. Giddens 1990.

only possible when looking at it in the rear-view mirror. People mostly act simply in their own interests, and criticize others from that standpoint. Likewise, the peasants in Jämtland were not aiming to change the larger social structure and the state, but rather to work the system to their own maximum advantage (cf. Hobsbawm 1973; Scott 1985).

New houses and house improvements (refurbishing kitchens, installing linoleum flooring, hooking up electricity, building more rooms, and so on) change the physical as well as the cultural frameworks of everyday life. Housing policies, on the other hand, can be seen as a means for realizing centrally defined norms of 'good living', establishing a discourse of what is proper. During the interwar period in Sweden, a great number of official reports described and even defined the countryside as a problem-area. The inquiries certainly referred to the actual living conditions dominating in the countryside, which were considerably below the standards in urban areas. For the large groups of lumberjacks and peasants in the northern parts of the country, moving into the modern dwellings provided by the welfare state certainly meant a significant change. Thus, the image of the countryside as a problematic area was produced by the very housing policies that originally aspired to bridge over the distance between the living standards of urban and rural areas.

Swedish housing policies can be described as a combination of technical and social engineering with late 19th-century romantic ideas on the importance of the 'home'. It is therefore no coincidence that the welfare state in Sweden was named 'The People's Home' ('Folkhemmet' in Swedish). The 'home' came to symbolize the ideal of equality since at home everyone is alike. Referring to both the concrete living facility and the nation in general, the home meant the right to security, and incorporated modern achievements, such as central heating and bath tub. To be able to enjoy these facilities and security, however, the people in the countryside had to accept that they had previously lived in a place characterized by unenlightened and uncultivated circumstances.

For the poor in the countryside, governmental loans were part of the dream promising a better future. But there were many obstacles on the road to the future, and the granting of the loan did not guarantee that it was the villager's own dream that was going to be fulfilled. My field material provides concrete examples. The case of Stina and Bertil in Lillviken[9] provide one example for the difficulties in obtaining a loan for building a new house. They made a blueprint of their own and sent it to the municipality for a building permit. However, they shared the faith of most applicants: the local housing committee did not approve of the blueprint.

> It was just like a dictatorship. You were not allowed to decide yourself what kind of house you want to build. If it had been today, I would have been much more outspoken, but in those days we didn't know, we had to accept the situation to get a loan at all.

Instead, the municipality usually recommended a prefabricated house, one which, however, seldom corresponded to the demands of the builders. Sometimes the people had to face outright faults, as in the case of Maja and Frans, whose toilet was so small they had to keep the door open when using it. There were even more defects:

> People gather and socialize mostly in the kitchen, especially in the countryside, but here the kitchen was too small. It was almost impossible even to cook in it. The idea, I guess, was that we should have our meals in the multi-purpose room, but it was too far from the kitchen. But it was fabulous to have a basement under the house with woodshed, heating boiler, laundry room, and storeroom, and now we even have an oven for baking bread. We wanted to build the oven all along, but first they stopped it. So we built it later on. It was the controller who stopped it, but I guess he only followed the instructions.

The basement with its modern hygienic technology, was thus accepted with open arms, while the kitchen proved to be too small and the inhabitants felt the need of an oven. Maja and Frans could manage to install an oven later, while they still had to live with a small kitchen and bathroom. They did not, however, let themselves be exiled to the living room for their meals. We meet here a kind of refractory behavior toward the 'good and right living' dictated by the housing policies. This behavior can be explained by the borrowers' disadvantageous position: they needed to get access to resources administered and controlled by the housing policy representatives.

The same relation is corroborated by the narration of Edit. She and her husband bought land from a relative in the small village Kalkberget, and settled in the old house on the homestead in the year 1939. After five years Edit was widowed and was left alone with her three small children. Like most of her neighbors, she earned her living on the small farm with a few cows, goats, hens and, from time to time, a pig. She grew the barley she needed for porridge and bread for herself and fodder for the animals, she made butter and cheese and butchered the occasional pig to obtain meat. The only kind of food she had to buy was 'a little oatmeal'. In Edit's narrative, the village appears as one big family which helped Edit to survive. By the end of the 1940's, however, Edit realized she could no longer live in the old house due to its worsening condition, thus she applied for a state loan. From the beginning, the municipality[10] maintained that Edit should not be allowed to build in Kalkberget, since that village was too remote, and the house would not have sufficient value. Instead, she was offered to buy a lot in the more central village of Havsnäs. Since Edit owned a forest and agricultural land in Kalkberget, she argued that it was against common sense (especially from an economic point of view) not to allow her to build there. The municipality eventually let her build in Kalkberget. After this battle, however, Edit seems to have lost the energy and will to continue to fight for her own ideas concerning the house:

> I had no idea about what the house should look like. You couldn't even have an idea, since they had made a blueprint of the house, the way it ought to be. There was nothing to discuss. If you had a loan, you had to build the way it should be, that's the way it was. You had to accept their calculations.

The product of the building was a two-and-a-half-storey house, due to the fact that the prefabricated house on the blueprint had a basement. Edit had known from local experience that it was impossible to build a basement into the hard bedrock in the area. The contractor then chose to turn the basement into a ground floor instead, which gave the building a very high base, and made it necessary to build an extra staircase to get into the kitchen; "... that was not the way it was done in the past, they never built basements then ... ." It is easy to imagine how quickly the news of the bureaucrats' and building inspectors' incompetence spread in the village. Even though this did not lead to any immediate or active expression of resistance, the experience with state

9 The material on Stina and Bertil, Maja and Frans, and Edit is collected within a research-project on the rise of housing policy in the parish of Alanäs in the northernmost part of the county of Jämtland.

10 The loans were granted by the state but applications were sent to the municipality, which would give recommendations to the regional state housing committee, which would eventually approve or disapprove of the application. The municipal committee did have most of the contacts with the applicants, but their freedom of action was restricted by government regulations.

bureaucrats and the examples of repudiating the implementation of housing policies came to be part of the local knowledge and, thus, were used to forge local identity. On the other hand, there was another side of the housing policies, as well. In spite of all the problems, Edit felt both joy and pride when she moved into her new home. Just like Maja and Frans, Edit later built an oven for baking thin, unleavened bread. Already at the time of the construction, she made the bricklayer prepare the installation of the oven, even though the supervisor had explicitly said it was not part of the project. It is perhaps not insignificant that so many examples of refractory behavior circle around the oven and baking. The type of bread they bake has a strong symbolic value: it is considered a regional specialty, while baking also allows the women to prove that they master their roles in the traditional way of life.

The housing policies were clearly normative. They accomplished more than simply providing people with new and better housing conditions; they changed the way of living also through inducing changes in behavioral norms. Through the regulations of the construction, the authorities sought control over the space (rooms, kitchen, bathroom) that immediately surrounds the people. The power of the state, its capacity to change the conditions which shape people's lives, was established on at least two levels. First, as a material power: through administering loans and subsidies, rules and regulations. In the villages this power appeared in the form of new resources, which first of all reached the poorest (not the farming freeholders), since requests of those in the greatest need were given priority. The price these people had to pay in exchange, however, was marginalization. This constitutes the power on the second level: the power to define, to change villagers from ordinary provincials into inhabitants of sparsely populated, problematic areas. The official reports established a new knowledge about the housing conditions in the countryside. This knowledge, however, was not neutral. It also implied the existence of an important relation of power: the right to define the problems as well as the necessary measures to solve them was in the hands of government bureaucrats. Material resources became power; they were made manifest in the routines of social reproduction when integrated into the local social relations. The redefinition influenced not only the representation of the sparsely populated countryside as marginal area within the larger national unity, but also its internal organization. If we don't believe in conspiracy theories, this new ascribed identity is the *unintended* consequence of exercising material power by the state through welfare policies.

What we have is thus a structuring interference[11]: an explicit aim to improve people's living conditions by structuring their field of action. The reproduction of ways of living in the villages was a permanent, repetitive process, integrated into the course of everyday life. At the same time, it was itself an integrative process: it was in this reproduction that new possibilities were inserted into parts of the already existing structure. This meant that local actions could either strengthen, modify, or deny the actions of central institutions, depending on the local conditions. The refractory behavior of the villagers, however, seldom involved structured, systematic reactions because the consequences of government actions were not only unintended, but also hidden for the actors involved.

In everyday conversations, people in the woodlands tend to speak of welfare policies in terms of power dimensions: rural as opposed to urban, marginal as opposed to central, sparsely as opposed to densely populated, and so on. One may thus claim that the exercise of power, and the resistance to it, have been clad in a language referring to

11 Cf. Giddens 1984.

sociogeographic rather than sociopolitical conditions. For the woodland villagers, the opposition between countryside and city, or the sparsity or density of the population, is a major tool of interpreting power relations: ties to a marginal place are made to symbolize the experienced impotence in political action. In this way, identity appears as a relatively steady cognitive construction, which may be brought to the fore when the situation calls for it. When villagers dress up in what we may call 'the costume of local identity', they do so in order to foreground and represent concrete places that otherwise have been integrated, even dissolved, into wider territorial, social, and cultural fields for a long time. It is hardly surprising that local identities in the woodlands show two major characteristics: the repudiation of governmental powers, and the upholding of the significance and meanings of everyday local practices, of the knowledge that is shared by the villagers themselves. It is only when these two characteristics are both present – not in the form of public announcements, but rather in the routines of everyday life – that the local identity can turn the experience of marginalization into the pride of being able to survive in a sparsely populated 'problem area'.

A large portion of the welfare policies were introduced in the countryside: this is certainly true for the housing policies. One major reason for the state's willingness to implement welfare measures in the rural areas in the 1930's and 1940's was the very real risk of depopulation. This would have meant shortage of labor in the forestry, one of the most important export industries of Sweden. The administrative efforts of the state, however, could not prevent the further outmigration from the northern countryside after the late 1950's. As a consequence, the government bureaucrats shaping welfare policies gradually turned their attention to the fast-growing urban environments. In the meantime, the focus of political action in the rural areas shifted toward the attraction of new industries and investments. This double change did not mean that all welfare resources were withdrawn from the rural areas. The general welfare policies continued to operate on a national level, but ceased to give priority to rural problems. This whole shift was explained in the name of equality. Before the 1960's, the rural population had been defined as an underprivileged group in need of affirmative measures in order to attain equality (meaning likeness) throughout the country; in the 1960's, however, the urban workers became this underprivileged target group. Thus, welfare policies ceased to have the same symbolic impact on people's lives in the countryside they had had during the previous decades.

The focus shifted even on the level of local identity construction. During the first decades of the Swedish welfare state, people utilized their refractory behavior to diminish the influence of what we may call the 'disciplinary effects' of welfare policies. This behavior gradually became meaningless as the state withdrew. Instead, local discourses became preoccupied with migration and depopulation. Since it was the villagers themselves, their sons and daughters, neighbors and colleagues who moved away, the discourse could no longer reinforce the earlier self-image that the villagers were morally superior to 'others' in the towns or other parts of the country. The emphasis shifted to the conditions for and problems of modernization, which resulted in the politicization of local identity; but at the same time, definitions of local identity became more vague, mainly because it became more difficult to reach consensus in the local community.

The development or, rather, decomposition of the welfare state during the last fifteen years or so, has induced a breakdown of the cultural and economic 'double equality'. The idea of equality-by-likeness, of course, can have only limited credibility at a time when immigration and racial issues occupy the forefront of political debates in Sweden. On the other hand, the redistributive welfare system has also started to disintegrate due

to the economic recession and the crisis in public finances. In the process, the gaps between the different social classes have widened, and the ideology of likeness-by-equality has also lost its relevance. As a result, while the advantages of the welfare state have evaporated, nothing changed in the marginalized position of the villagers in Jämtland.

The Liberation Movement and the Regional Setting

Geographically speaking Jämtland is, and has been, a marginal area in the sense that the county is located far from any political or economic center. This marginality, however, never meant economic or social isolation, since production cooperation and trade as well as the institutional ties to the church and the state have traditionally integrated the area into the larger society. Then the introduction of welfare policies resulted in an increased presence of the authorities, and the "not-present-Others" (cf. Giddens 1990) started to play a more active role in structuring the everyday lives of local people. The increasing integration resulted in decreasing autonomy, while it also gave access to new resources. The discourses legitimating the large welfare investments, however, represented the recipients as politically and economically marginal. In addition, while during the post-war period, Swedish economic development on the national level was characterized by fast industrialization and urbanization, Jämtland, being a non-industrialized, non-urbanized area, was subject to a large outmigration that led to a considerable decrease in population. Marginality was thus complemented with the problems of depopulation.

In the 1960's, the regionalist movement in Jämtland started out basically as a reaction to the outmigration from the county. The actual event that triggered its foundation, however, was the plan of the state government to unite Jämtland with Västernorrland, its neighboring county to the east. This was part of a national scheme to reduce the number of counties drastically, which was met by protests all over the country. In Jämtland, the yearly festival of *Storsjöyran*[12] was used to mobilize people. The initiators managed to persuade people to send thousands of postcards to the government in protest against the unification of the two counties. This kind of demonstration was not unique to Jämtland, it was part of a general popular opposition against what was regarded as too much state centralization. But a series of events made the protests in Jämtland truly unmatched: a small group of people (most of them related to the show-business) simply proclaimed the region an independent republic and appointed a rather well-known TV-entertainer president. Though the proclamation was performed in a jocular fashion, it nevertheless expressed a strong statement of protest. The members of the group behind the playful performance called themselves the 'Freedom Movement', mimicking other, more serious liberation movements around the world. The Freedom Movement employed humorous images in a carnivalesque manner which gave the movement publicity, and helped it to escape serious opposition from the authorities.[13] At this early stage, the Movement defined its aims mostly in relation to government policies, without developing any regional alternative. Instead, in a way typical to carnivals, the Movement used all of its energy to make fun of the people in power: its 'politics' was simply populist and not explicitly regionalist. The elements of a serious protest were thus tightly wrapped into a package of pranks.

12 Storsjön is the name of the lake in the center of the region on which shores is the only regional town, Östersund. 'Yra' roughly means frenzy.

During the 1960's, as the population of Jämtland was steadily diminishing, the Freedom Movement entertained itself and its audience with joking protests. Apart from the intellectuals who had migrated out of the province, the Movement never really got any substantive support outside the town of Östersund.[14] In the following decade, however, the population decrease stopped.[15] It was partly due to the international oil crisis, which created recession in the Swedish industrial sector, and thus there were no more employment opportunities in the cities to attract people from the countryside. In this situation even the Freedom Movement came to a standstill: it suspended its activities and the festival did not take place.

When the economic boom of the 1980's once again put pressure on the region by attracting its workforce to the industrial centers, even the Freedom Movement – now renamed the Liberation Movement – came back to life and revived the festival of Storsjäyran. The president was new, but just like his predecessor and successor, he came from the world of show-business. The strong emphasis on employing persons from show-business, not only as presidents, but also as members in the various appointed 'governments', shows the strategic importance of utilizing jesting. This, of course, makes the Liberation Movement difficult to attack, since every attack may be countered with the assumption that the assailant is unable to read the joke. Still, in the beginning of what we may call the second phase of regionalization, parodying the institutions and actions of the state government played an important part. The Liberation Movement exploited a popular stereotype of the Jämt peasants: their image as being proud and shrewd as well as backward and marginal. This stereotype was used to comment upon governmental politics directly, and not in a way to reflect concrete local experiences with welfare policies and criticize the government through these examples. It is likely, though, that the criticism resonated with the way people in the villages saw government officials. The Liberation Movement was thus using an already existing, if vague, image of the Jämt as being both different and exploited by 'the Bigswede', which came to be the denomination not only for authorities and bureaucrats, but, in a more imprecise way, for the inhabitants of Stockholm and the southern parts of Sweden.[16] The vagueness of the image the Jämts had of themselves would have prevented the development of the Movement into a more serious and broad popular movement. Without another strong ideological element, the Movement would not have been able to become an important political factor.

In order to examine this crucial ideological element, we first have to point out that Jämts have always expressed a strong sense of tradition and a profound interest in local

13 At one time 'the president' succeeded in being received by the Swedish prime minister Tage Erlander, himself a great humorist, in a mock version of a state visit. They were being filmed for the TV-news in the same rowing-boat where Mr. Erlander a few months earlier had met with the Soviet general secretary Nikita Krustschev.

14 For example, none of the presidents have been permanent residents of the region. All of them are outmigrated intellectuals (here including show-business people).

15 The small growth in population that could be registered in the county was concentrated to the town of Östersund. The growth in the town's population increased even further through the immigration of people from the region's countryside. The countryside was thus still being depopulated and people still trying to get by through the strategies of refractory behavior.

16 'Bigswede' is actually used by the Liberation Movement as a word of abuse to denominate everything that is seen as bad for Jämtland. One could perhaps claim that its use demarcates the forces of power from the powerlessness of the people, but since the meaning of the term 'Bigswede' varies according to user and situation, this is not always the case. Sometimes it is enough to come from the southern part of Sweden, and to 'show an attitude' to be called 'Bigswede', even though this person may not exercise power in Jämtland. The 'Bigswede' is thus solely defined by the Jämts, and does not exist outside of the Liberation Movement's discourse, even though the powers it is made to represent may very well exist.

history. When this localism, which previously had been represented mainly by student associations,[17] was finally linked to the idea of the Republic, the process of regionalization started to accelerate. A central line in the construction of regional history has been to emphasize that it is different from Swedish history. In this context, the relative remoteness of the area gained special importance. Historians of the region claim that, at least up until the late-fifteenth century, Jämtland was ruled through an independent provincial popular assembly, and therefore the claims for independence today is historically rooted.

This is precisely the point where regional opposition turns into ethnification, where historical narratives conceive the Jämts not simply as a regional population but as a people.[18] The ethnification process in Jämtland is a textbook-example of invented traditions. It is the ethnified interpretation of history that creates, or invents, the Jämts as a people. Historically, there has never existed an endogamous kinship system demarcating Jämts from other groups. In fact, the whole idea of an independent popular assembly with parliamentary functions is built on rather weak references, and is linked to residence and land ownership, rather than ethnic belonging. But in the larger geographical context, any attempt to define the differences in ethnic terms, even between Norwegians and Swedes, would mean to miss the historical point. In the whole area, belonging has been defined by residence and ways of life, or in cases of war between the states, by citizenship – but never by ethnicity. 'Norway', 'Sweden', and 'Jämtland' consequently function as cultural constructions, symbols that are used in the elaboration of various matters which from the start concerned regional development, but which have taken on the disguise of an ethnic struggle. What the Liberation Movement is trying to do, then, is to give a present-day political meaning to the history of territorial boundaries.

The process of ethnification is of course not solely restricted to the writing of history. It also involves the production of symbols, such as flags, official seals, anthems, maps, and literary languages. In the case of the Liberation Movement, the production of these symbols and the drawing of sharp boundaries that separate Jämtness from Swedish traditions, make possible territorial claims sound justified. The Jämt flag, the most visible symbol, has already gained a semi-official status, it is used at public as well as private events, it flies from the flagpoles of local governments. The image of Jämtland as 'the land of difference' has also been adopted by the tourist industry, and its impact has risen accordingly. Once it is able to establish the Jämts as a people in its own right, the Liberation Movement might even call itself a national movement. So far, the Movement has provided Jämts with a frame of reference and interpretation by connecting the idea of belonging to a region with social and political change. The image of Jämts as being a marginalized, exploited, and different people is utilized to endorse ethnic interpretations of present day social development. Moreover, the spread of multiethnicism in Sweden further facilitated the conception of the Jämts as a distinct people. In sum, it is the combination of jesting, traditional ethnic mobilization, and the ethnic interpretation of social change that has made the Liberation Movement powerful.

Even though one might say that the Liberation Movement has given the political protest an ethnic rather than a party-political flavor, the regionalism of Jämtland is not right-wing politics. On the contrary, it is definitely leftist, its history perhaps reaching

17 One of the main movers in this process was the student fraternity *Jämtamot* at Uppsala university.

18 There are obvious parallels between this process and what has been happening in many other parts of Europe, for instance the ethnification-process in northern Spain concerning the Basques, even though this latter process is much more dramatic (cf. MacClancy 1993; Knudsen and Wilken 1997).

back to the classic Swedish coalition between peasant- and labor-parties in the 1930's. The protests are directed against people in power positions, the 'Bigswedes' of finance and central government. As a sign of the broad support for regional ideas, in the referendum on Swedish European Union membership, approximately 85% of the Jämts voted against joining the EU.[19]

The leftist position is not unproblematic in the process of ethnification: there is only a thin line that separates it from a more or less clear-cut racism, especially in a situation where general recession has led to anti-immigrant actions throughout the country. Therefore, the situation is quite delicate at the Storsjöyran festivals. The Jämt president usually makes his speeches at midnight on the main day of the festival in front of a crowd of several thousand people. Most of the listeners are drunk and could be easily agitated into violent actions. The president's jovial and conciliatory words have so far prevented any violence. He opens his speeches by addressing the crowd:

> Magnificent Härjedalings!
> Splendid Saamis!
> Lovely Jämts!
> Wonderful Ravundings!!
> Terrific Trönds!
> Inspiring immigrants!
> All sons and daughters of humanity![20]

While the Liberation Movement generally imitates and performs the more peaceful actions of other independence movements, the existence of certain factions within the Movement alludes to more violent forms of ethnic or regional struggle for independence. As the website of the organization reveals, the Liberation Movement contains a "quasi-militant faction, the Jämtland Republican Army (JRA). The Republic and the Republican Movement is far from being as militant [as] their names indicate" (*Republiken Jämtland* 1994). The parallel to organizations like the IRA in Ireland or the ETA in the Basque area is both apparent and intended. So far, however, the 'soldiers' of JRA have acted only as presidential guards during the Storsjöyran-festival, or as 'customs officers' at the borders of the Republic, demanding customs fees in a mocking fashion. In their playful parades, the soldiers of the JRA march with old hay-making tools in their hands. Today, no one would support seriously an armed uprising in Jämtland, but the idea itself has already emerged. The members of the Liberation Movement have recognized the dangers of such prospect, which has made the president emphasize repeatedly the non-violent character of the Movement: "True freedom is never reached at anybody else's expense; it is reached through balanced coexistence and human maturity" (The president's speech, Republiken Jämtland 1994).

It is fairly obvious that the actions and rhetoric of the Liberation Movement have established – consciously or not – a new political arena in the region, and a new

19 In Sweden, unlike in many other countries, the EU is seen as a right wing project.

20 All quotations from the president and/or the Liberation Movement are taken from their homepage on the internet: http://omega.studo.mh.se/~verner/dfr/presidenttal94.html. In the presentation of the Republic of Jämtland it is said to consist of three parts: Härjedalen, Ravund and Jämtland. Tröndelag is the Norwegian county bordering upon Jämtland. In the region there is also a Saami population, sometimes in conflict with the Swedish/Jämt inhabitants. The important thing, however, is the inclusion of immigrants, 'in-migrants' from other parts of Sweden as well as 'real' immigrants who have come from a farther distance.

conceptual framework for interpreting political and social questions. Even though very few people in Jämtland would actually want to turn the province into an independent republic, this new conceptual framework compels most people to a certain type of thinking and interpretation. When, for instance, the recession in the 1990's reached the public as well as the private economic sector, the disintegration of the welfare system was interpreted in regional and ethnic terms rather than in class or sociopolitical terms. Jämts believe that their land is exploited, that the great natural resources (timber and electric power) of Jämtland is wasted for very small compensation – and this perspective implies that the resources are actually *exported* to Sweden from the republic. In order to legitimate its existence, it is essential for the Liberation Movement to prove the unfairness of the state policies towards the region. And once the region is defined as a republic, the argumentation has to support it.

> Eventually, it is proved beyond all doubt: Jämtland is not a parasite, a heavy rucksack, a burden that the Bigswede is forced to bear. [...] Jämtland makes a great contribution to the Swedish nation, particularly in terms of well-educated youth. Without Jämtland, Sweden screeches to a halt. We do not demand any 'Thank You' cards. All we ask is that we will not be described as welfare addicts and scrooges. [...] Should the electricity we export be as dreadful as our roads, the commuter trains in the Mälardalen region[21] would no longer commute ..." (The president's speech, Republiken Jämtland 1994).

Some Concluding Remarks

It should not be surprising that in the processes of identity construction, both on the local and the regional level, sociogeographic interpretations of the world dominate. It is precisely this quality that enables the researcher to speak about place-based identities. In this paper, the marked differences between two levels of place-based identities, the local and the regional, have been explored. I have pointed out that it is certainly possible to view the construction of local identity as a symbolic activity, but it is equally relevant to see it as a reaction to changes in the social relations that makes up everyday life. The formation of local identity in this sense is an integrative act, a way for people to connect and unite separate bits and parts into a whole. One might claim that 'being local' is very seldom an aim in itself; the goal instead is expressed in terms of being able to go on with one's life. During the first decades of the Swedish welfare state, the relative equality that dominated village life in Jämtland did not reach out to encompass those in power. Villagers felt that the conditions and experiences making up the base of their local identity were different from those of the government bureaucrats, thus they were not equal. It seems that the idea of equality was a central part of local identity construction. On one hand, within the local community, no one could boast without being negatively sanctioned. On the other hand, there was a strong emphasis on individual autonomy, but without entering into open conflicts. This, in turn, led to a refractory behavior when villagers encountered governmental decisions and measures that they saw as nonsensical. After the 1950's, local identity formation centered on cohesion and on handling the experiences of outmigration, which was not seen as a rejection of local community, but rather as a result of state conspiracy or inadequate anti-migration measures.

21 The Mälardalen region is the area surrounding Stockholm and has roughly the meaning of 'home of the exploiters and the ignorant'.

As opposed to local communities, regions are imagined, in a way similar to the making of nations (cf. Anderson 1983). This means that identity construction on the regional level is mediated, and therefore organized and directed. Regional identity formation may be described as a process of awakening: the regional identity of Jämtland did not really exist until it was initiated by the Freedom Movement in the early 1960's.[22] At the beginning, although regional identity shared some characteristics with the local identities, it did not grow out of them. Based the urban intellectual milieus of Östersund and Stockholm, the Freedom Movement was probably met with some skepticism in the countryside. It was not until later that it gained popular support, and then regional identity – in its ethnified version – also influenced the way local identities were reconceptualized. Thus, one could say that while local identity is constructed in the practices of everyday life in the community, regional identity is, in the main, a discursive enterprise. In Jämtland as a whole, it would be problematic to find practices that everyone shares, and thus would confirm shared belonging to the region. Instead, identity is built upon symbolic activities, such as waving the regional flag, writing regional histories, speaking in regional dialects, and so on, to create an image of common descent.

The state plays a crucial role in both local and regional identity construction, but does so in different ways. On the local level, people feel that the state is out of reach. It is like the weather: it affects everyday life and it can be commented upon, but it cannot be influenced. Therefore, when the state, through the 'disciplinary effects' of its welfare policies, interfered into village life, people defended themselves with refractory behavior. Regional identity construction, however, targeted the state from the very beginning. The organized form of the Liberation Movement and its campaigns made it possible to present one dominant and directed discourse on 'Jämtishness'. By determining the uniqueness of the Jämts, the Movement was able to create a sense of Jämt belonging. And by pointing out the difference in relation to the rest of Sweden and the state, a sense of common cause was created. The emphasis on uniqueness and difference creates the conception of Jämts as a distinct people, and this idea is the basis of ethnification. The ethnification process itself was probably not planned by the initiators, but the power of the discourse structured the space of the actors in predictable ways. Today, it would be impossible to pursue successful oppositional regional politics in Jämtland without entertaining the idea of the Jämts as a people.[23] Thus, the Liberation Movement is potentially a serious challenge to the state. The Movement provides a frame of reference for interpreting (welfare) state policies in regional-ethnic terms, which overrides traditional divisions in party politics. The referendum on Swedish membership in the EU is an example of this: the Jämt rejection was more a vote against the Swedish political establishment than against the EU as such.[24]

On the regional level, the question is not so much about the level of interference, because the Swedish nation-state and its policies have always influenced the region. It is rather about reinventing and reconceptualizing it as unwelcome, outside interference,

22 In the past, of course, several regional historians tried to describe the area and its history and thereby naturally emphasizing its uniqueness. However, they did not create any widespread regional discourse on identity.

23 Even the regional state authorities seem to have been caught by this image. For example, the former county governor is a member of the present Jämt 'government'.

24 The Swedish–Norwegian relations are not affected, since on the level of the two states, there is no support for any present-day implications of the historical interpretations of the Liberation Movement.

a threat to the region. The future of the Jämt Liberation Movement is, of course, hard to guess. The success of this endeavor naturally depends on the degree to which it corresponds to the experiences and reflections of the people living in the region. The role of the state as enemy will be crucial, since regional identity is meaningful only when its protagonists actively seek opposition and initiate resistance rather than reconciliation. And as the sense of regional belonging becomes stronger, the mythology of Jämt uniqueness may very well be constructed in ethnified terms.

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Faces of Modernity

Men in Films: A European *versus* an American Model?

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The Internal Deconstruction of Masculinity

Since the advent of feminist criticism, it has become an incontestable truth in politically correct circles that male domination, which is ultimately the model of every sort of domination, is a social institution that has been inscribed in social and mental structures over the millennia in the European Judeo-Christian cultural sphere. Its basis is, in Bourdieu's terms, the 'libido dominandi' acquired unintentionally by men in the course of socialization. It is an 'innate desire' to dominate, a sense of responsibility based on internal drives which a man 'owes himself', so to speak. This self-evident drive is the belief in the obligation to stress masculinity and performance, and it compels men to defeat other men (and the women belonging to them). This 'libido dominandi' drives men into games, the extreme form of which is war.

If we men are just a little bit sincere with ourselves, we cannot deny that scientists (artists, politicians, priests, moneymakers, communication moguls, showbiz tycoons, etc.) are mostly recruited from the representatives of the first sex even today. That said, it cannot be hard to acknowledge that next to our 'malestream' 'his-tories' taken as universally valid and self-evident, the 'her-stories' – which at times radically deconstruct our image of the world and society – have their place under the sun.

So far, however, the deconstruction of male domination has for the most part become the subject-matter of systematic analysis from the position of oppressed women. The so-called internal deconstruction of this social institution by men is little known outside the walls of the academy. Therefore – paradoxically enough – politically correct western liberal circles are increasingly characterised by the 'crab inversion' of the former epistemological state (to open up little gates onto new fields of association with this Schönbergian term). While it was once posited that women were only capable of thinking within the conceptual frameworks elaborated by men, now a growing number of men interpret their own social (dis)positions on the basis of knowledge derived from a female point of view.

It seems therefore justified to reexamine the knowledge men have about themselves. The question might rightly be raised: why are films used for this investigation? And why in particular award-winning films? First, because film – next to popular music – is one of the most influential media of mass culture. Since it has a global effect, a film can be decoded anywhere in the world. Films constitute a common horizon of reference from Helsinki to Kuala Lumpur, from Caracas to Johannesburg. Also, as commodities meant to appeal to