

Construction of Community in Northern Värmland

– A study of local people's experiences of outdoor life and
nature tourism

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Supervisor: Yvonne Gunnarsdotter, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Examiner: Kjell Hansen, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

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Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development

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Abstract

This master's thesis in rural development explores how local inhabitants perceive tourism and how it is included in their sense of community. How people use narratives and activities to make meanings of their community is in the centre of attention. The fieldwork took place in the areas around Sysseleback, situated in northern Värmland. The material was collected through semi structured interviews with inhabitants in Sysseleback who have an interest in outdoor life. The study focuses on two nature tourism facilities: one that is "small" and locally owned, and one that is "big" and externally owned. Local people stress the importance of the small facility's local ownership and its history in the community, whereas the lack of local anchoring is described as a shortcoming for the big facility. The history of the small facility in the community means that people have memories of being there, which have created a certain feeling for it and the scenic nature surrounding it.

The analysis is based on the question *How is a sense of community maintained over time?* Ruth Liepins' theory is used for the understanding of how construction of community is made and it shows that the content of community is continuously contested among people with different perceptions of what belongs and what does not. The meanings of community are constantly negotiated, showing that it is not static but always changing.

Key words: community, Tourist gaze, nature tourism, Värmland

Sammanfattning

Den här masteruppsatsen i landsbygdsutveckling utforskar hur lokala invånare uppfattar turism och hur det inkluderas i deras känsla av community. Hur människor använder narrativ och aktiviteter för att skapa mening av deras community står i fokus. Fältarbetet utfördes i området omkring Sysslebäck i norra Värmland. Materialet samlades in genom semistrukturerade intervjuer med invånare i Sysslebäck som har ett intresse för friluftsliv. Studien fokuserar på två turismanläggningar: en som är ”liten” och lokalt ägd, och en som är ”stor” och icke lokalt ägd. Lokalbefolkningen framhåller betydelsen av den lilla anläggningens lokala ägarskap och dess historia i samhället, medan bristen på lokal förankring beskrivs som en nackdel för den stora anläggningen. Den mindre anläggningens historia i bygden innebär att människor har minnen från att vara där, vilket har skapat en särskild känsla för den och landskapet omkring den.

Analysen är baserad på frågan *Hur behålls en känsla för community över tid?* Ruth Liepins teori används för förståelse för hur skapandet av community görs och det framgår att innehållet i communityt ifrågasätts kontinuerligt bland människor med olika uppfattningar om vad som tillhör det och vad som inte gör det. Innebörden av community förhandlas ständigt, vilket visar att det inte är statiskt utan alltid i förändring.

Nyckelord: community, the Tourist gaze, naturturism, Värmland

Introduction

The tourism industry in Sweden is constantly growing and the interest in nature tourism and outdoor life is steadily increasing. Nature tourism is usually described as a possible solution to what people on the countryside should make a living of nowadays and in the future. But nature tourism involves commercialisation of nature, which might lead to conflicts between the interests of tourists and the interests of local people. Tourists open up to the possibility to charge for outdoor life activities, which might affect also the local people. Tourists can be experienced as disturbing or rude if they impinge on local traditions or norms.

I have an interest in outdoor life activities and nature tourism myself. I love to experience the wonders of nature by being in it, looking at it or using it. My home is in a city and I believe that it is becoming increasingly important to people to experience nature because of the distinguishing between rural and urban life. When I ski or hike in the (mostly) northern parts of Sweden, I often reflect about the fact that I am dwelling in other people's homes and usual surroundings. It makes me feel that I do not want to impinge on their homes and lives in a negative way. This reflection was what formed the aim and research questions for this thesis. I wanted to explore how nature tourism could be accepted among the local people.

According to a research project about nature tourism business pursuers, the most important factors of success for nature tourism were life style that conforms to the business, personal interest in outdoor life and local anchoring in the area. I have therefore looked closer upon the significance of local anchoring, which seems to be the far most important difference between the two facilities that are studied in the thesis.

Since nature tourism and outdoor life activities is a part of people's lives in Nordvärmland, it is an important part of their community. The interest in outdoor life activities is something that connects people both within and outside the community. The places and activities that are considered important to people are bearers of traditions and stories. How these become important to people's perception of their home village is something that I find interesting and therefore have chosen to investigate further in this study. Since sense of community is crucial to people's perception of the place in which they live, it is important as a mean to understand why people choose to stay in a location or not.

This thesis started with the aim to explore the meaning of a locally owned tourism facility, named Långberget. During the field work it became clear that another tourism facility, Branäs, played an equally important role as a counterpart in the story. The thesis is therefore focused on the both of these facilities.

Aim

The aim of this thesis is to examine how a sense of community is maintained over time among the inhabitants in Nordvärmland engaged in outdoor life activities.

The questions that guide the thesis are:

- How do people maintain a sense of community over time?
- How has the transformation towards nature tourism affected people's perception of their community?
- How has the significance of Långberget changed over time to the local people?

Background

The river *Klarälven* stretches from south to north in Värmland and continues into Norway. The flow of the river has formed a deep valley that is a landmark for Northern Värmland; *Nordvärmland*. The forest-covered mountains slope down to the river, where the most houses are situated. There are many wild animals in the forests, like moose, wolves, lynxes and bears. Wood from the forests, hunting, fishing and gathering have been important for self-sufficiency and later also as monetary income for people in Nordvärmland. The wood was during a long time transported by timber-men along Klarälven, which was a dangerous and demanding job. Nature was, and is, constantly present when living in Nordvärmland, and people still make a living out of nature. Hunting and fishing are major interests in the area, and are also important to a certain degree of self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, another way of using natural resources has grown throughout the years – nature tourism.

The two facilities studied are situated in the municipality of Torsby; *Torsby kommun*, constituting the northern area of Värmland and which henceforth also will be called *Nordvärmland*. It has an area of 4000 km² (about one fifth of the total area of Värmland). The municipality has close to 12 000 residents with 4000 living in Torsby town (SCB, 2015). That means that the population is less than five residents per km², which is regarded as sparsely populated according to the definitions of the Board of Agriculture. The number of jobs within health and social care, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and personal and cultural services are more common than the average in Sweden, in contrast to business services and information and communication activities which are less common than the average.

Tourism is an important industry in Torsby kommun. The sales were 685 million SEK in 2014 and there were 626 persons employed in the tourism industry (Resurs, 2015). The tourism is mostly nature tourism, with summer and winter seasons as the far most significant. During the summer season there are all sorts of outdoor life activities: beaver safaris, moose safaris, hiking, biking, paddling, rafting, fishing, hunting and more (Carlsson & Larsson, 2014). Especially skiing, both cross country and downhill, attracts people during the winter season.

80 kilometres north of Torsby is a small community called *Sysslebäck* with barely 500 residents¹. The community has faced a negative population growth for a long time with few newcomers, which has led to an increasing amount of elderly people. This mirrors the national trends that seem to prevail in many rural areas. But despite that much of the service that once was there has been lost, some

¹ In 2014

service is still there. There is a grocery store with a good selection of goods, an elementary school with 125 students ranging from preschool to high school, and businesses working with hardware, crafts/construction, chocolate making and tourism, to mention some.

A study on entrepreneurs in Sysseleback focused on their experiences of conducting business in a sparsely populated area (Vilhelmsson, 2014). One issue that was brought up as important was the small customer base. In order to compensate for this, tourists are seen as an important contributing part as well as networks. The entrepreneurs express that an important role of their businesses is the social importance to the community, where their businesses helps the communities feel alive. To the population, this means a sense of pride of the community and the businesses can also work as a meeting place for people.

Långberget

The examination of this study has been performed with the main focus on the tourism facility *Långbergets Sporthotell* in Nordvärmland, from here on referred to as *Långberget* or *the local facility*. Långberget is situated 15 minutes *north* of Sysseleback and the road there is steadily climbing. The facility was built in 1964 and has since then been running more or less regularly. It was originally focusing on hosting conferences but has changed throughout the years and was later turned into a tourism facility. The original founders had different origins but some were local actors and it is today owned by three people from the area. Långberget has had the labelling of a conductor of ecotourism but does not at the present.

The facility provides accommodation in the form of a hotel and camping spots and has a cross-country skiing facility. People can either stay at the all-inclusive hotel, in a cottage or in a mobile home, or they can just come there for the day and use the hotel's services for payment. The business idea is to offer outdoor life activities and nature tourism to their customers all year round. In the summer time, they offer activities like moose safari, paddling, yoga, hiking and outdoor pool. There is equipment available for rent at the facility and some activities can be performed on one's own while some require a guide. It may be during the snowy season that Långberget has the most number of visitors. The facility has 63 kilometres of prepared cross-country skiing tracks and attracts visitors with the promise of good preparation for a potential *Vasaloppet* race. They also attract less competitive visitors who prefer just spending a day in the spring sun. Cross-country skiing is the biggest and most important business for the facility during the winter. In order to please a wide customer base, they also have a small downhill slope.

Branäs

The other tourism facility which has proven to be important for the study is *Branäs*, which is situated 15 minutes *south* of Sysslebäck. The focus of the facility is downhill skiing but they also offer cross-country skiing and activities like dogsled and snowmobiling. Branäs has a big number of different accommodations and they offer full service facilities like restaurants and ski rentals. The facility was opened in 1988 and was the result of a cooperation between several actors, both state and private actors. It is now owned by the Branäs group, a corporate group that owns several ski resorts in Sweden. The owners do not live in the area and the facility has its head office in Karlstad, a two-hour drive south from there. Branäs has a big share of the total tourism business in Nordvärmland and the facility has in recent years come to expand a lot, which creates many job opportunities in Nordvärmland. Local people work at Branäs but many also come from other places. Since the skiing business is seasonal they need a lot of staff during the snowy season and far fewer when the ground is bare. In order to separate Branäs from Långberget, it will from here on *not* be referred to as *local*.

Tourism

Tourism is the main business of this study. Even though the facilities are mostly directed towards tourists, local people can also use it. The difference between tourism and what is not is found in the definition:

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes.

These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.

(UNWTO, 2014)

The definition of tourism in this thesis is inspired by the definition above. What is considered tourists is people who come from afar to visit the facilities. Since the study focuses on the local people, they are separated by either coming from the area or from having lived there for a long time. It can also be people who have access to a permanent residence in the area.

Tourism in Sweden annually generates large sales. In 2014 the total revenue of Swedish tourism industry was 268,5 billion, and since the year of 2000, the number of employees within the industry has increased with 22 % and tourism is expected to grow in the future (Tillväxtverket, 2015). The character of tourism as place bound means that there are opportunities to create employment regionally. This could be a way for rural areas to create job opportunities, which could improve the possibilities to live and work in the countryside.

Nature tourism

One type of tourism is *nature tourism*, which is a common focus in the countryside:

“Nature tourism comprises people’s activities when they stay in nature areas outside their usual environment”

(Mittuniversitetet & ETOUR, 2009)

The activities in nature tourism are pursued in nature and are typical outdoor life activities, which as a concept emerged when man was separated from nature in the industrial society 100-150 years ago (Sandell & Sörlin, 2008:14). Today it is an important bearer of tradition and national identity (ibid) and is above all a culturally constructed term (Sandell & Boman, 2014:220). Outdoor life is by many people perceived as important for their quality of life and it plays a big part as leisure activities in both organized and unorganized forms (Fredman et al. 2014:14). The difference between nature tourism and *outdoor life* is whether the people who pursue it do it in their usual environment or not, which means that the same people can pursue outdoor life activities in one place while they pursue nature tourism if they just travel a bit to do it. In this study, the local people who pursue outdoor life activities in their usual environments have been in focus, not the people who pursue nature tourism.

Research about the entrepreneurs behind nature tourism companies has shown that their identity is often not compatible with profit- and growth maximization (ETOUR, 2011). Instead, the driving forces are life style and guest satisfaction (ibid). The character of nature tourism being dependent on natural resources means that companies have to prioritize sustainability before growth. If the resources dwindle, then it would mean that the operation is not going to work in the long run.

A type of tourism that resembles nature tourism is *ecotourism*. The overall goal with ecotourism is to manage a sustainable tourism both through an ecologic, economic and social perspective (Ekoturismföreningen, 2016). Some believe that ecotourism is the saviour for keeping rural areas from becoming even more sparsely populated and destroyed by overexploitation (Nilsson, 2006). A condition in ecotourism is that the money stays locally and contributes to the local area, e.g. by offering jobs to the local people. Socially sustainable tourism means that local people should be integrated in a positive way in the business, meaning it should not be experienced as negative among the locals and consideration should be taken to prevailing local conditions without impinging on the culture and tradition of the place (Ekoturismföreningen, 2016). The characters of ecotourism have shown to be features that the informants in this study express as important for their acceptance of tourism in the area.

Method

Qualitative studies and Interviews

This thesis is the result of a qualitative interview study. Qualitative research methods are used in order to understand meaning from people's own perspective (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:11). This fits well with the aim to find out how people maintain a sense of community, which only can be recognized by talking to them. The interviews have been pursued according to the phenomenological tradition, meaning that social phenomena are understood from the individuals' perspective since their own perception of reality is what is interesting to examine (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009:42).

The purpose of my interviews has been to gather material about what the informants express as their personal thoughts and feelings. Interviews give the opportunity to gain knowledge about the individual's experience of life, but it requires taking the time to listen to people's stories (Gordon, 1970:50). The interviews have had a semi structured character (Kaijser & Öhlander, 2011:99), which means that a template of questions has been guiding the interviewer but that unforeseen tracks have been leading the way simultaneously (see appendix for interview guides). Supplementary questions have shown to be important in order to find out more about what the informants choose to talk about. In the first interview, the significant distinguishing between Långberget and Branäs was discovered which people seemed to find important. Therefore, questions were asked about it in the following interviews, since flexibility is an important part of interviewing (Kaijser & Öhlander, 2011). Thanks to the fact that the unknown topic was discovered early in the process, questions about it could be included in all the following interviews as well.

The interviews were recorded and the interview material was sorted into themes in order to discover patterns or commonalities. The result upon which the analysis is based are the quotes. The quotes were translated from Swedish to English by me. Because English is not my first language, I cannot claim that the translation is perfect. Maybe other words that are not in my English vocabulary would have corresponded better to what the informants said.

The material only consists of the interview material. No additional method has been used. It could of course have been fruitful to e.g. look at local newspapers or try to reach more people through surveys, but I chose not to because of the time limits of a master's thesis. The many deep interviews instead gave the opportunity to get a picture of what the people who actually are engaged in the studied outdoor life activities really think.

Since the focus of attention in this study is the local people, there has been a selection of informants within the surrounding area which means people who live or have lived up to a 30-minute drive from the facilities. Since the aim is to capture local people's perceptions of tourism and community, the informants hence have to have some kind of experience of it. All of the informants have either grown up in the area, have lived there for a very long time or have a second home there. Some people have left the area but all still have housing where they can stay if they visit. The number of informants is twelve and has been kept to a relatively low number in order to be able to do semi structured interviews. When a new interview did not supply me with any information that I did not already have, I decided that the number was enough (see Teorell & Svensson, 2009:129).

The selection of informants was a result of the snowball method, meaning that the first informant was asked to give suggestions on whom to contact next (Teorell & Svensson, 2007:86). Contact was taken with people with three different roles: private users, owners and the municipality. It was also preferable to choose different ages and sex in order to get different perspectives. The search for informants who had an experience of Långberget required a strategic selection, which means that I had to choose what informants that I thought best could answer the questions of the study. In order to find younger people who use the facility, the local sports organizations were contacted. The owners of the facility were obvious informants to contact and from them I was given names of two persons to contact as I asked them for informants of a group that had been underrepresented so far. The municipality of Torsby was contacted and I was referred to one specific person who worked with tourism issues. At the same day as the interview I also participated in a gathering for operators in the tourism business in the municipality, arranged by the municipality. This was seen mostly as an opportunity to get a little insight in the subject more than a chance to make any observation.

The Informants

Because of secrecy, the informants are not called by their actual names in the thesis. Despite the ambition of secrecy, it might be valuable to the reader to have a little information about the informants:

Jacob (male) 20, second home housing, raised in the area

Ebba (female), 30, second home housing, raised in the area

Erik (male), 30, second home housing, raised in the area

Johanna (female), 40, permanent housing, raised in the area

Elin (female), 40, permanent housing, moved to the area

Kristina (female), 50, permanent housing, moved to the area
Felicia (female), 50, permanent housing, raised in the area
Magnus (male), 60, second home housing, raised in the area
Bo (male) 60, no permanent or second home, raised in Torsby
Gunnar (male), 60, second home housing, moved to the area
Lisa (female), 70, permanent housing, moved to the area
Gustav (male), 80, permanent housing, raised in the area

Two of the informants were involved in a relationship as a married couple. Some of the other informants knew each other a little or had some kind of family connection, but most people did not know each other that well.

Ethics

Research ethics is partly about making sure that the informants are informed about the aim of the research and how their contribution will be used (Pripp, 2011, see Kaijser & Öhlander, 2011). All of the informants were told about the aim and were asked for permission to record the interviews. Research ethics is also a question about determining what material can be used and how in order to not reveal the informants' identities (ibid). Account has been taken to this, more in some cases since some informants have stressed the importance of letting them stay anonymous. Others have been interviewed in their role as a somewhat official person and thereby not been able to be anonymous. The intention though, is that all informants should stay as anonymous as possible, which they were promised before the interviews.

Reflexivity

The point of departure in this study is that all research is subjective and is not able to deliver one hundred percent objectivity. The researcher plays a crucial role to which subject is chosen, how she interprets the material and what issues that are chosen to put most emphasis on. The meaning of this is that I as a researcher play an important role in this study. Therefore, I aim to outline who the researcher of this thesis is.

I am a 26-year-old woman who is brought up in Norrtälje, a town of 20 000 residents one hour from Stockholm. I currently live in the city of Uppsala where I study rural development and agronomy at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. The place that this study takes place in is chosen

by me because of a personal interest in Nordvärmland. My great grandfather was born in one of the two houses that are situated on the plot that my family owns there. My family and relatives have used the houses as second homes ever since my great grandfather lived there, but no one lives there permanently now. It is not until recently that I have really discovered the enjoyment of the skiing facilities Långberget and Branäs (in focus in this study). I have always had strong feelings for Nordvärmland though, mostly connecting it to vacation since I have only been there for pleasure and not for my everyday life.

The fact that I have ties to the area might affect people's willingness to contribute to the research. I think that it has mostly been to my advantage, since people might look upon me as somewhat belonging to the community. To find connections between the informant and the interviewer could at its best be an advantage in the sensitive interplay between them (Kaijser & Öhlander, 2011). Negative aspects of my personal connection could have been that my previous knowledge about the place might have affected what questions I was interested in, and how I choose to present the material.

I have sometimes felt an urge to be liked among the informants, but it is important not to let that affect the interviewing and I have been aware of the risk. Even though it is important to create a sense of trust and connection in interviews (Gordon, 1970:50), it must be weighed against the risk of affecting the interview because of personal connection.

Theoretic concepts

Some important concepts of this thesis is Meeting place, Community and Identity. Meeting places and identity are parts of what constructs community. Some different theories and ideas about these concepts will therefore be outlined in the following paragraphs and I will explain how these are linked to the main theoretic approach in this thesis, namely the concept of community by Ruth Liepins. I will further describe Sense of Place and the Tourist gaze, which also are important theoretic concepts in this essay.

Meeting places and Identity

The importance of close relations and a social life can be seen as a fundamental human need. Much has changed in the countryside especially during the last century, which has had consequences for how social relations are being maintained today compared to before. Ferdinand Tönnies' notion of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* in late nineteenth century reflects the difference between the former close and familial social relations in rural areas, compared to "the private, anonymous and the life of self-fulfilment in urban areas" (my transl., Berglund, 2015:19).

Meeting places are an opportunity to maintain social relations face to face (Gunnarsdotter, 2005) and enable people to meet outside work and home (Oldenburg 1989:230, Urry 2000:139-142, see Gunnarsdotter 2005:93). They are important for the sense of community when the restructuring of agriculture lead to people working in town instead and thereby spending less time in the place where they live. It can be places like the local grocery store, sports organizations or the folk museum. In this case study some important meeting places are Långberget and Branäs. These type of places can create an atmosphere that is experienced as informal but at the same time public. In meetings people can discuss all types of topics that seem relevant to them, both in their everyday life and other less frequent issues. Conversations enable the creation of a shared view of life. According to Blehr (1994), "the informal conversation" (my transl.) enables the establishment of boundaries of who and what belongs in the community and what does not. Meeting places are thereby an arena for construction of *Identity*. Through the relations that are established at meeting places, people become someone in relation to others. Identity is a social construction that is both *constructed by* social relations as well as *constructing* society (Gunnarsdotter, 2005:97).

Community

The English concept of *Community* usually includes some sort of affinity or cohesion, like people who live close to each other within a clearly defined area (Blehr, 1994:25). The geographical boundaries of community are, however, contested and Blehr claims that community does not have to involve geographical boundaries. Communities can also be based on other criteria, like special interests (Gullestad, 1978:38, in Blehr, 1994:25). Anderson stresses the importance of understanding that communities do not have to be empirically real in order to exist since they can exist also based on an imagined community (1983, in Blehr, 1994). An example is how the Internet enables to find likeminded people who share the same interests. Then one can find a sense of community with people who never even physically meet each other.

The concept of community is in this thesis used in order to capture the common interest in outdoor life and in particular the interest for Långberget among local people, in accordance with Gullestad's reasoning (Gullestad, 1978:38, in Blehr 1994). It touches the description of a symbolic community made by Cohen (1985) since it is not until people participate in social relations that they become aware of the cultural meanings of the community, which is not seen in the same way by all people. Liepins agrees with Cohen and Blehr but adds the importance of how power and discourse affect social formations and must be taken into account when doing social analyses of rural communities (Liepins, 2000:326f).

The analysis of the empirical material is based on Liepins' model of community. Meeting places are, in her model, understood as spaces and structures and the construction of identity happens through social connections and the creation of a sense of meaning within those spaces. Liepins argues that communities should be seen both in their material and imagined form (Liepins, 2000a, see Liepins, 2000b). She therefore looks at four dimensions that must be established in order to find out and thereby analyse a community: people, meanings, practices and spaces and structures.

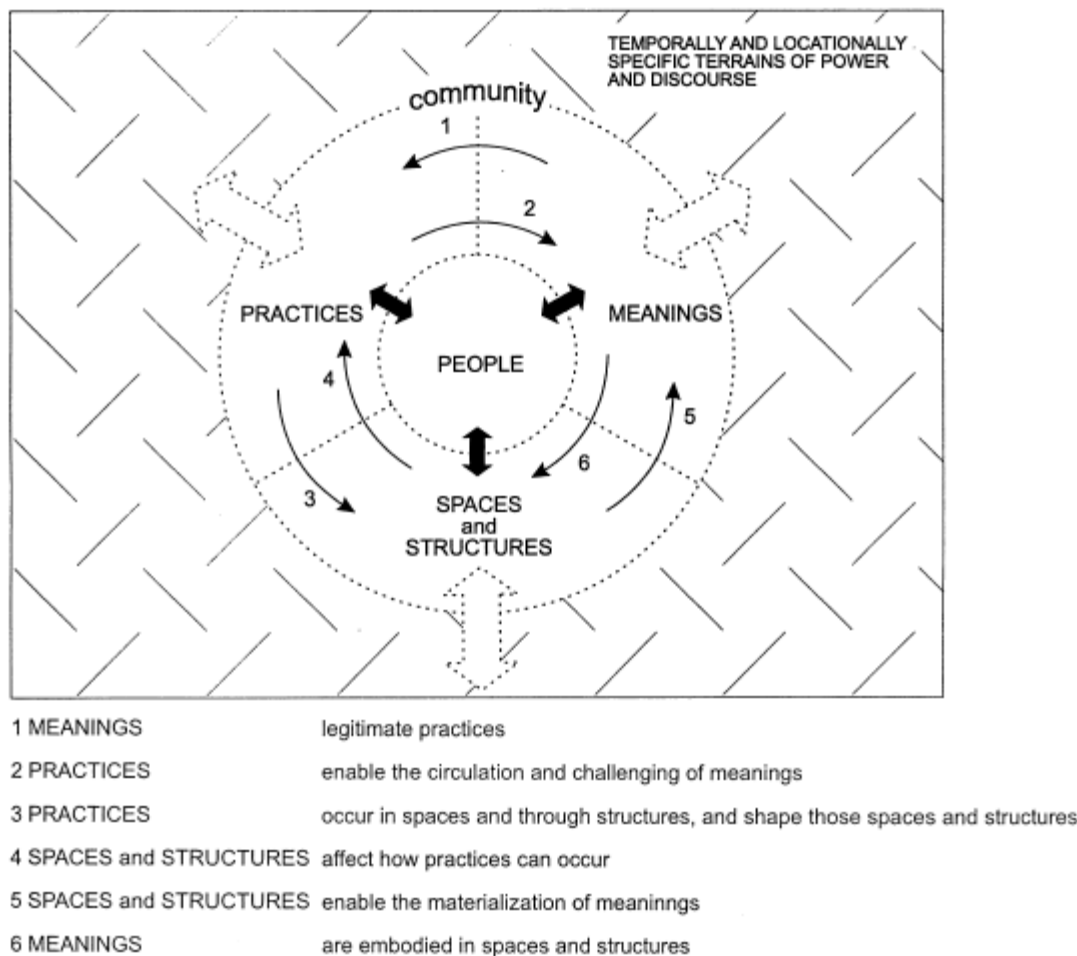


Figure 1. A community model (Liepins 2000b, own revision)

The four elements of Liepins' model are described as follows:

It is "the collective interaction and enactment of 'community' *by people*" which is the foundation for a social construction of community (2000b:327). People have different roles in various positions, groups and networks both inside and outside a certain community thus influencing the construction of community in different ways.

People in a community "develop shared *meanings* about their connectedness in 'community' via local discourses and activities" (2000b:327). People share *narratives* with each other about the meaning of community and there are multiple narratives because of its heterogeneity.

Practices are important for people's understanding of the meaning of community. Practices make it possible to connect people to certain key activities, institutions and spaces. Practices can be both commonly accepted or commonly contested, and they can be informal or formal.

The people, meaning and practices mentioned above, will take place physically, which is done in different *spaces and structures*. Liepins mentions key sites and organisational spaces in which the embodiment of community take place.

Sense of Place

Massey defines *Place* in a similar way as community is described above and according to her places are “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (Massey, 1993:66). Massey wants to put place into a wider context since places cannot be seen only in terms of geographical boundaries. Relations, experiences and understandings are influenced by things outside the geographical area, which is why it is improper to draw boundaries of a place. Massey is critical towards the use of place to describe a moment of peace and quiet, which is unaffected by time and where things do not change. In fact, all places are affected by things that are going on in other places in the world, such as economically, culturally and politically. Therefore, we cannot understand changes in the countryside without looking at other places too.

According to Massey, a *Sense of Place* is progressive, meaning that it is constantly evolving. She has developed three certain characteristics of the definition of place (1993:66f, 1991a):

- Places are not static. Since places depend on social interactions in them, they change and the place is therefore a process.
- Places do not have to have boundaries that work divisively.
- Places do not have single unique identities.
- Places have specificities that make them unique, but are continually reproduced.

Place and community are thus both constantly changing due to current constellations of people and their actions and both are something that takes place. But the inherent physical dependence of place is something that separates it from community. Place will always be spatially based, which community will not.

The Tourist gaze

Urry (2002:57ff) means that tourism creates a distinction between us and them, between the tourists and the local people and thus affects the sense of community and place. The objective of tourism is to have something extraordinary to gaze upon, which is mentioned as the *Tourist gaze*. People both gaze and are gazed upon by others and this affects how people behave and how they perceive themselves (Urry, 2002:137). Tourists have expectations on what kind of people they will see in their gaze, which also goes the other way around since local people have an idea of who is gazing at them. Tourists and local people meet in public spaces like restaurants, hotels and squares. The public spaces are meeting places where social interaction between tourists and local people occur.

Tourists thereby become involved in the community, which is important for the construction of identity both for the local people and the tourists.

In the nature of tourism lies the fact that it involves services that are delivered instantly, e.g. transports, hotels, catering and entertainment. These are important parts of the overall experience of the tourist, which ideally should enhance the experience by conforming to the tourist gaze, in the sense that the tourists should see what they expect to see. The services take place in specific places under certain conditions and often include a close connection between producers and consumers. This is another occasion when local people and tourists meet and it requires social interaction (Urry, 2002).

Results and Analysis

The outlining for different theoretic concepts in the previous chapter will in this chapter hopefully be explained and used in an understandable way. The analysis is based on the theoretic concepts above but the main theory is the concept of community by Ruth Liepins. The material is structured in accordance to the four different elements: spaces and structures, people, practices and meanings.

The analysis is a suggestion on a categorization of what material could belong to what element, meaning that it does not explicitly describe the arrows between the elements, even though these of course would have been of interest to study too. The analysis is not deeper than the classification of the different components and what that tells by itself. The reason for not putting more emphasis to the arrows is basically that of time and space limits, which would have been too wide for the scope of this thesis.

Some components could have been categorized in several elements. It is not obvious that for example the concept of ownership structure belongs to structures and structures only, since it involves both people, activities and meanings too. The choice of how to categorize is made by me and is not necessarily the only right categorization.

Spaces and Structures

Spaces are, according to Liepins, places where community can be embodied, which can be both physical places and structures. In this case study, the facility of Långberget and the facility of Branäs are understood as central. These are important spaces to the local people for the construction of their community and thus part of their identity. There are also important structures, like the sport organizations and the ownership structure. In this section I aim to describe how these spaces and structures work for the embodiment of community.

Långberget

The informants were told that the interviews concerned the significance of Långberget to the local people. The intention was to explore how Långberget works as a physical space for the occurring of community. According to Liepins, a physical space can work for the embodiment of community in several ways, and it works different for different people. This is also what was found in the interviews. Some people think of the space as a place for social meetings with locals, some see it as a place for exercise, and others see it as a place for peace and quiet. Jacob describes it both in terms of enjoying nature as well as the possibility for skiing:

I take in the environment very much, I do. [...] I love to exercise, whether it's running or skiing. Especially skiing. I think it's so wonderful to get in the cold air, it's beautiful, sun, below zero and... I like to move. And of course, it's more fun to ski in a winter wonderland than in the ski tunnel [in Torsby] that is made of concrete. (Jacob, 20)

Jacob sees Långberget as a place to express his interest in nature and exercise. The love to nature is expressed by several informants and is hence a part of the community, which people can show by going to Långberget. Långberget seems to be used as an arena to establish these facts about the community. Most informants mean that the sense of loneliness and calm at Långberget is the reason they go there, so they prefer to go to Långberget on their own:

The view, the air, charging of batteries... I am kind of a "lone wolf" when I'm outdoors so I think it's perfectly fine to just bike up, go on a tour alone. Then when I'm up there I might buy a cup of coffee or an ice cream and sit there and enjoy the view, or I bike home again. The road back down goes very fast... (Kristina, 50)

We like Långberget because it's small and it's calm. (Ebba, 30)

The expression “we” is a way to establish something that the community has in common, namely the wish for tranquillity. When people go to Långberget to be alone and experience peace and quiet, they establish that those are important features of the community.

People describe several physical features of Långberget, as seen in the quotes above. The forest, the wild animals, the ski tracks, the sun, the snow and the fresh air are all things that come to people’s mind when they are asked to tell about Långberget. These aspects of the place are all physical parts of it and it is often combined with descriptions of social interaction. Café Ripan (the café at Långberget) and Långberget are described as places where people meet during work or during spare time. The café is a place where people can meet both with locals and tourists and is also a place where people can work and thereby contribute to the community. This kind of spaces is important for the embodiment of community and the social interactions that form the community (Liepins, 2000).

Several of the informants have worked at Långberget. According to Liepins (2000:336), work is a way for people to shape their community, so when local people work at Långberget they also shape their community. Långberget thereby makes a physical place where local people can contribute to the community through work. A couple of the informants have been involved in the start-up of training camps and others have assisted when Långberget needed extra help:

I’ve only done some extra work when it has needed. I have filled in in the kitchen and helped out sometimes when they’ve had a lack of staff, to be kind. The job with doing the dishes isn’t that fun I think but I’ve done it anyways since they need people and when I don’t have anything better to do. [...] I [feel like I want to be there for them]. Since it has been some owners from afar that have been owners... but right now I actually think it’s only people from here who are owners, and then it’s even more like you want it to go well for them. Partly because I think it’s a good facility to ski at but also because what’s good for Långberget is good for the community. (Erik, 30)

Some of the informants that have worked at Långberget are members of the local sports organizations. The members often help out at big events at both Långberget and in other arrangements, which is a prerequisite for the arrangement of big events in the area. While this is a way for the organizations to make some money (though a modest compensation), it is also a way for the organizations to work for the community. The sports organizations thereby play an important role for the creation of community.

While many people say that they have helped out at Långberget, there are few stories that state that the community gather at Branäs in order to do the same. Branäs differs from Långberget since they usually sort things out on their own due to their wider connection with “the outside” of the community.

Branäs

During the interviews it became clear that there is another space in the area that also is important to people. The downhill skiing facility Branäs is rather big and is situated a 30 minute-drive from Långberget. While Långberget is described as calm and local, Branäs is described as busy and foreign. Most informants do not describe Branäs as a part of the community, but the ones who do are people who use Branäs regularly. The fact that people talk a lot about Branäs shows that the site has importance to the community, mainly as a counterpart to what the community *is not*. So just because people do not describe it as part of the community does not mean that it is not important for the construction of it. Sites are thus used to tell divergent narratives about a community (Liepins, 2000:336). In this case it is shown by the divergent pictures people have of whether Branäs is important to the community or not. Branäs' belonging or not belonging to the community will be further discussed in the chapter called Meanings.

Ownership Structure

According to Liepins, structures also serve as a form of embodiment of community. The prevailing meanings and practices in a community will take on a structural form (Liepins, 2000:328). This is reflected in the ownership structures of the facilities, which are generally known among the local people. All informants know that the owners of Långberget are locals from the area and many are also personally acquainted with them. The knowledge about individuals is something very typical to small countryside villages and it is especially important to know about kinship structure and relationships (Ekman, 1991:91ff, see Blehr, 1994).

Since the owners of Långberget are locals, they possess knowledge about the community they are a part of, which seems to be an important feature for being liked among the locals. This is described as a clear advantage when it comes to making contracts with landowners in the area. Långberget has to make contracts with all the owners about using their land for their activities and the owner structure around the facility is complex. According to Långberget the landowners are positive towards letting them pursue business on their land since the landowners have a personal connection to the place themselves:

Everyone is kind, everyone wants-, has like... since the facility is so old, then the most forest owners or people in the community has a connection, a part of their heart at Långberget actually. And you have memories from your childhood and you remember things that have to do with [Långberget]. And it's like, a heart, dedication; you want this facility to go well. That's nice. [...] Everyone has an emotional bond or somehow memories. I

think it would be much, much, much harder if we were to build Långberget here now. And try to-, if someone came from afar and wanted to put up this facility here... I think that would be incredibly tough. So we have a lot to thank because it's old and has tradition. That it's here and always has been here. (Felicia, 50)

[The head owner] is the glue though, she's been there since... she has said when you've talked to her that she can't imagine a life without working at Långberget. [...] I think she hits the nail on the head when she says that they're a good owner structure now and it's... she's here from the community and everything and it's probably needed. (Gunnar, 60)

According to the informants, the landowners' personal experiences of Långberget is crucial for people's willingness to help. People are very much aware of that the community depends on Långberget as a physical space for the embodiment of community, and they want to help since the owners are from the community. The times when the owners have not been locals are described in a different, sceptical way:

I don't know where they were from, but then it collapsed totally. They kept open but no... maybe they thought it was more easily handled or if they just did their thing. No, it became hard. [...] I don't think they ran the place more than a couple of years. Maybe it was some fortune hunters who move around but I don't know. (Lisa, 70)

Långberget is the Sysslebäck-people's really. And of course, that's what happens since it's been people [who haven't been] from the community who during shorter periods have owned the hotel. Then of course it's more local connection [now]. (Magnus, 60)

The expression "fortune hunters" made by Lisa can be interpreted as though owners from the outside mostly care about money and not about the community, which is not compatible with the locals' view of the community. The expression that owners from the outside only own it for shorter periods might imply that they are not capable of owning it for a longer time. It seems like people think that owners of a facility like Långberget need to be from the area in order to know how things work. The type of ownership structure is apparently very important for the embodiment of the community.

Branding

The facilities Långberget and Branäs are both situated in the wider area that is called Nordvärmland, which plays a big role for people's identity and connection to the area. However, the name Nordvärmland has in recent years been replaced by the name Torsby, which is a result of an attempt from Torsby municipality to improve the destination brand in the area. The decision to change

the name was not welcomed in the beginning, especially not for people in the north of Nordvärmland who live far from Torsby town. The informant at Torsby municipality explains what happened:

For a long time, we worked with Nordvärmland as a brand; “Leisure in Nordvärmland”. But a while back it’s Torsby that’s the brand. And people have had opinions about that in Sysseleå. “We’re not Torsby, Torsby is down there”. But now it’s like that, now it’s Torsby. (Bo, 60)

I ask if the disapproval has become less over time. The informant at the municipality says that they had to add Sysseleå to the brand as well:

We have given in a little, one could say. This is how the guidebook looks like [*shows me*]. There [Sysseleå] still stands. It’s to make it clear to a tourist really. When they come up to Sysseleå then a tourist might think that well, the Torsby guide doesn’t work here? It’s Torsby-Sysseleå [now]. [...] It’s Torsby that is our brand. That we have decided. (Bo, 60)

The branding of the area is a way to structure the spaces in order to meet the interests of the tourists. Bo means that the change of name was mostly made because of this reason. This way of using a united destination brand is often used in the tourism industry for spatial divisions in order to clarify specific themes that tourists can find in different areas and thereby make it easy for them to recognize specific places (Urry, 2002). But as shown, changing name of the area might not fall out that well among the local people. This is also shown in the interviews where people still refer to the area as Nordvärmland, rarely Torsby.

Another question about destination brand is brought up in the example of Branäs. When one enters Branäs’ website it is not clear that it is situated in Värmland:

They have their brand, they don’t think that... they have added Värmland now but it took some time. Because they don’t want to... “Värmland, they don’t have any winter?” is what people think... “no”. People think Åre, Sälen. That’s why they didn’t want to even include Värmland. Because then people think that Värmland is hardly a winter destination? But now they have loosened a little and it’s a little to, well, they try to make an effort it feels like. But it’s Branäs’ brand that’s... and it can be situated anywhere. It’s Branäs that people recognize like “it’s a really good ski resort there”. Could as well be in... Västerås. (Bo, 60)

Whereas the municipality wants to promote the destination brand of Torsby to express where it is situated, Branäs tries to do the opposite. It seems like it is more important to make clear what activities they offer and rather hide the fact that they are situated in Värmland. Since this is something that does not help in the advertising of the community, it is not that popular among the local people. The space of Nordvärmland is important for the creation of community, so when Branäs does not see themselves as a part of Nordvärmland then people will not connect it to Nordvärmland or the community either.

People

People are in the inner circle of the community according to Liepins' model and it is people who construct meanings and practices in various spaces and structures (2000:327). People can both be inside the community as well as outside, in the sense that they have different positions in different contexts. One informant is for example both a tourist and a local at the same time, since he has access to permanent housing in the area. In this section I intend to describe who the local people at Långberget are and their perceptions about the visitors at Långberget.

Nordvärmland is an area with aging population, as in many countryside areas in Sweden. Many people are originally from the area and have grown up there, while some have moved there. The visitors at Långberget can be divided into local people and tourists, although these categories sometimes overlap. The local visitors mostly share an interest in outdoor life activities and they go to Långberget on their own or with company and have different purposes with their visit. The tourists are both people who visit for the first time and people who have been there before. Some have access to permanent holiday cottages in the area while others rent a room in the hotel or a cottage. There are both beginners and professional skiers at Långberget.

The perception of whether there are many local people at Långberget or not seems to differ. Some people say that they rarely meet people they know at Långberget:

One is always a little surprised nowadays that it's not more local people who are at Långberget to ski. (Magnus, 60)

My perception is that there isn't that many people there. But the ones who are there are only tourists. I never see anyone I know, it's only tourists who are there. (Jacob, 20)

But there are also people who say that they surely meet many people that they know at Långberget:

Yeah, always. It's always someone there who's out skiing that you know. Different people, friends' parents that are out walking the dog, or people who exercise more and things like that. Yes, you do, you always meet people. (Ebba, 30)

Yes, you do. You always see someone. So it is [that you stay and talk], and it's kind of like that in a village like this, you know each other. [...] Everyone that I don't recognize is a tourist. It's like that. And that's probably what's a little different if you compare Långberget and Branäs, since Långberget is more familiarly. (Elin, 40)

The stories about Långberget as an important place for social meetings turned out to be rather diverse. People are there but they experience it in different ways, showing that community depends on the people who construct it and their different understandings about it (Liepins, 2000:327). Some

of the informants say that they have gotten to know some tourists that they met at Långberget, which could be seen as an example of how community is expressed through social interaction.

What seems to be the general case though is that most people see at least someone that they know when they are there. For some it is more common to meet familiar tourists than locals, since the shared interest in skiing and Långberget has brought them together. Instead of sharing a united sense of Långberget with local people, they share it with tourists who are there so regularly that they are almost considered as locals.

- And the ones who come here as tourists, they're people who have an interest in being outdoors. Even if they don't ski they're out in the nature. [...] (Lisa, 70)
- Especially the winter skiers like there, they're people that I think-, up here, the ones who go out in the nature, it's not like that if you go to Roskilde on a festival (Gustav, 80)
- No, no, no... [*laughter*] (Lisa, 70)
- They're a different kind? (Me)
- They're a different kind yes (Gustav, 80)
- Well it's more people who are interested in nature and... want to be outdoors. [...] So in that way there's no difference between them and us, then they become like locals almost. (Lisa, 70)

These quotes imply that a community can involve people from the outside and is not bounded to geographical boundaries (Liepins, 2000 in Gunnarsdotter, 2005:33). The locals seem more willing to include tourists who are like the local people perceive themselves, in this case share an interest in outdoor life activities, since it then corresponds to their picture of the community.

The tourists at Långberget and Branäs are overall described in neutral or positive sayings. Branäs targets on families with children and is thereby calmer than other downhill ski resorts that attract more young people who often are interested in partying as well. The tourists at Långberget are described as pleasant, decent people, which are important features for being liked among the locals. An informant who has worked at Långberget says:

Not noisy at all [...] Långberget is more outdoor life and cross-country skiing and... it's calm tourists [...]. They are very nice customers. It's like... one shouldn't have prejudices but cross-country people, it's like... well it's a little calmer. For alpinists it must go fast. They're like people... Like simple, you're happy with simple stuff. (Ebba, 30)

Branäs is very concentrated there for a couple of months a year. Långberget is calmer overall. The summer tourism at Långberget, it doesn't bother anyone I think. It's my view of it. [...] It's more like when it gets

noisy and fuzzy or when something happens or if someone drives into the ditch outside Branäs while they're on drugs, then one gets a little like "what is this". Like when they throw garbage for example, that's a type of thing that you see and get annoyed about. But often not. (Elin, 40)

Elin explains what behaviour is approved within the community and what is not. Since the community is constituted by everything in it, it is important *who* are in it. When tourists behave weird or unappreciated, the locals do not like it, because they do not feel that their behaviour belongs to the community's shared values.

An important group of people in this study is the owners of the facilities. The owners of Långberget have local anchoring in the area while the owners of Branäs do not. Who the owners are is described as important to people. If owners are from the area, they are perceived as belonging to the community and are therefore accepted. External owners might also be accepted, as long as they are willing to cooperate in the construction of the community:

I would say that Långberget targets against local people more than Branäs does. But then it has become better. Before it felt more like Branäs was kind of an island. They didn't have that much contact with the rest of the society, but the mountain was run from the head office in Karlstad was the feeling. But there, I think I see a change, and that depends on what people work there, who the managers are. And I think that the current managers have much more their tentacles out. Much more sympathetic towards the local people and the associations here. They try in a different way. (Elin, 40)

Elin feels that the current owners of Branäs are trying to cooperate more with the local community now than they did before, which is something that most of the informants do not express. The discrepancy in people's perception of Branäs is not surprising. Since people's perceptions depend on the different positions they have in the community, it gives them different experiences (Keesing, 1987, Barth 1989:134ff, see Blehr, 1994:41). Since Elin has been engaged in a lot of activities at Branäs she has different perceptions of it.

Practices

Practices are social processes which link people and activities in a community. The community is maintained or changed through practices like social relations, economic transactions and cultural activities (Liepins, 2000:333). Some practices are regular and others are frequent and they are interesting since one can look at how people “practice” their community.

This chapter discusses mainly activities at Långberget since few informants have talked about activities at Branäs, even though they also have good opportunities for outdoor life activities like cross-country skiing. The ones who do use Branäs for activities mention downhill skiing for the family, and the pub and restaurant for the youths in the area, however they are only mentioned shortly by few, so no emphasis will be put on these. I intend to describe what activities people engage in and in what way they do it, and how these practices can be seen as an expression of their community.

The more regular practices that local people pursue at Långberget are outdoor life activities and social meetings. It is common to bring the children there and teach them how to ski, both cross-country and downhill. The only downhill slope at Långberget is small and flat and therefore good for beginners. Many people also go there in other seasons to eat at the restaurant, hike or bike, pick berries or mushrooms, or to teach the children how to swim in the outdoor swimming pool. Some people visit Långberget in order to get some good exercise while others visit it to enjoy the sun during a nice spring day. However, the winter season is by far the most used by the local people.

When people practice activities at Långberget it is a way of expressing that the place is meaningful to them and thereby meaningful to the community (Liepins, 2000:333). When local people meet other locals there they also get the sense that the community is important to many people. Cross-country skiing, the main interest for the locals, is an important cultural activity for the community that involves meeting people, both whom they know and do not know. The descriptions of Långberget entail stories of what activities they pursue there. How the landscape is an arena for action and meaning is also expressed by Berglund (2014:23), who means that landscapes involve people doing things, individually or in common.

I try to match the nice days. It's fantastic to grab a backpack and make some hot chocolate at home, kexchoklad and a sandwich and then take the dog and skies out in the tracks. And it's like just the right temperature, a little cold but it's sun. That's just fantastic. So we like that. [...] To get an experience, exercise the dog, have a coffee... relax, yeah, an activity kind of. It's peace and quiet up there. (Ebba, 30)

Ebba describes how the landscape looks like by describing physical features of Långberget: cold, sun, peace and quiet. She also mentions what activities she pursues when she is there, like skiing and

having coffee. The activities are connected to the physical features and thus a way of expressing what the community means to this informant; peace and quiet, which is embodied by going to Långberget.

The most common way for the local people to perform activities at Långberget is on their own. While tourists engage in organized activities like beaver safaris or group hikes, the local people do not. Sometimes they do things individually and sometimes with friends or family, depending on activity, person, aim, etc. One reason for not participating in the organized activities is that people already have the nature in their everyday life and often for free:

- They offer a lot of nature tourism in different types, is that something you take part of? (Me)
- No, no. I have my for free there anyways [*laughter*]
(Magnus, 60)

It's only the skiing that I take part of [...]. I actually don't know why that is but it feels like when you're in your hometown maybe one doesn't do those things, because it's in my nature to see beavers and moose. But if I would go to Norrland then I might have wanted to go on a bear safari since that's not that common here. So I think it's in my nature that I'm not tempted by it since I've seen moose before. (Jacob, 20)

We think it's a little funny this interest for moose. It's many who think it's so fascinating, while we like, yeah there passed a moose. It's fun and you can do a thing out of it, moose safari and stuff like that. (Ebba, 30)

The fact that people are not that interested in what they can access in their everyday life is hardly strange. The nature in Nordvärmland is something that the local people experience in their usual environments, and it is therefore not as exciting to them as it is to tourists. Tourists want to explore the river or the animals more explicit than the locals since the experience is new to them. However, when local people have visitors they are more likely to engage in tourism activities that their visitors might be interested in:

Maybe it's more like, when people get a visit from relatives in Stockholm, then we book a canoe trip or raft trip [...]. It has to be on an initiative if you should go on a raft trip or in a canoe or... for the locals, I mean. The opposite for a tourist, perhaps. A tourist comes here in order to raft. (Bo, 60)

Bo describes the difference between tourists and local people. He means that tourists come to Nordvärmland with the purpose to experience nature, while local people experience nature in their everyday life, which is described as the reason for not engaging in tourist activities. By not participating in tourist activities, local people can state that it is not a part of their community.

By looking at what Långberget has been through history one can see that the activities have changed. Some informants tell me that Långberget was different when it was a conference facility

and they had conferences during the weekdays and then offered dances to the local people during the weekends. Many local people came to the dances and Långberget was “the place to be”. When the interest in couple dance declined, the dances were replaced by disco during the 1980’s. The dances during weekends were important activities for meeting local people and thereby constructing the community. Among the more irregular activities were celebrations of Midsummers and Easter at Långberget. These activities meant a lot in the past but not as much nowadays, as reflected in this conversation:

- Midsummer was always opened. Then it came a dance team there... (Gustav, 80)
- And before... well they always had the folk dance crew. Then they had midsummer celebrations. (Lisa, 70)
- Yes... that they don’t have anymore. And it’s almost never any dance or something. (Gustav, 80)
- But it was people from the community then? (Me)
- Yes, it was mostly. (Lisa, 70)
- But it’s not in that way today. I don’t know why it isn’t like that. (Gustav, 80)
- No, I don’t know either. (Lisa, 70)

When one became a teenager then this was the party place for the youths in the area, because Branäs wasn’t opened then. It was here that you went to party and went by EPA tractor here. [...] So when I was young it was often disco here on Fridays and then it was couple dance on Saturdays. With smorgasbord first. (Felicia, 50)

During the 1990s, Långbergets’ orientation changed from a conference facility to an outdoor life activities and sports hotel. New activities have therefore been introduced, but they are equally important to express what the community is through practices. The change of activities is an expression for how community is constantly being negotiated and changing. It is through practices of activities, whether it be dancing or skiing, that people meet and construct their community. The change from activities like dancing to outdoor life activities shows that the actual activities have changed at Långberget, but the community is still dependent on the place for various activities to take place. With time Långberget started to evolve into a pure tourist facility for leisure activities, which meant that tourists were the main focus also during weekends and holidays. The change from a conference centre to an outdoor life facility happened due to trends in the wider society, when Långberget had to adapt to the market in order to survive as a company. The decreasing population and low demand for couple dance were other factors that affected the change of focus at Långberget.

Massey means that changes in the wider society are something that affects places, which means that places are not only constituted by the local changes but also affected by external factors (1991). This is, according to Massey, becoming more common and has increased dramatically in recent years. In my interviews, this change seems to be most hard to grasp among the older people, who do not really understand why the activities for locals stopped. When the activities changed from dancing to outdoor life activities, it excluded some people since the focus on outdoor life did not necessarily suit all the previous users. It might also be that the older people are not familiar with global trends like commercialisation in the same way as younger people are, for whom it has been a part all their life.

Whereas dances and celebrations of holidays were important practices at Långberget in the past, the annual event *Skoljoggen* seems to be important today. *Skoljoggen* is a race for the pupils at the elementary school and is combined of running, biking, swimming and skiing a certain path in the area. The aim is to make the students do all the parts every school year and make it to a good experience of outdoor life and social wellbeing. They can choose between participating in a competition class or just a regular class with no timekeeping. The skiing part is pursued at Långberget. The cooperation between the school and Långberget is something that many informants appreciate:

Then we have a cooperation between the school and Långberget, a “classic” that we have here, that the pupils during a school year do with running and biking and swimming and skiing. So every year we do the thing with skiing the week after Vasaloppet. Then all pupils ski one mil and then [Långberget helps out] with everything we want. We get to borrow the facility, they make tracks, we are offered drinks at the end station and yeah... heavily discounted price if one wants to rent equipment also. [...] Långberget sponsors members [in the local ski organizations] with discounted season cards like that, so we’re very grateful about that. (Kristina, 50)

People generally express happiness with how Långberget is experienced to support the community through their help with *Skoljoggen*, which is a way of practising and gathering the community. In an early age the pupils learn that Långberget is the place to go if they want to ski or have a good time. The offering of different classes in the races can be seen as an attempt to show that the community is open to different types of people. The multiple narratives of how *Skoljoggen* is perceived also shows the heterogeneity that exists within the community.

The fact that activities can gather people is reflected in the shared interest in cross-country skiing among tourists and locals, which creates a sense of connection between them. The interest in outdoor life activities is seen as part of the community and the tourists who engage in it are therefore more likely to be welcomed:

- And the ones who come here as tourists, they’re people who have an interest in being outdoors. Even if they don’t ski they’re out in the nature. (Lisa, 70)

- Especially the winter skiers like there, they're people that I think-, up here, the ones who go out in the nature... it's not like that if you go to Roskilde on a festival (Gustav, 80)
- No, no, no... [*laughter*] (Lisa, 70)
- They're a different kind? (Me)
- They're a different kind yes (Gustav, 80)
- Well it's more people who're interested in nature and... want to be outdoors. (Lisa, 70)
- ... and that you feel you're similar to in some way? (Me)
- So in that way there's no difference between them and us, then they become like locals almost. (Lisa, 70)

These informants create a positive image of the tourists because of their interest in outdoor life activities. "Festival visitors at the Roskilde festival" is used as the opposite type of people to the cross-country skiers. Lisa states that the tourists "become like locals almost" because of the shared interest in being outdoors, which is a good example of how activities are used to embody a sense of community.

The significance of practices for the construction of community is reflected in the transformation from an industrial society to a service society. The forest industry has always been an important business in Nordvärmland, especially in the past, where people worked with their bare hands and it was concrete in the way that the products were directly picked up in the woods. Forestry was a practice of community that confirmed the importance of forest to the community. But what was once a traditional and common business in Värmland has now partly been replaced by more tourism-oriented business:

We're sort of living in a transformation of a society that has worked with chopping woods in the forest and pull it out, building things, and now it's a transition to services... and it's like, there's a generation left that has done this with real work... working in the sawmill, the forest, and then to their children and grandchildren will serve a Stockholm tourist in Branäs. It's a totally different thing. And we're in that process now. And it squeaks sometimes. (Bo, 60)

Bo tells that the change from working very hands-on with producing things to deliver services instead is something that affects people's perception about themselves. People then in a way have to match the tourists' image of them, which does not always feel right. If people are forced to work within the tourism industry due to the circumstances, then one is also required to deliver what it needs. The practice of community in this way confirms that the community must please the tourists. But one must remember that this understanding is only one view in the community. The subject is contested

since some people are positive towards the tourism expansion while others are negative. The gathering of community in the tourism industry might as well be a perfect opportunity for people to show their discontent with the “new” situation, e.g. by choosing not to work at Branäs. This shows how activities can be used in order to demonstrate differences within a community (Liepins, 2000).

Meanings

Meanings are yet another important part of the construction of community. According to Liepins, “people will develop shared meanings about their connectedness in ‘community’ via local discourses and activities” (2000:327). This can be explored through listening to oral narratives and key texts, which will reveal widely held beliefs and expressions of social connection (Sandel, 1982, see Liepins, 2000b). The intention of paying attention to what meanings people express about their community is to discover what the people in the community in question think represents their community. The local people give Långberget a certain meaning through the stories they share.

The most recurrent themes in the stories told by people are the *importance of local anchoring* and the *significance of nature*, which are constantly reconstructed through *narratives*, sometimes in the form of *rumours*. Additional elements that affect meanings within the community are *commercialization* and *tourism*. The informants constantly contrast Långberget to Branäs. How these aspects affect the meaning making of their community will be discussed in this chapter.

Narratives about *the Other* facility

Stories can reveal lots of things about a community – what has happened in it, what sort of people that belong in it and what values they share. Narratives can sometimes be stories that are told in somewhat different ways depending on the perspective of the person who tells it. Ekman explains that knowledge varies between individuals and is based on their personal experiences through life (1991, in Blehr, 1994). Narratives that are told within a community have a function through the creation of shared knowledge within it. The creation of narratives shows that there is a constant construction of meaning within a community (Liepins, 2000).

An example of a narrative that is used to explain people’s less positive image of Branäs is the view of them as incapable of offering high qualitative cross-country skiing tracks. A common saying is that the skiing tracks are better at Långberget, which is expressed among several informants and is a part of the shared knowledge within the community. The knowledge is a part of the discourse of Branäs as not trustworthy. Even though people’s stories tell about poor quality of the cross-country skiing tracks at Branäs, most people have not actually tried them:

- As a cross-country skier I think that Långberget is more popular than Branäs, since they’ve focused more on the skiing tracks... it’s a little poor [at Branäs]. (Lisa, 70)
- Yes... (Gustav, 80)
- You’ve been there? (Me)

- No. But I've heard several people this winter saying that it was much worse there. Well, they can't handle everything. (Lisa, 70)

No, I actually haven't [been there]. I have a ski card at Långberget and think that Långberget has such good track facilities. And it's often... Branäs doesn't have any artificial snow canons out in the tracks but Långberget does. So it's automatically better conditions at Långberget. But I have said now for many years that I should try the tracks at Branäs, but unfortunately it didn't happen this winter either... (Jacob, 20)

These sayings illustrate that people have the belief that Branäs is bad in cross-country skiing, even though they have not actually experienced it themselves. It seems to be a perception among the locals that lingers on. The fact that people choose to believe other people's stories about how bad it is at Branäs is an example of what Blehr categorizes as "talk" (1994:98ff). According to another informant who has actually tried the facility in Branäs recently, the tracks are getting better:

- And they've built-, they've made it really nice actually, Branäs. And they've made the ski tracks at Branäs very good now up at the mires. (Gunnar, 60)
- You use to go there too? (Me)
- Yes, but I feel like I'm cheating then, but I do it sometimes. [...] The 10-kilometres at Branäs, that's amazingly beautiful. It's a charming track to go. It's a little easier in general than the red one [at Långberget]. So sure, I go there sometimes, I do, but it's up here [at Långberget] that I have a season pass. (Gunnar, 60)

When the informant above says the tracks at Branäs are not that bad, he challenges the prevailing narrative of Branäs' lack of skills. The similar story is told in different ways, that abandoning Långberget for Branäs is to abandon the community, since the norm is to support the local facility.

Since Långberget and Branäs focus on different types of activities, they do not necessarily compete about the same tourists. But since both facilities offer cross-country skiing it might be a case of competition sometimes. This is, however, nothing that the owners of Långberget experience as bad. According to them it is mostly positive that they have Branäs close:

- We change guests. The ones who live with us go to Branäs someday, especially if it's youths who want to ski downhill, and Branäs' guests come here if they want more cross-country skiing than what's down there. (Felicia, 50)
- In the end of the season we change guests, absolutely. But the ones who're here training for Vasaloppet don't go there, but the ones who have their kids with them can spend every other day in the facilities. A little back and forth. It's really good to have Branäs next to us. (Johanna, 40)

Even though the owners think that it is good to have Branäs close to them, some local people yet see Branäs as negative competition to Långberget:

Then I'd rather point out Långberget, their ski tracks. They could use some tourists too. Branäs doesn't have to grab everyone. (Ebba, 30)

This discrepancy of opinions between the owners and the local people can be viewed as an example of the heterogeneity that exists within a community, which leads to a need for constant reconstruction of meaning within the community (Liepins, 2000:330). The different stories of Branäs as good and bad show how people try to construct the community according to their own perceptions. The discussion about the quality of the cross-country skiing tracks is another example of how narratives and thereby community are constantly being challenged and debated.

Rumours are a kind of narrative that is not verified as true, but still can mean a lot in the construction of community depending on what meaning people give them. One narrative that is described as a rumour among some is that Branäs does not want to employ local people:

There's a pretty rooted idea in the community that it's hard for youths in the village to get a job. If it's correct I don't know but that's the perception that people have. It might be a myth but I believe that people think that youths from the village don't spend any money in Branäs and the Branäs facility prefers those who rent a residence from them and spend their salary in the facility. It's people's perception I believe. (Kristina, 50)

Branäs can be a little-, one shouldn't say bad things but, so-so in the eye of the local people I think. Because it's many people from afar and it kind of gets a little impersonal. And then like, they have a reputation that they rather hire people from afar because then they get to lease apartments to people from afar and then they make more money. It's a stubborn rumour, it really doesn't have to be that way, or mean that it is. But when it's people from home that work in the village it's more thumbs up. (Ebba, 30)

The view of Branäs' reluctance to employ local youths seems to be a rooted perception among almost all the informants. The only informant who means that this is not true is Elin, who spends a lot of time in Branäs herself:

Sometimes I can feel that Branäs has a little unfair bad reputation, like "it's no one from here who gets a job in Branäs". But we see it every season that there are a lot of people from here who get a job in Branäs. So it's a myth that stays. But then, at some personnel, it's very hard to recruit staff with the right qualifications. And then of course you look at others than people from the community. But I think that to a great extension one also looks at them. So it kind of lives on, a myth sort of, I believe. (Elin, 40)

The bad rumours are a part of people's negative image of Branäs and the stories that are told confirm the bad perception. The rumours are a way of constructing meanings about why Branäs does

not belong to the community, by letting it represent a lot of negative things. The narrative shows that it is not only what *is* community that is interesting to look at, but also what *is not*. Branäs works as a counterpart to Långberget and people let it represent what Långberget is not, which supports the separation of “us and them” and thereby strengthens “us”. Branäs is physically and sometimes subconsciously a part of the community, but it is not part of the good things that represent the community. The good things are tied to Långberget; familiar atmosphere, peace and quiet, social meetings and cooperation between the local people. Branäs is instead representing the unfamiliar, anonymous and unfair, and that is not what the local people think represents their community.

Local Anchoring

Långberget was built in 1966 and has a long history in the community. The current three owners represent the first owner constellation that entirely consists of local people, even though some local people have owned it once in a while before but then also together with other people without local anchoring. The current owners have owned it since 2008 and two of the three owners have worked at Långberget more or less since their youth, sometimes only during seasons and sometimes more regularly during the year. The head owner had her mother working there when she was a child and she used to join her at work sometimes, so she has lots of memories from when she used to run around in the hallways at the hotel or help out with sorting pencils. The owners’ local anchoring often means that people are personally acquainted with them. The fact that the owners are local seems to matter a lot to the local people:

You feel the connection more with the owners I think. The owners are after all from here and they live here and have invested... Branäs is so big so there you don’t have any connection to any owners, you don’t even know who they are. One probably feels more for Långberget, I think. (Kristina, 50)

Branäs’ lack of local ownership is described as something negative, which affects the feeling for Branäs that becomes different than the feeling for Långberget:

Långberget – of course there’s a different feeling, I think so. It becomes the local in another way. Just the fact that Branäs is run from Karlstad makes it... if you call Branäs you dial 054, just that’s a strange feeling sort of. (Elin, 40)

Långberget becomes special because now several of the owners are from here, well, everyone [...] And that becomes something totally different [from Branäs]. So of course it’s a difference in that way. (Elin, 40)

The fact that the owners of Branäs miss local anchoring is used to explain why they do not care about the community:

It's a huge difference, it is. You can compare Branäs and then you have Långberget which is locally owned. Hovfjället – locally owned. Branäs has more like “we are ourselves and we decide”. Very typical... [at Långberget or Hovfjället] it is about engaging in the community... Branäs isn't-, they don't want to be involved in anything other than their own. That's how it is. (Bo, 60)

The narrative that Branäs does not want to cooperate with the community is once again told, this time by exemplifying with incidents where Branäs has made it hard for local businesses to start competitive businesses towards Branäs and suppressed local initiatives:

I know many examples of others who have experienced that they aren't really cooperative with locals, other businesses like that. They have played dirty sometimes in other examples, like when others have tried to establish a ski rental and things like that close to the facility. Then they put up an own ski rental just next into it with big signs or like that. Or they buy a house and send the traffic on the other side of the river and things like that. Really not a good reputation. Now I'm not updated so it might have gotten better but it has definitely been that way before. (Erik, 30)

Erik expresses the feeling that Branäs puts its own interests before the community's. Branäs is seen as unwilling to cooperate with the rest of the community, which makes people upset. They bring the story further to other people and let it illustrate how Branäs is not part of the community because of their external ownership. The sense of anonymity that local people feel when they visit Branäs is also used to explain why it is not part of the community:

The times when I'm there I'm always struck by the fact that I don't know anyone. Many people who are employed there but... well, sometime in the lift maybe I know who it is but... many employed there and the most people you don't recognize. I understand it as seasonal workers, young adults who're here and working during this period. (Kristina, 50)

Local people find their way to Branäs too for recreation, but it's such a big facility so you don't bump in to each other in the same way. But I experience Långberget more as a recreation spot for the local people, in some way. (Elin, 40)

Branäs focuses on something else, more alpine, but they're bigger and it gets more people and like scattered and bigger... and I think that the most here think so. (Ebba, 30)

By contrasting Långberget to Branäs, it becomes clear that Branäs is seen as something negative because of its lack of local ownership, while Långberget is not because it represents the opposite: the positive local ownership.

Memories of a Place

According to informants who all have had their upbringing in the community, their feelings for Långberget are strong. The informants often talk spontaneously about their memories of Långberget. Many have spent time there when they grew up and have brought their own children there later in life. People have also spent time there as adults, both in their everyday life and at special occasions. Like Berglund points at in her research on Nordvärmland, the connection between people's previous experiences of a landscape and the current experiences is crucial in order to understand how people relate to it (2014:36). The time spent at Långberget has contributed to people's perception of it as a landscape and the place is in that way an arena for action and meaning (Berglund, 2014:23). It is not only nature that people describe when they talk about Långberget, but the certain actions that have happened there throughout the years:

I met my husband there, which is really fun. And I remember that when we got our youngest, we were going to have coffee after the baptism somewhere and thought that Långberget feels obvious, because then the circle is closed in some way kind of. So it will always have a great meaning to us of course. (Elin, 40)

Elin would choose to celebrate special occasions at Långberget, which shows that it is meaningful to her (as she also expresses herself). Another informant tells that she took her parents there when her mother celebrated her birthday. The place seems special to the local people and it is a place you visit if something should be noticed.

The fact that parents take their children to Långberget has created many memories of the childhood from there. The large amount of time spent in the place where people grow up makes them develop a strong sense for a typical character of nature (Nordström, 1998). People remember what experiences they had, which becomes a part of their identity (ibid). Ebba describes the experiences she had at Långberget as a child and tells about the importance of returning to "the big stone" even today:

Well, it was there one learned how to ski downhill. That's the case for many. I also think that it's, since Branäs is so big and people go so fast in the slopes, you rather take your kid to Långberget. Because it's a small hill and a small slope, and calm and quiet in the slope. That's probably the case. I hear people say like I take the kid to Långberget first, teach it how to ski there. [...] When one is sitting on a sheepskin, drinking hot chocolate, going to the big stone and things like that [...]. To have a coffee at the big stone is mandatory, you have to do that. (Ebba, 30)

Ebba lets "the big stone" represent something solid in life, which she could visit both as a child and as an adult. She connects the place to what experiences she had there, things that she used to do in company with others when she was little but nowadays does on her own. Through the sharing of

this memory, actions and meanings are connected to time (her childhood) and space (Långberget). The contact that people have with nature when they grow up is later on upheld through similar activities, like Ebba, who still goes to the big stone when she visits Långberget, which is a way to maintain her identity. Another of the informants has spent a lot of time at Långberget due to his big interest in cross-country skiing, and when he was young he used to go to Långberget to exercise as often as he could. When he goes there today, he can relive that feeling:

[Långberget] feels very much like home to me. Långberget is very pretty; it's a very good ski facility. There are hard, hilly tracks and there are easy tracks. But just, this feeling when one's been in Torsby during summer and autumn, and has been inside the tunnel in the autumn to get the skiing started and then like "yes!", now they've sprayed snow at Långberget. And then you come there and it gets like... yes, finally the ski season has started! So of course, it feels very much like home to me, it does. (Jacob, 20)

Several of the informants mean that growing up in the area was the best kind of upbringing one could have. It is described as easy and exciting since there was always something one could do:

It was great, at least for me who likes to be outdoors in the forest. We were outdoors almost all the time, building huts and things like that, went on adventures in the nearby area. [...] I think I would've become mad if I hadn't had it. It was so simple everything. [...] It's freer. I have an electric guitar and amplifier for example, home in Nordvärmland. I can take a long cord and plug it in the contact inside and then I can be out on the lawn and play and turn up to max, just such a thing! Maybe it's not a nature experience in its own but the nature makes that possible. (Erik, 30)

It's probably the freedom [that I like the most]. To be able to go out in the nature and do what you want more or less. Even though it's skiing or just out and play in the woods. I think there's a big difference from growing up in a storey building in Stockholm. (Jacob, 20)

At that time, it was probably the best one could've done, generally speaking. There was everything one needed, anyways. (Magnus, 60)

As I have shown, the memories of Långberget constitute a large part of the informants' stories. Memories are interesting to reflect about since they may be of importance when people choose where they want to settle down later in life.



Figure 2: "The big stone" at Långberget (Forsström, 2017)

Commercialization

Nature tourism involves packaging and selling nature as a product, so it becomes commercialized in order to fit in to what the consumer asks for (Arnould et al., 1998). Since nature tourism depends on that nature can be sold, it is important to the businesses that tourists consume nature through the tourism company instead of on their own (ibid, p.190). Långberget commercialises on nature by charging for cross-country skiing and other outdoor life activities that are pursued with the facility's equipment or with guides. Cross-country skiing is one of few commercialized activities that local people take part of at Långberget, but the financial contribution of it is quite timid compared to tourists since tourists often have a demand for additional services and products that the locals do not.

The pricing of nature can sometimes be touchy. Gunnarsdotter (2005) exemplifies how the meanings of community are challenged when nature is tagged with a price. Her example is moose hunting, where the meaning changes when money and strangers become involved. The pricing of nature activities requires a separation of the relations between people and nature in order to make it into a product (Evernden, 1987 in Gunnarsdotter, 2005), which deprives the activity of its intrinsic values and creates instrumental values instead.

The increase of nature tourism in Nordvärmland has not always been easy to handle for the local people. When nature, which has always been a part of local people's lives, becomes a product that can be sold on a market, things change. It is clear in the example of when Långberget started to charge for cross-country skiing, which made the local people upset:

I think it has been an aspect, this with the ski cards. I think it was news that weren't that welcomed among the local people when they started with that at Långberget. One could hear that, frowning that it was expensive and nonsense that one couldn't ski for free. The access to All mans' right and access to nature, that someone would disregard these and begin to charge. I think that was a little tough for a while. I'm not sure that Långberget understood this but I think it was negative for them, cause then it was like "okay, so that's the way it is, then it doesn't matter, then I'll go to Branäs". (Kristina, 50)

What people aren't really used to in communities like Sysseleback and its close environment, and it's the same in all other places too, is when tourism comes then it gets natural that it will cost also for the local [people]. And that's, I know how it was the first time that we charged for a ski card at Långberget. It was really "wow wow wow", it wasn't popular... and it was even people up there who owned cottages and rented them out at times and made money out of it, but they didn't want to pay anything for a skiing card. So we at Långberget kept prepared tracks so that someone else could make money. And it costs very much to keep the tracks open. (Magnus, 60)

As these sayings show, the general perception of that nature should be for free is an old opinion that has been strongly rooted in the community. People have been living off the land and it has always been a right to have access to it. The fact that local people could charge for skiing seemed to cause a surprise in the beginning, since it changed the perception of the community. The social relations in a community change when one charges for nature activities and the people who charge might be looked upon as cheap (Gunnarsdotter, 2005:187). As the stories tell there have been different perceptions about whether it is right to charge for nature or not, which once again shows that community does not only consist of homogenous people and thoughts, but that it is constantly challenged.

I believe that, for now I see, now it's no whining about that you should pay 50 or 60 kronor for skiing. And I think, now they know that now it's no car dealer from Gothenburg or some real estate owner from Malmö who puts the money in their pocket. (Magnus, 60)

As Magnus explains, it is easier for the local people to accept the fact that Långberget charges for skiing when they know that the money stays in the community. Since the owners are local and employ local people then they contribute to the community, which is a way to deal with the scepticism towards charging for nature. By making sure that the income benefits the whole community and not only the chargers, the owners of Långberget can uphold a good social relation to the local people. By showing that Långberget values loyalty and locality they are seen as part of the community, despite of their business. Businesses within nature tourism often depend on local anchoring for the business to be successful and they do not prioritize profit maximization (ETOUR, 2011). Långbergets' attempt to contribute economically to the community fits well into this description.

Another aspect of commercializing nature is that it enters strangers with other norms into the community. As this informant explains, new people who see opportunities to make money out of fishing is something that the local people might be sceptical about:

Now they're doing some stuff in the fish management organizations, starting to charge the local people, who has gone-, it has been a right to go to the river and fish ones' own fish, fish for food and stuff, or has gone to a lake. But now they charge for fishing license. [...] And it's typical with those stuff, that then it comes people, as we say up along the river; from afar, who start that and see that... who are maybe used to pay since earlier, then they come up there and start and get engaged in those kind of organizations, and that's not that popular of course. (Magnus, 60)

Magnus explains that the commercialization of fishing affects the local people and not only the tourists. People from afar are said to have other perceptions of what one can charge for and not, like fishing. When nature is prized then it can occur a change of focus from social relations and self-sufficiency to a focus on who has the right to fish due to ownership (Gunnarsdotter, 2005:187ff), which might in the long run affect people's identity and the meaning of the community.

The acceptance of Långberget as a commercial business has, as shown, grown throughout the years. The view of Branäs as a commercial business is on the other hand still negative. The informants mean that their main focus is on profit making, which is portrayed as something bad. Even though both facilities are commercial businesses in the sense that they are both making money, the narratives about them are very different:

[Långberget] is kind of a little more personal, because Branäs... well they're bigger and it kind of comes more actors from afar: investors – now we're buying housing here. Pumping out lots of money and it gets like... (Ebba, 30)

No, [Branäs is] not dependent at all. The very business idea with a ski resort like Branäs, and Hovfjället too actually, especially Branäs where all accommodation is in one place: here is where the tourists should go, and they should stay there. Because this is where all the money should be put – ski rentals, rent, and eat everything, because that's their business idea. They shouldn't go to Sysslebäck to have a bite to eat. And like, I understand that, but it's a little sad. It's not such big spill over effect from such a facility. (Bo, 60)

[People] maybe don't see [Långberget] in the same vital way as Branäs because of course, if Branäs would shut down then it would affect enormously on the commerce and so. (Kristina, 50)

One probably feels more for Långberget than [Branäs]... Branäs is more of a commercial business. (Gunnar, 60)

The story is that Branäs is mostly there to make money for themselves. Branäs is described as mostly important for keeping up commerce in the area, viewed as a good thing, but also a symbol for distance. The overall picture is that Branäs is more seen as a necessary evil since the community depends on it for jobs and service. Tourism is in the Swedish politics often described as contributing to regional development through the spill over effects it has on other businesses in the area. However, as Bo puts it, the business idea of Branäs and other similar ski resorts is to keep the commerce in one single area; their area. This means that tourists for example do not ask for lodging outside the Branäs area, or look for restaurants and shops outside, since everything is already in the ski resort. Långberget on the other hand is said to have collaborations with other actors in the area and they support local sport organizations, the local school and other events. Långberget is said to be more dependent on other businesses and local people in the area who can help them with all sorts of things and provide services.

The Tourist Gaze

Liepins means that even people outside the community “may also be powerful in constructing – or constraining – understandings about it” (2000:327). It holds also for this case when tourists let wilderness and tranquillity symbolize the community here in Nordvärmland. Also the municipality is an important actor since they try to define what Nordvärmland is according to what would attract tourists to the area. Community and place are thereby not only constituted by internal actors, but is also affected by *external* views of it, e.g. by tourists. According to Urry (2002), tourists go to places in order to gaze upon something that they experience as extraordinary or out of their usual surroundings. Långberget offers various opportunities for this, like moose safaris, snowmobiling and hiking. All activities are parts of the destination brand Nordvärmland and Långberget markets the magnificent nature in terms like “silence, wilderness and activity” (Långbergets Sporthotell, 2016). People who come as tourists to Nordvärmland thereby have a picture of how the place is and hope it to be fulfilled. Several parts compose the tourism product, often the main activity and the supporting services (Urry, 2002). The tourism product is dependent on the people who are involved in delivering it. A part of the tourists’ experience is hence how people treat them during their experience.

Urry (2002) calls the tourists’ view *the tourist gaze* and it constitutes a part of the meaning that tourists experience when they visit a place, in this case Långberget. But the tourist gaze is not only important to the tourists, but also to the local people. How people look at their community affects their self-perception. The interviews with local people have told *how they perceive* the tourists and their experiences.

Tourism is mostly described as something positive among the informants and one reason for this is because it is flattering to people, who think it is nice to know that tourists believe it is worth to visit the area:

That they are interested in coming here, it's very flattering to us. We think it's fun. And the same with you who are writing an essay about Långberget and its significance to the community, it's really fun that someone is interested in our village. (Ebba, 30)

My dream is that [the local people] will see Torsby as a place where people go on vacation. Sort of like, I use to compare, I imagine, like people on Gotland who live in Visby. What are we? Well it's this place people go because it's so... much to see, fun to come here. [...] Then you create this sense of pride and... the self-image is that we are a destination for others. So that's what I see as my vision, that if everyone, or the most, feels that way, then the hospitality and service come automatically. (Bo, 60)

It seems like the local people are, and are expected to be, flattered by the fact that people come to Nordvärmland. As the municipality expresses, the aim is to make local people feel that Nordvärmland is something special. The fact that outsiders think of the area as beautiful, calm and free also helps the locals to see that, since they are affected by how the tourists look at them and will adjust to meet their expectations. The tourist gaze thereby affects how the locals perceive themselves (Urry, 2002:137f), which is also reflected in how the informants tell about feelings they get in the meetings they have had with some tourists/outsiders:

Well their [*people working by season in Branäs*] aim was to have a fun ski season. Work and like, that's it. But it was obvious right away that they were from afar. We had a discussion once about "yeah, imagine if you'd get a motor failure on these roads, like out in the forest on your way to the mountain. Dark roads...". I understand because then they maybe don't have anyone to call. But then it was like "oh my god, animals in the forest, and there I stand with my car". They talked about animals in the forest like "here in Värmland there are real wild animals, oh my god". And I mean, I feel like this, it's not a jungle. There are no tigers. The animals are far up in the forest, and it's not dangerous animals. That kind of stuff is obvious. (Ebba, 30)

- Then it was one [outsider] who asked, because we worked quite much with the rally until last year. And then it was a person. She isn't from here but she lives here anyway. And then she asked and said that: "well but then we'd have to be well paid?" And I thought "stupid woman" ... how can you think that you'll get paid? (Lisa, 70)
- You get angry when they say that. When one helps for nothing. (Gustav, 80)
- And we who live here and that road to Höljes... I said that it's a lot of miles to drive. But we didn't have any compensation for that, but that's the way it is. (Lisa, 70)

This conversation between Lisa and Gustav shows that there seems to be a discrepancy between the outsiders' perception of what people should do for free and not and the locals' view of it. Lisa and Gustav describe how they feel when outsiders do not understand how it is to live in a community in the countryside, where the locals' own commitment means everything to the community. The fact that tourists/outsiders see the community in another way than the locals experience it themselves is an example of how tourists and locals might have different perceptions from the outside or inside perspective. Outsiders are sometimes afraid of the forest, which is an image of nature that Ebba does not recognize. The knowing that outsiders look at their community in this way makes people having to relate to it. People therefore also create shared knowledge about that the forest is not actually that deep or dangerous, but rather acknowledge the fact that it is important to learn about it from an early age. When outsiders are being upset about that people work for free then people seem to strengthen that saying and make it into something to be proud of instead.

Nature in Nordvärmland is something that attracts many visitors to the area. For the local people, however, nature is a part of their daily life and usual environments so therefore it is not as exciting to them as to the tourists. But when local people have visitors they might be more likely to engage in nature tourism activities, as discussed in the chapter Activities. This means that when local people have a visit from outsiders, they are also more willing to look at their home environment from an outsiders' perspective:

- It's cross-country skiers, restaurant guests in the summers, who're here [at Långberget] for a visit. Gladly bring their loved ones for a visit. (Felicia, 50)
- So it's a natural destination when one gets a visit, locally. When relatives and friends come and visit, then it's a natural day excursion to Långberget. In the whole municipality, one could say. (Johanna, 40)

Many local people gladly show nature or other places in Nordvärmland when they have visitors, which shows that they feel a sense of pride of their home area. People want to confirm the positive image that tourists have of the area by showing the best sides of it. But the local people also "gaze" at the tourists:

In the beginning it was this [problem] with Germans coming here and "they're up making fires in the forest" and "they're picking potatoes in my garden" and things like that... Many stories like that. Now they don't exist. So of course, it's a question about maturity. And it's taking long time. It's the generations that it's about, especially this with the type of jobs I think. To go from a manufacturing society to a service society. (Bo, 60)

This informant tells about how it used to be when tourism started to expand in Nordvärmland. People were first more sceptical towards it but it has decreased over time. Stories about how the

tourists disturb and take liberties to enter into people's gardens are ways of creating images of "the tourists".

People talk about tourism in the area as something that is mostly positive and also necessary. The general understanding is that it contributes a lot to the society because of several reasons: jobs, social aspects and a positive self-image. This is an understanding of tourism as important to the community and therefore something that is worth looking after in order to keep. People focus on the positive aspects that it brings whereas the negative aspects are not experienced as that serious:

- I don't experience Långberget as crowded, even though it's many people. The only thing that can be crowded is the parking lot, but when you get out in the terrain and tracks I never feel like it is crowded. [...] Many people at Konsum². I think it has contributed since it has made the commodity supply better for us too. There is a wider supply. Then you know what times you shouldn't go [to the store]. I think it's fun, very good that the store is doing well. (Kristina, 50)
- Do you think that most people are positive? (Me)
- I think so. I don't hear anything negative, at least [...]. I know the saying: "sports holiday, now they're coming, the 08s³". But no, I don't hear that actually. (Kristina, 50)

And also we know how important it is with tourism up here. We grow up with the fact that we have to be careful about our tourists, that's what keeps the society alive. People from home have jobs. (Ebba, 30)

- Do you think that you or others are affected by the tourism in a negative way? (Me)
- No, rather positive I think. I feel that it sorts of lightens up a little during the tourist seasons in some way. [...] It can be annoying queues at Konsum and things like that. But I think it's mostly positive really. [...] Of course one can go to Långberget on a Saturday and almost queue around the tracks, it can be like that. But then I think that one can go skiing with a headlamp in the night instead and then it won't be a problem somehow. It's fun... after all we make a living on the tourism, so I think that most people, they see it as very positive. We wouldn't be able to keep the community service that we have, the bathhouse wouldn't be open if it wasn't for the tourists from Branäs four months a year. The lifeguards sit and watch a basically empty pool during the rest of the year. (Elin, 40)

As Ebba mentions, the importance of tourism is something people are taught in an early age in order to keep the sense of community. People motivate the presence of tourism with jobs, a better supply in the grocery store and a swimming pool that can be open all year round. The benefits of

² Konsum is the local grocery store in the village

³ 08s is an expression for people from Stockholm with the area code 08

tourism are described as important to the community and people are expected to give up on some inconveniences that the tourism might cause (like long lines at Konsum) in order to back up the community. This positive perception of tourism can imply that it is socially sustainable since it seems to meet the criteria of not being perceived as negative among the local people (Ekoturismföreningen, 2016).

Conclusions

The analysis shows that there are several parts that construct community: spaces and structures, people, practices and meanings. These different elements affect each other and sometimes overlap, which makes it into a model of community that is not always the easiest, but perhaps a fruitful one. The community model by Liepins has been helpful in the understanding of this specific case in northern Värmland. The sense of community is described in relation to previous and current happenings that are remembered and described in relation to important places and practices, which shows that space and time are crucial for the creation of a community (Gunnarsdotter, 2005:33).

How local people use Långberget has changed throughout the years, but it is still important as an arena for action and meaning, although dances and holiday celebrations are now replaced by outdoor life activities and work. Långberget offers a space where people can share and create understandings about their community and it is important as a symbol because of its local anchoring and involvement with the inhabitants. In order to express the importance of Långberget, people compare it to the bigger facility. Branäs is used as a symbol of what *does not belong* in the community and the knowledge about the facility is shared through stories that linger on. I have argued that the ownership structure is important for how meanings and practices in the community express themselves. Local owners and landowners, knowledge about the area and loyalty between Långberget and its local employees are seen as important features among the informants. The significance of Långberget being locally owned is extra clear when compared with Branäs, which is not.

The change of Långberget into a facility focused on tourism has caused a need to process and reassess the community and people's identity. Långberget and Branäs are two facilities where local people and tourists engage in social interactions, whether they want it or not. The experience of tourists among the local people has proven to be somewhat different between Långberget and Branäs. It is clear, though, that local people sometimes feel a greater sense of connection with tourists who are outside the physical community, based on their shared interest in cross-country skiing. The possibility to create communities that are free from geographical boundaries is a quite new phenomenon, partly due to the possibilities of globalization, which might bring appreciated opportunities in rural areas.

The informants claim that they almost never see anyone they know at Branäs, neither among the staff nor among the tourists. The size of the facility and the great number of people who are there naturally makes it hard to see people that one knows. People say that they rarely see locals at Långberget either, but it is described in a different way, using positive terms like claiming that it is

calm and quiet there, whereas Branäs is portrayed in negative expressions like big and impersonal. The positive story about Långberget shows how stories are used to confirm people's perception of the community.

Branäs is mainly looked upon as a commercial business that contributes to practical things in the area and not to other values like social values. Their focus on making profit makes them having to contest other values. People's experience of Branäs' ignorance to local collaboration does not fit in to people's view of the community and they therefore describe it in less positive terms. When the case of Branäs is compared to Långberget one understands that Långberget is a part of the community because of its relations to local people and institutions. Långberget's care for social values is something that contributes to the local community and is therefore seen as good, which is why people want it to be included in the community.

From an outside perspective (like e.g. the researcher's), Torsby kommun or Nordvärmland could easily be seen as *one* community. In real life, people could probably experience a stronger sense of belonging to other communities that share an interest in outdoor life, even though they do not belong to the same local place-bound community. People often belong to several cultural communities, where some are within geographical boundaries and some are outside (Blehr, 1994:41). The description of a shared community among local pursuers of outdoor life and tourists who visit Långberget for the same reasons, illustrates this kind of shared community outside the physical boundaries of the local community. It can be seen as an example of how places can consist of several communities that are discovered through talking to local people. This study has shown that the construction of community can appear in different ways, and the sense of community can be as strong when it is based on interest as when it is based on place.

In my fieldwork I have found that not everyone has the same opinion about the meaning of Långberget. It has more importance to some than to others, and the ways it matters differ. There are also contrasting perceptions about Branäs, where the people who use it tend to have a more positive view. This shows that places are full of internal differences and conflicts, which are all parts of the community (Massey, 1991a, in Massey, 1993).

Appendix

Interview guides

Questions to older people

- For how long have you lived in this place?
- Do you know many people here?
- What kind of people live here?
- What have you worked with?
- What is the best thing about living here?
- Have you been to Långberget recently? If yes, what did you do there?
- Did you meet anyone that you know?
- What more people were there?
- Has Långberget existed for a long time?
- For how long have you been going to Långberget?
- What do you usually do there? What did you usually do in the past?
- What do people usually do there? What do the tourists do? What do the local people do?
- How did it look like when you used to visit Långberget in the past?
- How is it today at Långberget? Do you experience that Långberget has changed?
- How would it have been if Långberget didn't exist?
- Do you have any particular memories from there?
- What do you think will happen with Långberget in the future?
- What do you enjoy doing on your spare-time?
- What do you do when you're out in nature?
- Do you engage in any outdoor life activities?
- Where do you usually do that?
- What is the best thing about those activities?
- Why is it important to you to be able to do that?
- Do you practice outdoor life together with others or on your own?
- What do you think are the most important spare-time activities for others who live here?
- What do the younger people do in their spare-time? And the older people...?
- What people are at Långberget?
- What do the tourists do there?

- At what time of the year are you usually there?
- What do you use of what Långberget has to offer?
- What do you think is the best thing about Långberget?
- How do you experience having access a facility like Långberget?
- Do you know anyone who works there?

Questions to the owners

- When did Långberget open?
- How long have you worked here?
- Where do you come from?
- How is it that you started to work here?
- What more people work here?
- What kind of people come here?
- Is there any difference between day-staying-guests and over-night-staying-guests?
- What people are your main customers?
- How would you describe Långbergets' business?
- What is your goal with the business?
- What is the best things about working at Långberget?
- How do summer- and winter season separate?
- What are the most popular activities?
- Have you noticed any difference in what people find interesting through the years?
- Do you separate between activities that are directed to tourists and locals?
- Do you see many of the inhabitants here?
- What do the local people do here? Same as the tourists or something else?
- What do you think Långberget means to the community?
- Who are the local people who use Långberget?
- Do you use the facility yourself?
- Do you experience that you get support from for example the municipality, county or region?
- What do you think about the future for Långberget?

Questions to younger people

- Where do you live now and why is that?

- Where do you come from and where have you grown up?
- How was it to grow up in X area?
- What was important to you when you grew up?
- How did you meet with friends?
- What did you do in your spare-time?
- Were there a lot of activities to choose between?
- What do you think you would have done if you would not have been able to do that?
- What do other young people do in their spare-time?
- What are your clearest memories from the skiing?
- How often did you ski?
- Did you do anything more except from the skiing (at Långberget)?
- What would you say that the possibility for skiing has meant to you?
- What do you think the access to Långberget means to the community?
- What people go to Långberget? What do they do there?
- Is the facility equally important all year round? Are all of their activities attractive?
- Do you experience that Långberget mostly turns to tourists? Is it “touristy” there?
- Do you know a lot about the facility?
- Do you know people who work at Långberget?
- Do you engage in any other outdoor life activities?
- Why do you like it?
- Do you do it on your own or with others?
- Where has your interest come from?
- What do you think is most important in order to like living on the countryside?
- What is the most important to you?
- Do you want to move back to X later in life? Why/why not?

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Figures

Figure 1: Liepins, R. (2000b). *A community model*. In: Liepins, R. (2000b). *Exploring rurality through 'community': discourses, practices and spaces shaping Australian and New Zealand rural 'communities'*. Journal of Rural Studies 16. Dunedin: University of Otago

Figure 2: Forsström, E. (2017). *"The big stone"*. Photo taken by the author of the thesis: Elvira Forsström