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Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Farewell Welfare

 Local manifestations of the welfare society in two rural Swedish towns

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- Local manifestations of the welfare society in two rural Swedish towns

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Abstract

In this master's thesis, I investigate the local manifestations of the welfare state through a case study of two Swedish small rural towns. Using local stories and narratives collected through in-depth interviews and observations, I follow the development of the towns from the 30's until today. I examine the development through the aspects of modernity, market driven marginalization, industrialization, administrative rationalization, extended communities and collective remembering through instant media. I use theoretical concepts such as place, identity and Anthony Giddens structuration theory to understand how the welfare society has affected the local acting space of people and the creation of the local places. I conclude that the national project the welfare state had and still have very situated and local effects, which differ much in my two different towns. Factors such as location, locality and the people of the local community impact on how structures coming from the outside are understood and used locally. The structures frame the local acting space, but they also become locally structured. The welfare society has had a large influence on the appearances and functions of today's towns. It has transformed them from small trivial villages to modern service centers, but also stripped away some of their functions through further rationalization and modernization, which locally is perceived as a marginalizing let down. Through protesting against this marginalization, the inhabitants of the town create new acting space and further affect the local place and development. Concluding, the welfare society is a national, structuring phenomenon. However, it is in the local setting that people meet it and understand its influence as either limiting or enabling. It is therefore the conditions of the local place that create the welfare society in which we actually live.

Keywords: Place, Welfare Society, Community, Modernity, Local Action Space, Small Town

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1 Introduction

In this thesis, I am telling a story. It is a story about the Swedish welfare society. It is a story stretching from the very local life of the 30's through the economically blossoming 50's and into the present. It is a story about a poor rural society transforming into a modern democracy. It is also a story about the establishment of local welfare in the form of service and its following dismantling. In this thesis, I will use the concepts *welfare*, *welfare society* and *welfare state*. With welfare society, I refer to a more general phenomenon, while welfare state refers to policies, reforms and investments made by the state. When used alone the term welfare refers to a state of wellbeing and being socially protected.

Welfare states are a young phenomenon. The expression welfare state roughly refers to a state that takes responsibility in providing its citizens with a basic level of welfare. Scholars have tried to define and derive the causes of welfare states, normally on a broad national level. Danish scholar Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990) stresses the varying structures between different welfare states and identifies three types of welfare states based on their quality of social rights, their social stratification and the relationship between state, market and family: the liberal, the conservative and the social democratic welfare state. The social democratic welfare state, to which the Scandinavian countries belong, is universal and preventive. It offers state support of high standards equally distributed among the citizens. The design is meant to meet the expectations of different strata and thereby legitimize high taxes. According to Esping-Andersen, the Swedish welfare model is based on broad red-green alliances, made possible through independent and politically strong small-scale family farmers (ibid.).

Lars Trägårdh (2013) has focused on the Swedish welfare state and the particularities that characterizes it. He claims the Swedish well fare state to be characterized by high individual independence and high social trust and faith in the state. He conceptualizes this as the *Swedish Social Contract*. The contract offers the individual strong autonomy from traditional institutions such as family and church, but has instead created a dependency on the state. The Swedish welfare model has historically put the systemic perspective and social rights over the individual perspective and civil rights, but in recent times, it has been liberalized through private alternatives to state institutions (ibid.). Raising costs and an aging population has made the high standard promises, acknowledged by Esping-Andersen (1990), hard to live up to. Consequently, the distance between individual expectations and welfare provided by the state has increased, which has lowered the trust in the public sector and opened a new market for private insurance, which might strengthen individual power and rights (Trägårdh 2013).

Andreas Bergh (2007) engages in analyzing the factors behind the Swedish welfare successes of the nineteen hundreds where social reforms were combined with a well-functioning capitalism. He also discusses the liberalizing reforms of the 80's and 90's, which are often described as dismantling the welfare state and moving towards the market economy. Nevertheless, Bergh claims that the Swedish welfare state managed to keep its characteristic

functions and features such as high taxes, a large public sector and universal policies despite the liberalization.

The perspectives above are helpful in grasping the concept of the welfare state in general, and the Swedish welfare state in particular, but the perspectives are wide, focusing on the state and its relation to the citizens. It does not take the perspective of the individual into consideration. Neither does it distinguish social groups divided according to something other than class. When brought down to an individual level, focusing on the everyday life of people, the development raises questions that cannot be answered through the previous scholars. What difference did the welfare society imply in relation to everyday life in rural Sweden? How did the national welfare state manifest locally? What has it meant for rural towns and villages? To be able to answer such questions, I have to situate the welfare state, insert it into a place. The places chosen for this thesis are two rural towns¹, which make up scenes for the thorough policies and innovations that we know as the welfare state and the improved welfare and social sequrity connected to the welfare society. I will look at the changes of the welfare society through the lens of these two local communities and describe the changes of the welfare society as they appear in these two towns. The towns constitute examples of small villages that came to be rural centers, where the institutions of the welfare society were gathered. By following the everyday lives of people, I intend to examine how different local conditions have created different welfare societies. I also want to understand how welfare factors such as the public sector, shops, the commercial and industrial life, the job market, globalization, infrastructure and modernization created and changed the conditions for a local everyday life.

1.1 Aim of the study

This master's thesis in rural development discusses the welfare society in Sweden, its development and how this has been perceived on the local level from the perspective of two small towns. I intend to show how the rise and development of the welfare society has taken different forms and had varying consequences in different places, depending on the local conditions and individual agency, but also how the welfare society has been part of shaping the local places. I will also look at how storytelling and remembering has an active part in today's understanding of the town where one lives. To examine this, I will look at local stories and narratives concerning the historical development and the present state of the towns and view them through concepts such as modernity, market driven marginalization, industrialization, administrative rationalization, extended communities and collective remembering through instant media. Additionally, I will look at the material manifestations of the welfare state. The aim of this study, thus, is to study local manifestations and perceptions of the welfare society through two small rural Swedish towns.

¹ The Swedish word for these places are small *tätorter*. *Tätort* refers to dwellings of different sizes and has a more neutral character than the historically infused village or town. It is rather an administrative concept than an emic

1.2 Method and methodology

This is a qualitative study focusing on the particularities of a phenomenon - the history and everyday life of the two towns Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. The study has a case study design, where various methods are used to create a deeper understanding of the places through in-depth analysis (Creswell 2014: 14). My main data collecting methods were semistructured, in-depth interviews and observations, both participatory and more passive ones. Throughout my work, I have attained a phenomenological approach I order to grasp the meaning that the informants ascribe to their villages, their everyday lives and their history (Inglis 2012: 86ff). I have worked ethnographically, that is, I have started with my experiences in the field and theorized around them (cp. Kaijser & Öhlander 2011). The study focuses on narratives, the stories told by the inhabitants of the rural towns when they talk about their past. Because it is based on interviews and memories, the thesis is situated within a time frame of the living memory of the informants, of what is remembered locally. Narratives and stories are already interpreted by the informants (Borgström 1997). They reflect the informant's understandings of the past. It is these personal stories and understandings of the past times that are the interest of this thesis. I have not intended to portray some kind of objective past or accurate causality. The stories treat past times, which means I can not observe what actually happened. The conducted observations therefore serve the purpose of understanding how people act in the towns today as a result of its history (cp. Kaijser & Öhlander 2011:114ff).

The thesis is based on field studies conducted during spring 2017. The cases for this study, the towns Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, were chosen on the basis of their particular characteristics, a so called purposive sampling (Silverman 2015: 60f). My intention was to look at small, rural towns that in some way constituted centers for people in a surrounding area. They were not to be larger than 2000 inhabitants, but not smaller than 1000. Since I wanted them to constitute centers, they were not supposed to be close to a large, dominating city. I have deliberately chosen two towns with rather different conditions considering local access to services and job markets, since this was thought of as enabling two contrasting images of the welfare society development. By describing two contrasting towns, I intended to show that the welfare society has had varying results at the local level.

I spent one week in each town, where I conducted interviews, spent time in the local library, in the youth center, small talked to people in the grocery store, observed life on the streets and joined discussions around kitchen tables. In Åmotfors, I conducted ten in-depth interviews, primarily with people born in the 30's, 40's and 50's. My Åmotfors interviewees were both men and women which had all worked in the local factories, however some of them had also had other occupations. In order to grasp the town today and how life has changed for new generations, I also interviewed two åmotforsers born in the 70's and 80's. When combined with observations and small talk this gave me an understanding of youth life and young adulthood in more recent times. The family of my brother's girlfriend lives in Åmotfors, why I was quickly able to engage in local life through dinners and a family

birthday celebration. They became my contact persons who showed me around town and a sounding board against which I could test my perceptions and interpretations.

In Hammarstrand I also conducted ten interviews. The main interviewees were born in the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's. The interviewees were both male and female. Their occupational background was more varying than in Åmotfors and included self-employment, government employment, farming and industry work. Like in Åmotfors, I also talked to two people substantially younger, to grasp some of the particularities of today's Hammarstrand and its younger population. The interviews were completed through small talk in town, participation in a committee meeting, a visit to a weekly gathering for retirees and kitchen table discussions. In Hammarstrand too, I had close contact with a family with which I had dinner, was showed around town and could ask questions and try my interpretations.

With two exceptions, the interviews were scheduled after my arrival in the towns. I mainly looked for people born between the 30's and the 60's, who had lived their whole lives or major parts of it in or around the towns and who could tell me about life there in past times. In order to avoid a too homogenous group of interviewees I used several methods to come in contact with them. I met some after recommendations from my contact persons, from the town churches and from local sports associations. Others I found through local Facebookgroups, through recommendations from interviewees and through talking to people while doing observations. The method allowed me to find interviewees that differed in age, background, opinions and engagement although most of them knew or knew of each other. Most of the names in the thesis are the accurate names of the informants. A few have been anonymized and their names have been made up.

Most of the interviews, both in Åmotfors and in Hammarstrand were conducted in the homes of the informants. Some Hammarstrand interviews were conducted in a local café and two Åmotfors interviews in the local museum. The majority of the interviews were conducted with one interviewee at a time, while some were conducted with two interviewees at the same time. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I let the informant discuss the topic in an open and flexible way (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). Since the study focuses on narratives and memories of the interviewees, I let the stories of the informants direct the interview. I usually started the interviews by asking the interviewees to tell me about their lives in the towns and used follow-up questions to abide in a certain issue or to return to the main story. To keep on track, I used a loosely assembled interview guide, with some guidelines and basic questions (cp. Bryman, 2012). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, thematized and interpreted on the basis of some theoretical outsets. In order to be able to understand the local stories as local manifestations of the welfare state, the personal experiences of the informants were connected to a broader Swedish welfare societal development. When performing the analysis, I have looked for the mutual in the stories in order to create a representation of the towns as units. Consequently, I frequently talk about the towns and their inhabitants as collectives. When I write about the opinions of the amotforsers and hammarstranders, I refer to shared opinions expressed by my informants.

Both in Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, I had one initial contact person before I headed out into the field. The contact person helped me to find accommodation, showed me around and provided me with basic information about the towns. I consider these contacts and their local knowledge and networks being large assets to the study, since the contact persons hold qualities that I cannot attain. However, I am aware of the influential effect that they have had on my understanding of the towns, which might have made some aspects and perspectives dominate others. However, there will always be a first contact with the field, regardless if it is with a contact person, a sports association or with the local church. With a first contact comes a certain perspective, why the problem of first meeting the towns through a certain angle is inevitable. Throughout my thesis work, I have been aware of this issue and taken it into consideration when choosing my informants, performing my observations and analyzing my data. The thesis is based on personal stories of individual pasts, and is not intended to constitute an objective historical writing. However, to be able to fulfill the aim of my study and to perform my analysis I need a broad set of data, why I have attempted to acquire a spread within my group of informants. This should also prevent me from drawing conclusions based on a too narrow and angled empirical material.

1.3 Theoretical outsets

In this thesis, I have looked at Åmotfors and Hammarstrand as places. The thesis is based on the understanding that our lives take place somewhere, we, as humans, are situated. The place effects our understanding of the world, since it is through that place that we experience it (Cresswell 2004). Since people are situated, so is also the welfare society. Depending on this localization, the welfare state attains different forms. Consequently, the place with its unique conditions shapes the welfare society.

Place is a complex concept which can and has been understood in different ways following different ontological and epistemological traditions; as something that exists out there, as a social construction or as the scene of human existence. Cresswell (2004) states that place is somewhere in the middle between these outposts. Place could not and did not exist before humans, it is constructed by us, but place is also essential for humans' existence. I would like to propose a two-way understanding of place as something concretely existing, the arena on which human interaction and practices take place, and something existing in our minds, the idea of the place and what it is. Both aspects of place are continuously changing, both physically and as an idea, as local practices and structures around it changes. Space, as well as place, is also social since it is "a product of interrelations" (Massey 2005:9). According to Massey, relations are embedded material practices, constantly being performed. Spaces and places are therefore always under construction and ever changing. Many practices leave traces in the physical landscape, they are materialized, which means that place carries traces of old practices and former social relations. Place consists of interwoven stories, stories of

pasts (ibid.) Consequently place is a constant reminder of those former practices and relations, of how life used to be carried out.

Places can also be considered the results of everyday practices (Cresswell 2004). They become what they are through the repeated actions of their inhabitants. People act locally, where they are, in Hammarstrand and in Åmotfors, but the possibility to act, the frames within which people perform action are dictated by the society and world around us. The frames, or structures within which we act, are perceived by people in the form of possibilities and limitations (Giddens 1987). Our acting space, the repertoire of actions between which people can chose, is the emerging space between the agency of the actor and the structural frame. One of those frames, that constitutes possibilities and limitations, are the policies and investments that make up the welfare state. Hence the acting space of the inhabitants of Hammarstrand and Åmotfors, is dictated by the outer structure known as the welfare state.

Agnew (1987) has a three-dimensional understanding of place; as a location on the surface of the planet, as locale, representing the material conditions and as a sense of place, people's emotional attachment to a place. Through its characteristics, the place itself makes up a frame within which people act, but it also influences the perception of the frames dictated from the outside. The sparsity of Hammarstrand and the good communications of Åmotfors create different possibilities to act and influences local effects of national policies and decisions in the two towns. Consequently, place is both shaped by structural conditions and constitutes structural conditions for the actors. Physical and material conditions in combination with feelings affect how people relate to a place, and what they perceive as being possible to do or not. It affects the agency and thereby also the acting space of its inhabitants. Since the welfare state is located, its frames are perceived differently in different places. Therefore, the acting space connected to the welfare state differs between places, between Hammarstrand and Åmotfors.

Present place is visitable. I have been to both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. The past tense of places, on the other hand, is not. Instead past times are reachable either through physical traces in the landscape or through stories (cp. Hansen 2009; Massey 2005). Through looking at the physical town, we can see traces of former practices. Through listening to stories about past events, we also reach thoughts and comments about the practices. Additionally, stories of the past are a way for people to understand the present. Therefore, they do not only tell us about the past and the presence, but are also part of shaping it (cp. de Certeau 1984; Berger & Luckmann; Hobsbawm & Ranger).

Stories are tightly connected to the person telling them. No one describes the same event in the same way, since our understanding and interpretation of an event is tightly connected to our own pasts (Borgström 1997). Consequently, there is not one story about a place. The history of a place consists of many intertwined stories, always in the making. Nevertheless, there are dominating features, a frame story about what a place is, that the individual stories have to relate to (cp. McFarlane 1986; Hansen 2009). A story which does not fit with the frame story has little legitimacy within the community. In this way, individual stories are part of a collective tradition, a local discourse through which people also interpret what they hear

and see. A told story is therefore also an interpretation of an event or a previously told story (cp. Lundin 1992).

It is not only place that is constantly being created, but also the history of a place. This story is changeable, it changes with every story, every interpretation, every story teller and every listener. There is also an objectified story, the story we can read about in history books (cp. Borgström 1997). The official story is a negotiated, objectified one. Just like the frame story, it has the ability to affect the personal stories about an event. The story of the development of the welfare society is such an objectified story. However, it is an aggregated story, a general one, which does not reflect its heterogeneity in different locations. Therefore, the objectified, general story of the welfare society, needs to be combined with the local frame stories and personal experiences. By looking at the local outcomes we can dismantle the official story and explore the heterogeneity of the welfare state.

2 The towns

2.1 Hammarstrand

When arriving in Hammarstrand, you might, just as me, drive along the road 87 from Sundsvall, inwards the country towards Östersund. The road travels side by side with the river Indalsälven and the mountains heaping up behind it. This is where the county Västernorrland transcends into Jämtland and people start talking about the midland of southern Norrland. The area is characterized by its beautiful nature, successful skiers and a strong regionalism, but also by socio economic problems such as an aging population, outmigration and low tax revenues.

After about an hour on the inland roads I reach a hydroelectric plant, standing like a memorial of the time when the area made up the heart of the Swedish industrialization. Ragunda municipality, to which Hammarstrand belongs, has nine plants which were built and expanded during the first half of the 20th century. During the construction, the plants employed a lot of people, but the management was never labor intense (Rolén 1990). A sign informs the passerbys about available service such as a gas station, grocery stores, banks and restaurants. It is a four-way crossing and the road leading in to Hammarstrand is on my left hand side. Up the hill to my right is the small, wooden house village Pålgård, the old center of the area still holding the church. Pålgård is higher situated then Hammarstrand and already existed at the time when Hammarstrand was on the bottom of the lake Ragunda. The lake was accidentally emptied in the 18th century in an attempt to create a tributary flow to transport timber past the rough rapid (Rolén 1990). The story of when Magnus Huss or Vildhussen (the wild Huss), a merchant from Sundsvall, failed to recognize the inadequate bearing of the sand ridge through which the new timber slide was led has become sort of a land mark for Hammarstrand. The water pressure made the sand ridge collapse and Lake Ragunda was emptied in four hours. The once so dramatically vibrant waterfall lost its inflow and turned into Döda fallet (the dead fall) which is now one of Hammarstrand's tourist attractions. The story is well known and often referred to in the area. Every summer Vildhussdagarna (the wild Huss days) are celebrated with several activities in the villages around Hammarstrand. Furthermore, the emptying of the lake resulted in additional farm land on the former bottom of the lake. The large and beautifully designed farm-houses around the drained lake tell a story of fruitful grounds and prosperous farms.

I cross the river, pass the fire station and continue towards the town center. A large red wooden building with towers and swirly gingerbread work catches my eye just when the road turns to the left. Central Hammarstrand stretches in front of my windscreen. Even though my informants explain to me how many shops they used to have in the mid 1900's, Hammarstrand still offers a vivid center with a rather large collection of shops and public services. The closest cities Östersund and Sundsvall are around 100 kilometers away, which partly explains how the small town can keep a quite large quantity of shops going. I pass a gas station, a

former hotel, two grocery stores, a liquor store, a café, a pizzeria, several shops, company offices and a job center. Most of the stores and shops are lodged in quadratic houses from the middle of the 20th century. Others are housed in older wooden houses, originating from the time when Hammarstrand was a community of farmers, before it was incorporated in modern Sweden and chain stores and square brick houses entered the scene. Central in the town lies the Centrum house, owned by the in Hammarstrand prominent sobriety movement, which houses the town cinema. It is also where the weekly Bingo play is held every Thursday. The town center ends with a closed down gas station to my right followed by a red brick schoolhouse with a library to my left. The school for pupils between ten and fifteen is named after a local, Anders Olov, who emigrated to America and made a fortune out of gold and platinum. Across the road from one of the grocery stores, close to the Centrum-house, is the town hall. It was the center of Ragunda local government during the times of the older administration and remained the administrative center also after the reform in the 1970's, when todays municipality was instituted. Just like the school, it is a red brick building now hiding behind a parking-lot. The two buildings testify to a time of Swedish economic success and public investments. They constitute a reminder of the public presence in the town and the rationalizations process of the Swedish administrative machinery, the result of increasing tasks concerning social service and welfare for the municipalities, formulated by the state in the middle of the 20th century. The need for more rational and larger units led to a first merging of municipalities in 1952 followed by a second one initiated in 1962 (Hedenborg & Kvarnström 2009). Even though the creation of larger municipalities was initiated in 1962, the process stretched over a long time. Ragunda municipality grew larger and took its present form in 1974 when the neighboring municipalities Stugun and Fors were incorporated. In spite of this enlargement, Ragunda with its around 5500 inhabitants still is one of Sweden's smallest municipalities.



Central Hammarstrand

The town Hammarstrand could be considered consisting of three very closely located villages: Hammarstrand, or Hammarn, Kullsta, where the primary-school is situated and Kånkback. Hammarn mainly consists of the area around the main street Centralgatan. The villages lie so close together, that it is hard for an outsider to tell where one village ends and the next one begins, but the hammarstranders know to which village they belong. Over all, the distance between villages in the area is small and the number of villages large. When interviewing hammarstranders I cannot really restrict myself to talking to people from the main town. I need to include stories from the nearby villages and hamlets of Pålgård, Gevåg, Bölestrand, Krokvåg and Krångede, which are tightly linked to Hammarstrand through its role as the area service center. In the 50's and 60's, all of the villages and hamlets had their own grocery stores, many had several. Gevåg, Krokvåg and Krångede had their own schools and post offices. Interviewees born in the 30's and 40's remember having everything they needed for their daily life within the villages and travels down to Hammarstrand were rare and restricted to occasions like doctor's appointments, visits to the veterinary and purchases of certain goods. In those decades, the villages were full of smallholdings with three, four, five cows, a pig, some chickens and one or two horses. "As good as everyone with a plot of land had animals", Märta, born in the 40's, tells me. This background is shared by most of my informants. Bertil, Märta, Jan, Laila and Magda grew up on smallholdings in Hammarstrand or in the surrounding villages. Per's parents stopped keeping animals the same year he was born. The smallholdings fed the families, and if there was any surplus production it was sold to the local grocery store or, after the second world war, delivered to the dairy in Hammarstrand. This trade rarely resulted in cash. It was rather a barter trade where milk or eggs were exchanged for other products provided by the store. When thinking back, my interviewees remember a community where the breadwinning activities were mainly centered to the own farm. "One never had any money to spend", is a common comment among them. The activities on the smallholdings made up the foundation of the household economy, but were normally supplemented by forest work, flotation or construction work, carried out by the men. Such work provided the household with some cash used to pay off mortgages or to purchase certain necessities. The stories about these times create a picture of a near to cashless community. This changed gradually as the smallholdings were replaced by larger, more professionalized farming units on the one hand and salaried employments on the other. The development is not unique for Hammarstrand, but took place in large parts of Sweden during the second half of the 1900's. It is often understood as a result of political goals and decisions throughout the 40's and 50's concerning the agricultural sector, which was considered inefficient and therefore in need of rationalization to accomplish a higher level of self-sufficiency and to provide the flourishing industry with more labor (Hedenborg & Kvarnström 2009).

As my informants grew up, some continued farming, others left the traditional path and started working in the industry or in state or local administration built up by the young welfare state. Today, there are only a few farms left in the area. The smallholdings were part of the old society and the informants who chose professionalized farming before salaried

employments stopped producing milk and sold their cows in the end of the 80's. The traditional flotation is long since replaced by modern lumber cars and forest work is, just like farming, now carried out by a few, managing large machines. During their lives hammarstranders born in the 30's and 40's have experienced large changes to Hammarstrand and to Sweden at large. The traditional area characterized by agriculture and forestry underwent large changes fueled by the industry, modernization and the welfare state project. The development is two sided. One side is made up by welfare state policy that made life better and safer. Stable pensions, childcare and general social insurance belong to this side. The other side created wealth and optional life courses somewhere else, resulting in people leaving the area and depleting Hammarstrand. Both sides are part of the same welfare society, why it can be read as both enabling and preventing the development in Hammarstrand.

2.2 Åmotfors

To the visitor, Åmotfors looks like the typical Swedish small town. When I arrive to the western Värmland town on a Thursday night in February, the snowy, empty streets are lightened up by orange street lights. We are three people, me, my brother Erik and his girlfriend Isabell, squeezed into a small Nissan, traveling down road 61. 20 kilometers ahead of us is Norway. The road is a modern 2 + 1, partly with a steady cable barrier in the middle. We drive by something that looks like an industry area and turn left. "Are we there?", I ask since the speed does not increase after the turn. "Yes, this is it", Isabell, who grew up in Åmotfors, replies. The car passes the railway station where the trains to Norway stop. "There is a train going directly to Örebro leaving from here, the Oslo-train", says my brother, who lives in that city. Behind the train station a giant white moose towers. It decorates the roof of the inn *The White Moose*. The inn, which used to house guest of all sorts, now only accepts closed parties and it is no longer possible for the åmotforsers to have a Friday night beer there. We pass yet some industry buildings. In one large white building the light is still on. "What is that?", I ask. "This is where the gym is", Isabell replies. Through the large windows I can see people pulling weights.

We continue down a quiet street lined with houses from the middle decades of the 20th century. On my left hand side, I see two rows of houses before the lake stretches out. To my right stands a large white house. It is the old farm house on whose grounds most of the houses on the street were built. The construction of the modern houses was initiated by the paper factory, one of the towns' two large employees. The factory is situated just outside of central Åmotfors and was founded in 1897 (Schotte, 1958). The other one, the projectile factory *Norma* started its business four years later. Not unexpectedly, the projectile factory had an intense production during the second world war, employing around 1000 people. The industry has been the driving force behind the expansion of the town. From having been only a trading center for surrounding villages, supervened through the construction of the north western main railway line, Åmotfors grew from 251 residents in 1905 to 998 36 years later (ibid.). Initially the industries were run by hydro power from the river Kölaälven, whose

uneven water flow limited the expansion of the industry. At the end of the 30's, the industry in Åmotfors got access to electricity generated from other sources, which enabled the industry to grow. The following increased tax revenues allowed for the municipality to develop the town. Åmotfors made up its own administrative unit (municipalsamhälle) up until 1961 when it became part of Eda municipality (Ekman 2009). Today, the municipality consists of three towns: Charlottenberg, Åmotfors and Koppom. Among the three towns, Åmotfors is the one situated closest to the nearest city Arvika, 20 kilometers south east of Åmotfors.

The day after my arrival I walk along the rail road towards the town center. Opposite the rail way-crossing lies *Norma*, the projectile factory. I cross the tracks and walk left out on the main street. Large front windows reveal that all houses facing the street used to house shops. Some of them are now empty. I pass a tattoo studio, the local bank, an Asian restaurant and a closed down radio and television shop, still having old televisions on display. I ask Isabell about something that looks like a restaurant and receive an unsure answer: "Gambling machines? A pizzeria? I do not know, they open and close all the time".



Central Amotfors

After a turn, I can see the well-known signs of the grocery store *Konsum* and oppositely is a red brick building housing the library. The red brick building next to it used to be the post office and a second grocery store, but now holds part of Eda municipality high school. They offer education in restaurant and electricity work, but do not have many students anymore. According to some of my interviewees the municipality does not market them enough. The town center also has a church built in the early 60's and the community hall (Folkets hus) where a second-hand store is lodged. Apparently, the placing of the church caused some discussion among worried amotforsers in the 50's and 60's, who meant that a church should not be placed next to a house hosting dances. Nevertheless, it did not change the location.

Behind the church I glimpse the nursing home Älvgården and to my left, the cape Älvudden stretches with its square ground plots. The neighborhood was built by the paper factory in

the 1940's, as home-crofts for factory workers. This action of social responsibility, common in the old industry towns, goes hand in hand with the folkhem-vision, stated in the parliament 1928 by the social democratic leader Per-Albin Hansson (Hedenborg & Kvarnström 2009: 284). With a goal of social and economic equality, the Swedish state took measures for the development of the population, to improve the living situation and to fight unemployment. In Åmotfors, such work was carried out by the factories. Norma too helped its workers to improve their housing through offering its employees financial support to build houses. In return, the workers of both Norma and the paper factory had to stay at the workplace for a certain number of years. Additionally, both the paper factory and Norma used to own tenement houses. Most of those houses were built during the post war period, which was a golden age for the Swedish industry. The industry was blossoming and needed more manpower which often came from the agricultural sector (Magnusson 2000: 200). With Europe in ruins, the Swedish intact industry ran at full speed and enabled both state and private business to develop the country and the welfare society.

Over all the two factories have had a large impact on the physical Åmotfors as well as the cultural. Most of my informants have lived in one of the factories' houses or neighborhoods at one point of time. Margaretha, born in the 1950's, grew up in the Norma-house, a tenant building built by the factory. Ingela grew up on Älvudden, where Ewert, Bo and Hanna currently live and where the Olssons used to live up until some years ago. Sune has lived in the Norma-house and now lives in a house which he and his wife built with financial support from Norma. The paper factory and Norma were also involved in the founding of the Community Hall and the People's Park which constituted the larger part of the town entertainments up until the 70's. Ewert and Inga, both in their eighties, grew up in the worker's houses surrounding the paper factories Amotfors and Kroppsta. The houses surrounding the factories made up small towns of their own, where the fathers of all families worked in the factory. The simple red wooden houses were filled with children running from door to door. The housing was simple - mostly one room and a kitchen, an outhouse and rabbits in cages alongside the walls of the buildings. As usual in old factory towns, the factory accounted for the welfare of its workers and widows and retirees had free rent (Hedenborg & Kvarnström 2009). It was in the worker's town that the first cooperative grocery store opened its doors 1906 in a storage room deeded by the paper factory. Eventually the old worker's houses were not considered fulfilling the desired standard of housing. The demolition of the houses started in 1967 (Kindström et. al 1993).



The town hall in Amotfors

The transition from agriculture to industry work, which took place in the youth of my Hammarstrand informants, occurred earlier in Åmotfors. In contrast to Hammarstrand, none of my Åmotfors informants have worked on a farm as adults. They have all worked in the town. Almost all have, at a certain point of time, worked in either one of the factories, some in both. "[Everybody] wanted to work at Norma or the paper factory, because they had much higher salaries", Waldemar tells me. Even though the post-war economic success started coming to an end in the late 60's, the factories in Åmotfors soldiered on. They survived the oil crisis of the 70's, the inflation of the 80's and the financial crisis of the 90's. Both the paper factory and Norma have experienced crises and workers have been laid off, but through adjustments and rationalizations, they have both managed to keep the production running. Today Norma specializes in high quality hunting ammunition and the paper factory in high quality Kraft paper. Together the factories employ a few hundred people.

After some walking I reach one of Åmotfors' three preschools. A little bit further down the road lies the elementary school – a bright brick building, built in the 50's and extended over time. The oldest children in one of the preschools use a house in the school area, but will have to move soon, since the school needs the space. There is simply no room for the large batches of children. We walk back to the main road and back over the ridge. Up there, there are some houses looking older then the for Åmotfors typical 50's and 60's houses. We pass a home for handicapped on our way down. An abandoned gas station lies side by side with the fire station. One of *Värmlandstrafiken's* trains passes on its way back from Oslo.

3 Bicycle shops

It is my last day in Hammarstrand. I have driven to the hamlet Gevåg, some kilometers outside the town. Outside is beautiful spring winter and the snow lies like a firm layer over the fields surrounding the small village road that took me to Jan's and Margareta's house. The three of us are sitting in the living room with a clear view of the snow-covered fields and the forest-encrusted mountains behind them. It is a view which holds the power of making people cry. We are sitting around the living room table in the room that was used as the hamlet classroom before the school was built in the late 19th century. The school was closed down in the 60's, a fate it shared with many other small village schools. Instead, the school house now holds the village association. Jan and Margareta remember together and are jointly telling me their story. Jan grew up in the village Krokvåg, the next village on the road to Östersund. Like many others Jan's family lived off their small farm and on work in the forest, logging and carpentry. After school and some years at home on the farm, Jan attended a school for garage work and spent some years working in garages in the region. Eventually Jan and Margareta, who met when Jan worked in Margareta's home town, moved to Stockholm where Margareta got a job as a kindergarten teacher. In the beginning of the 70's, the couple moved back to Ragunda, after having a summerhouse in Gevåg since the end of the 60's. A lot has changed since the late 60's, they tell me. The small hamlet, which today does not have any shops, once housed a post office, two grocery stores and a bike shop.

Bikes, bike shops and sport shops are recurring elements in the stories about both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. Krångede, too, had a sport shop, as did Åmotfors. Hammarstrand still has the store *Bicycles and Sport*. The importance of the sport- and bike shops is emphasized through the many stories presenting the bike as the obvious mean of transportation in past times Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. Judith remembers when she first moved to Åmotfors in 1948, there was not a single car outside the factory. Instead the parking lot was filled with bikes. Lena, who grew up in a town 10 kilometers outside Hammarstrand, tells stories about biking to choir rehearsals, to the cinema and to dances. Inga, born in the 30's in Åmotfors, used to bike to her confirmation classes in Eda church, ten kilometers outside the town.

"Because there was not that many cars then. My parents, they did not have a car. So, it was for me to bike." (Inga)

Hans Ola and Märta used their bikes to get around in Gevåg and Krångede and in to Hammarstrand. Jan got his first bike during the war, when he started third grade. Because of the war, there were no rubber tires. Instead they used supplements which, in combination with homemade leather strap repairs made the rides loud and rather uncomfortable, but the option was to walk.

The bikes have an obvious place in the stories of the Åmotfors and Hammarstrand youth. Even though bikes had been around for a while, they did not make an entrance in the everyday life of people until the interwar years. Bicycle traffic and the sellings of bicycles strongly increased during the 30's. They were particularly frequent among the working class. Until the

car became available for the general mass in the 50's and 60's, the bike was the given way of transportation (Emanuel 2009). Rapidly, bikes became an important feature of the daily lives of the hammarstranders and åmotforsers. They were a speedy alternative to walking that made distances shorter. The technique was affordable and accessible for the common man, even for children.

Apart from the practical change, the bicycles also implied a cultural change. The appearance of bikes in the stories and of bike shops on the country side can be viewed as modernity stomping into the everyday life of rural Sweden. The bikes imply a shift in the old order, a shift into something new. The metal frame on two wheels becomes a symbol of this shift. It stands for a new mobility with shrinking distances, a widened access and increased speed. The practical instrument became a way into a new, bright future and allowed people to leave the past behind. It was part of the process of making the world smaller, a process that continued throughout the century. Even though the actual distances are the same, the perceived distances are shorter. The shift is not so much a shift in an out-there-existing world, but a shift in how we understand the landscape that surrounds us. Such new perceptions of distance can result in new ways of behaving, which changes the social and political landscape (Virilio 1996). In other words, increased speed paves the way to new actions and practices. In Hammarstrand and Åmotfors, the speed brought by the bicycles enabled Lena to go to dances in neighboring villages and Inga to bike to her confirmation classes. It contained a promise of new acquaintances holding the power to form their futures and brought independency to the village and town youth, who now could move freely around an enlarged area. Jan and his friends biked to school instead of taking the bus, since it allowed them to decide themselves when they should go home.

"But of course, we biked, otherwise one had to wait several hours in Hammarstrand before the bus went back." (Jan)

The bike also allowed people from surrounding villages, like Waldemar, to bicycle commute in to town and work in the Åmotfors factories. In that way, it became the link between the traditional farmer boys and modern life in the factory. It is a cog in the wheel of modernity. Other parts of this modern life, also contributing to shrinking distances were the new instant medias. Radio and daily newspapers presented news from other parts of the country or from abroad and connected small rural towns with the rest of the world (Virilio 1996). Telephones simplified contact with friends and relatives far away - in real time! The increased contact with the world out there also has implications for how people understand their town, their place in the world. It is in contact with the foreign that the familiar becomes clear (Ehn 1993). Without a there, there is no here. Without others, there is no we. Increased contact means more others and otherer others. Before, being åmotforser meant not being from Charlottenberg. Today it also means not being from Karlstad, Stockholm, Berlin and New York. Along with the increased contact comes the wish to be a bit more like the modern others. Luckily, the decreased distance also meant new products, which brought some of Stockholm and New York to Hammarstrand and Åmotfors. Lena tells me about the

fantastically modern nylon stockings that replaced the old silk stockings with suspenders attached to a girdle. The new garment was modern and simple to use, but rather cold for the Swedish winters.

"Then nylon stockings came along, they were so revolutionary and extraordinary. And I remember them being so cold. And you know, some people in winter, because you know there were no going out-pants to wear over them, skirts or full-length or anything. Snow pants didn't exit. And I know one who heard about some that had freezed their legs!" (Lena)

The new stockings are described as comfortable and simple to use. They were part of a simpler world that reached Åmotfors and Hammarstrand as well as the rest of Sweden. However, the stockings did not only mean a simpler everyday life. They also became a visible sign of one being modern, a sign of the transformation from simple and obsolete to advanced and modern. They constituted knitted modernity. Since stockings are worn on the body, it transforms the natural body of the past into a civilized modern one. Above all, it is a transformation of the female body, generally viewed as nature unlike men who are understood as culture (cp. Frykman & Löfgren 1989; Ortner 1974). The nylon stockings became a way of not only cultivating the female body, but a way to modernize it. It was a way to bring the world to Hammarstrand, a way of turning your legs New York.

In Åmotfors, New York came slightly closer in the shape of a hot dog. Even though everyone knew the hot dogs were green with mold and the broth filled with snot dripping from the nose of the salesman, they all bought them. The green-shimmering sausages were the only ones available in Åmotfors at that time and people wanted hotdogs. The hotdog man was eventually replaced by kiosks, which were very popular.

"It was quite the thing in those times to go out at night and buy a hotdog at the kiosk. Everyone had to be there, you know" (Ewert)

The hotdogs too become an expression for modernity, for being part of the world. By eating a hotdog, one indulges modern life. One becomes modern. The hot dogs that entered Swedish towns at this time is part of a general development. However, the detailed story about the moldy sausages is part of an individual storytelling, personalizing the arrival of the hot dog, situating it. It happened in Åmotfors and it happened to the people there. In the same way, the freezed legs in Hammarstrand situates the general entrance of stockings to Northern Sweden and Hammarstrand. The development has resulted in individual stories formed by the local, stories that imply that the general development had different effects, depending on local conditions: of the locality, locale of the places and to the relationships of the community (cp. Agnew 1987). The stories also embody the increased welfare and the birth of a youth culture taking place all around the western world at this particular time. People now had money to spend on treats and entertainment and the spare time to enjoy it. Consumerism became an expression for being part of a modern world and a new type of economy of employment and a regular pay check. Bikes, nylon stockings and hotdogs were part of a new world where leisure time challenged the virtue of work, pushed forward by capitalism and the market economy. In 1938 the Swedish parliament decided on two weeks of paid vacation

for workers. The two weeks became three in 1951, four in 1963 and five in 1978. The six days work week was replaced by a five days week 1971. The new times implied a new rhythm that left room for amusement and for wellbeing.

While some were eager to try out the new, others chose to stick to the well-known. Lena's mother never learnt how to ride a bicycle, but her father did. As usual when new techniques are introduced, the old lingers side by side with the new for a time. The new does not erase the old, modernization does not exclude tradition. Instead they coexist or merge together (Gusfield 1967). The passage from the old to the new is stepwise and often generational. In Åmotfors and Hammarstrand it seems to have been mainly the young who, at least first, tried out the new innovations. Even though this transition from traditional to modern and to the new welfare society is a general development, taking place in the whole country around the same time, it is highly affected by the local. Modern influences are not passively revived, but effected by the local context, by people and structures (ibid.). Lena's story about the nylon stockings have a strong element of North Swedish winter weather. The story about the Åmotfors hotdogs is tightly connected to the people living there at that time, to the community and the strong unity which belonged to it. The modern and the general, too, is introduced to and becomes part of an already given local context with its particular terms and conditions. Welfare state reforms such as vacations and reduction of working hours have different outcomes in a town characterized by industry like Åmotfors than in a town dominated by smallholdings and seasonal work such as Hammarstrand, since the reforms mainly concerned industrial workers.

As wealth continued to increase, bikes were replaced by cars as the main means of transportation. A more stable household economy allowed for factory workers, forest workers and farmers to buy a motor vehicle and the car overtook the role as the symbol of modernity and wealth. When the 50's ended and the 60's began, private cars were a rather common sight in both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. Waldemar, born just outside Åmotfors in the 20's, took his car to see Europe. All of a sudden, the continent was within his reach and he spent his vacations in the Alps, in Germany, and in Italy. Distances had decreased further. Speed made the world smaller (cp. Virilio 1986).

The next stop on the journey of symbolic modernization is the self-service gas stations which during the last decades have replaced shop assistants and gas station kiosks in both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. In the same way as the bicycles and private motoring was experienced as a step into the new and better modern world, the closed down gas station are now interpreted as a sign of the opposite. The gas station removes the possibility of interaction when refueling the car and makes it possible to individualize the act of buying gas by entirely assigning the decisions about when, where and how much to the individual. Even though self-service stations might be a technical progress which increases the efficiency, they are interpreted as a sign of dismantling rather than aggradation. To the inhabitants of the towns, the self-service gas stations are an upsetting indicator of degradation. They are a confirmation of the towns being increasingly marginalized. Just as

bicycles and cars seemed to decrease distance, turning the small towns into less remote places, self-service gas stations seem to reverse this, increasing a sense of remoteness.

"Now there is only a grocery store and a sport shop and a clothes shop[...] and a gas station with self-service. Automatic gas station. Back in the days there were three gas stations here![..]Now we hardly have one." (Jan)

The economic growth of the post war period laid the foundation for wealth. The private economy of the hammarstranders and amotforsers followed the national economic development. Sweden was flourishing, salaries were raised and the welfare society was built (Rolén 1990). Welfare provided by state and local governments was complemented by a private welfare, experienced as an increased wellbeing and a simplification of the everyday life through bicycles, nylon stockings and cars. The structural changes constituted by the prospering economy and an expanding welfare society met the locals in the form of new individual possibilities (cp. Giddens 1990). Modernity offered chances and paths other than those offered to previous generations. Jan studied through a correspondence school, Laila graduated junior secondary school (Realskolan) and started working in a public job center (Arbetsförmedlingen). Bertil bought a tractor. Childcare expanded and both Margaretha in Åmotfors and Margareta in Hammarstrand were part of starting up preschools. The factories worked at full speed: hired, built houses and offered factory workers two bedroom apartments. The following economical regression seems to be understood as if all what was built up and improved now was torn down. Modernity keeps on, the simplifications continues. But a more efficient gas station is not received in the same way as stockings or cars. The efficient and rationalized gas stations are perceived as a threat and an indication of welfare is being dismantled and possibilities taken away. They become a sign of the marginalization of the towns. The indignation over the gas stations notes a fear of further dismantling, that would make the town an impossible place to lead a good life. So, what went wrong? Did the world become too modern for Hammarstrand and Åmotfors, now left in the wakes of modernization?

In a world moving at an increased speed, Hammarstrand and Åmotfors can be seen as outdated, as too slow for the new, speedy modern world. With the invention of new techniques comes unintended consequences and the *Invention of Accidents* (Virilio 1986). In other words, every new technique has its downsides. With the car comes the possibility of car crashes, with the stock market come stock exchange crashes. In the same way, automatic gas stations and rationalization are consequences of potentiation and modernization. At least in the local settings of Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. The self-service gas stations are efficient and convenient, but they are perceived as a degradation of the quality of life since the kiosk is gone.

Efficiency and modernization have their own logics. They march on and rationalize the old. Since innovations and reforms are embedded in local conditions, they have different results in different places. Some innovations and reforms, like the bicycle, nylon stockings cars and statutory leave are experienced locally as improving the possibilities for action. They

either improve or do not affect basic social relations. Others, such as the automatic gas stations, are perceived as hollowing out such relations and thereby limiting the possibilities to act. The gas station is no longer a meeting place where social interaction takes place and community is in the making. Since place is made out of social relations (cp. Massey 2005), the limitation of social interaction becomes a threat to the towns. This is not the case in other settings, in places where time is short and meeting places many. Nevertheless, in Åmotfors and Hammarstrand it becomes threatening. The reforms and inventions are brought to Åmotfors and Hammarstrand from the outside and become parts of the frame that border peoples acting space. The automatic gas stations originate from something out of their reach, something unknown. Automatic gas stations are something that is being done to them and people experience that they are being rationalized away.

Despite the informants' experiences of threatening over-rationalization, modernization seems mainly to have improved and simplified the everyday life in Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. The informants remember the 50's and 60's as times of innovation and improvement. It is mainly during the later decades that people remember rationalization as something negative. The story about the bicycles is a story about the entering of modernity. The gas-stations however become a transit to an increasingly uncontrollable late modernity where collectivity is exchanged for individualization and in which small rural towns such as Åmotfors and Hammarstrand do not really seem to fit. They become a sign of dismantling of the collective, social society and a shift from collective to individualized solutions (cp. Giddens 1990). They become a sign of control lost to threatening structures.

4 The lost shops

I am walking through central Åmotfors. It is Sunday night. The movie at the community hall is soon about to start and three young women are smoking a last cigarette before they go inside. Apart from them, I do not meet any people on my walk back home. Konsum is closed, but the Asian restaurant still holds a few guests. The air is cold and the snow is glittering on the ground as I pass the empty display windows of the main street.

A frequent theme in my interviews has been the lack of shops. This is part two of the story of modernity hitting Åmotfors. There is not a single åmotforser that does not mention how many shops there used to be in the town center.

"Just imagine how many shops we had here back in the days! We had everything here" (Sune)

The stories commonly reveal a feeling of pride over the fact that the town used to be more or less self-sufficient. The stories present a norm against which the later development is measured.

"As you can see, there are so many shops there! And we were as good as self-sufficient, we did not need to go in to Arvika or Charlottenberg or anywhere else to shop. We had everything here!" (Margaretha)

At large, the åmotforsers appear content with their town. They describe it as enabling a good everyday life, it is a good place to live. But the pride and contentment is exchanged for a gloomier mood when the story of the past transcends into a story about the future. The established norm is used to prove the extent of the degradation.

"We had a shoe shop and we had a fish shop. And we had a paint shop and clothes, well there were a lot of shops here. So that has changed. Now it is nothing more than Konsum left. And the question is if that one does not vanish as well" (Waldemar).

When talking about the former shops and the change that Åmotfors has gone through, the future does not look so bright. The story can only end in one way.

"Well, Åmot will eventually disappear. Charlottenberg has taken over. Totally. Thanks to this mall, you know. Then we lost everything. Then they closed the ICA-store and then the shops disappeared eventually." (Ewert).

To many of the Åmotforsers, the disappeared shops are a sign of the town declining and finally dying. The recent loss of the pharmacy and the care center, does not seem to have improved the way the åmotforsers perceive the situation. The åmotforsers seem to be grieving the self-sufficient, capable town that is now lost. The opening of the shops was a sign of Åmotfors now taking part in the modernization. The market was growing and even spread out on the country side to be enjoyed by the åmotforsers and other rural communities. However, modernity marched on. Modernity has turned into late modernity, often characterized by industrial dismantling, increased mobility and an increased insecurity (Giddens 1990). The development has changed the town centers of Åmotfors and

Hammarstrand. To the åmotforsers, the empty display windows become a symbol of a dying town and an unstoppable declination. It confirms the accuracy of the narrative of the Swedish country side being dismantled and impoverished (cp. SOU 2017:1). In Eda municipality, commerce is now concentrated to Charlottenberg, which has taken the function as an urban center. Outside of the town there is an enormous shopping mall. It is placed closed to the Norwegian boarder to appeal to the financially strong Norwegian costumers. The concentrated commerce is a consequence of the economic development, the increased mobility and the following market concentration. Locally, the abstract forces behind the development become comprehensible through embodiment. In the same manner as the automatic gas stations, *Centret*, the Charlottenberg shopping mall, becomes the local symbol of the outer forces that have driven the shops and the independency away from Åmotfors. Since the forces running the development are out of their reach, they can do little more than watch their town get stripped off important functions. But at least, the beast has got a face.

At the same time the åmotforsers also claim to be able to affect the outcome, at least for a time. Several åmotforsers argue that shopping their groceries in the local Konsum is a way for them to keep the store. There is room for action within the ongoing process of service decrease. In the same way that an actor is able to exercise agency within structures (cp. Giddens 1987), the åmotforsers have the ability to act within the frames given by economic and societal structures. They are able to influence their reality and their town through their everyday acting, but this requires the ability to resist the grand supply offered at the shopping mall.

A similar story appears in Hammarstrand. Even though Hammarstrand still has quite a lot of shops, the hammarstranders remember a time when they had everything.

"At that time, we had everything in little Hammarstrand, one could say. There were grocery stores, furniture shops, sport shop, two local editorial offices, both Östersundsposten and LT" (Laila)

The Hammarstrand story of shop close-downs also includes the shops in the smaller villages and hamlets around the town. In the same way that Åmotfors small shops have been closed down in favor for shops in Arvika and at the shopping mall, shops around Hammarstrand have been closed down and service and consumption is now centralized to Hammarstrand. The smaller villages contain little more than houses and the villagers have to take the car to ICA, Konsum or any of the shops in Hammarstrand to do their shopping. If they want anything more specific, they have to go in to Östersund or Sundsvall.

In Hammarstrand, the loss of shops is understood as a consequence of declining population and the habit of shopping at the malls in Sundsvall or Östersund. The second cause is the same kind of explanation as the one existing in Åmotfors. The first cause on the other hand, is an echo of the frequently circulated narrative about the dying rural north existing in Sweden. It comes in the form of a narrative about a small northern country which has to sacrifice its remote parts in order not to fall too far behind in a world of global competition (cp. Westholm 2008). Norrland, then, becomes an unavoidable loser in the marketization of

service and welfare in a modern, neoliberal world (Westholm & Persson 1994). Stories about a depopulating north are frequent features in the media debate (cp. Back 2013; Molander 2016). Norrland is being robbed off its resources to finance investments mainly in the Stockholm region, talked about in terms of colonization (cp. Tidholm 2012; Lidström 2016). In the articles, population figures from the 50's are compared to today, showing a gloomy difference. The articles are commonly accompanied by photographies of isolated, lonely houses and bumpy roads stretching for miles through a forest covered landscape. The solution is often thought to be relocation of state agencies and companies, improved infrastructure, maintained service levels and increased tax equalization (SOU 2017:1). Over the last decade, the increased number of accommodations for asylum seekers located in small, rural towns and municipalities are seen as a possibility to increase the population figures. If they choose to stay (cp. Hansen et al. forthcoming). Both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand have a considerable share of asylum seekers, unaccompanied refugee minors and people who recently received their residence permits. In both towns, they have had a positive effect on the population figures. There is now ongoing work with integration, to make the new inhabitants stay and permanent the figures. Nevertheless, the story appearing in Hammarstrand is a local version of the national, well established Norrland-narrative.

But why is self-sufficiency and independency so important to the inhabitants of Hammarstrand and Åmotfors? The stories of how good it used to be are not only nostalgia, but also an expression of what is wrong with how it is today (cp. de Certeau 1984). For quite some time Åmotfors and Hammarstrand were very local towns, at least in the eyes of their inhabitants. As long as the towns were self-sufficient, the hammarstranders and åmotforsers did not experience any larger influences on their lives from the outside world. Life was local and therefore safe. However, during the twentieth century, local communities have been increasingly affected by influences from the outside world in the form of industrialization, urbanization, centralization of markets, mass media and increased infrastructure and transportation (Cohen 1985). In Amotfors and Hammarstrand this has had visual local effects, the close downs of shops being the one most commonly referred to by the inhabitants. The close-downs have a larger meaning than merely having to take the car to the shopping mall or to neighboring cities. The structural changes of late modernity also affect the local acting space. The shops make up public spaces where people meet. They attract people to the main street and create a vivid town center. A shrinking shopping street, therefore, limits the meeting places in town. Since meeting places enable interaction, the close downs limit coaction and social organization. When the chances to meet and interact are being limited, people perceive a shrinking acting space. The structural frames within which people act are being tightened, with the consequence of people needing to find new ways of acting, within the new framing (cp. Giddens 1990). It is experienced as diminishing the possibilities for the åmotforsers and hammarstranders to affect their lives. A vivid, self-sufficient town offers many chances to interact and, as a result, to act commonly. Therefore, a town with many shops becomes an affectable town - a place where one's life can be controlled locally. A town where the shops are lost is also a town where chances of co-operation are lost.

Meeting places are also important for the exercise of local identity, which emerges when people actively reflect on their everyday actions. Because our own identity becomes more visible when contrasted to that which is different, such reflection takes place in the meeting with others (Giddens 1990). When experiencing the life of people who differ from us, our own identity, as well as the locally shared identity, becomes clearer. We are who we are through what we are not. This is manifested through statements such as 'this could never work in Stockholm' or 'I could never live in a city, it's too anonymous', repeatedly proclaimed in both Hammarstrand and Åmotfors. The stories about what does not work in Stockholm, is really a story of what is uniquely possible in Åmotfors and claiming cities are too anonymous means simultaneously claiming that Hammarstrand offers the possibility to be someone important. Meeting in the local shop, talking about local life encourages reflection over how we are, and contrasting it to what we are not. The continuity of self- and local identity creates a feeling of predictability and security, closely connected to place through the perceptibility and stability of local particularities and relations (ibid.). Hence, the activities and settings that constitute the base of people's security are clearly situated. They happen somewhere, in Åmotfors and in Hammarstrand. However, the conditions for these activities and settings are being increasingly disconnected from the local. In Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, shop-close downs mean changed settings for exercising identity, caused by forces or structures from the outside. The local place and identity are structured by forces experienced as locally insusceptible, which creates insecurity.

In a changing world, the local often becomes the safe retreat (Harvey 1996). It stands for something permanent in an ever-changing world. But, as stated above, this permanence is constantly threatened and has to continuously adjust to conditions dictated in the outside world, which becomes visible to the amotforsers and hammarstranders through the shopclosedowns. In other words, the frames within which people act have changed and appear to be changing in an increased pace and from a greater distance. The stories about old Åmotfors where the factories set the town pace, describe a community where the conditions for acting mainly were determined by local structures and institutions. When talking about today, both the amotforsers and the hammarstranders express a feeling of these conditions being dictated from somewhere else. In Hammarstrand, this somewhere else, is mainly Stockholm, the place of national policymaking. In Åmotfors the conditions that disfavor them are set by the municipality in Charlottenberg and by abstract market forces. The shift from local to distant implies that the towns are being marginalized. The towns of former times are described as centers, as somewhere where things happened. Now, things happen somewhere else. The feeling of marginalization is reinforced by the experience of decisions, forming the conditions of local life, being made in Charlottenberg, Stockholm or somewhere further distant. They are not dictated by someone known, but by absent others, abstract people in an abstract somewhere else (cp. Giddens 1990). The feeling of having the conditions of their lives controlled by some kind of absent others from an unverifiable distance becomes ever present through the empty display windows. It marks the disrupted continuity, which seem to rob the åmotforsers and hammarstranders of their safe haven. The towns have gone from local to global, from central to marginalized.

The improved mobility, mass communication and market forces mentioned above can lead to, what Cresswell refers to as *Erosion of space*, the feeling of the local withering away (Cresswell 2004:43). Places become increasingly alike and the uniqueness of the local decreases. This is often experienced as a threat against the local community. It also means that inhabitants have to understand their town anew. Since it is through the local that we meet, interpret and thereby understand the world, the renegotiation of the local town also implies a renegotiation of our world perception (Cresswell 2004). The stories of the old shopping streets are also stories about the safe community where everyone had their place, where the world was local and predictable. Åmotforsers and hammarstranders celebrate the memory of those times through stories and nostalgic activities, which, at the same time are celebrations of the local identity.

When talking about the past, the informants often bring up the dances of the 50's and 60's. Both towns had a vivid dancing scene with bands playing several times a week. In Åmotfors the dances that used to be held in the People's Park and the Community Hall and in Hammarstrand on Trätjordsbacken and the Centrum House. Many are the stories about expectant teenagers on bicycles or kick-sleds on their way to dances. People are proud of the well-known artists that visited their little town. The Åmotfors the People's Park is remembered as something they built up themselves, with their own time and sweat. It becomes a symbol of their collective strength and potential. The dancing events declined heavily after the 70's, the bands became too expensive and the audience stopped showing up. In Åmotfors the People's Park has been re-awoken once every summer when a well-known Swedish artist has performed.

"...you are welcome here in July, when we have a rock festival in the people's park. Because then we triple the population." (Bo)

The event attracts a lot of people and veteran cars cruise around the town. It occurs to be important to the åmotforsers since it is mentioned by many of the people I talk to. In Hammarstrand, some efforts have been made to re-awaken Trätjordsbacken, but without any success. People experience it as harder to gather people around an event today. They tell me it is hard to compete against the range of activities offered in the cities or through television and computers. Instead, Hammarstrand has Vildhussveckan, a week of activities in Hammarstrand and in the surrounding villages and hamlets, attracting quite a lot of people. Different villages have different events, several connected to traditional foods of the area, such as special kinds of bread and fresh cheese from the hill farms (fåbodar). Those local events, with features collected from the old villages appear to be a celebration of the place and a possibility for the older generations to show the younger how the villages once were - at least in their memories. The events prove to the åmotforsers and hammarstranders that the towns still exist and that the communities are still able to achieve something together. It is a way of marking the inhabitant's bonds to the towns, a way to prove themselves as

authentically rooted in and connected to the places (cp. Massey 2013). In this sense, the Vildhussvecka and the People's park become celebrations of the towns' local identities and a way for the inhabitants to separate themselves from *them*, people who are not hammarstranders or åmotforsers. The events are ways to emphasize social boundaries and local uniqueness in a time when physical places are becoming increasingly alike (cp. Cohen 1985). They are celebrations of belonging to a specific place, a celebration of the own uniqueness. In the same way as the nostalgic stories of the golden age of the towns are a way of understanding their present situation, the celebration of the local and of their particularity implies a protest against the deterioration of the towns. Through the acknowledgement of their right to the place, the åmotforsers and hammarstranders claim the deterioration as being unrightful. By carrying out larger tasks the communities demonstrate their collective strength and what they can achieve despite the frames set by outer structures. It becomes a way of manifesting that they do not accept the current development.



The People's Park in Amotfors

However, the new framing does not only limit action. It also enables new ways and new types of action. An increased mobility that, joint together with a global market and large corporations, results in shopping malls and disappearing town shops is simultaneously an enabling factor for life in the towns. Mobility has caused an increase of the field on which the everyday life of the inhabitants is lived. The children of Åmotfors can commute to junior high schools and high schools in nearby towns and cities. They have access to activities and stores in the city. This means that people in Åmotfors and Hammarstrand can buy the very latest products on the market, the towns do not have to lag behind in means of consumption. They too can shop cheaply in large business chains in nearby cities. Consequently, the same mobility that is understood as having taken shops and services away, has also resulted in more service for the rural population. Some scholars claim that the extent of service for the rural population never has been as high as it is today (cp. Westholm 2017). Digitalized solutions and broad band have brought the world closer to the local villages and towns. The possibility to commute to work and have business partners outside of the towns is enabled

through the increased mobility of both people and goods. It has enabled Jan to sit in Gevåg and sketch for large companies in western Sweden and in Stockholm. It has enabled him to live in Ragunda. However, this late modern society requires a flexible individual and skills others than the ones demanded by the old society. The claim assumes that everybody is a part of the modern, which is not the case. For elderly åmotforsers without a car, a blood test requires public transportation with long waiting time. Digitalized solutions exclude those without computer skills. A mobile world demands mobile people.

From a welfare perspective, the lost shops can be seen as an indication of people having better lives. Most of the shops in Åmotfors have not closed because of bankruptcy, but because the owners have become too old to run them and no one has wanted to take over. Running a shop six days a week with little pay is no longer considered an attractive job. The time when the shops started, working life looked different. In Åmotfors, factory workers worked six days a week for a rather small pay check. In Hammarstrand, people worked long and many days on the farm or in the forest. The hammarstranders describe a community where work was supposed to cover food and accommodation. Cash was rare. At large, days were long and the pay was small. In that context, six days a week in a shop appear to be a good job, for those with that opportunity. A small population implied small profit, but it was enough to survive on. However, as the economy developed and the welfare extended, people's expectations on working hours and pay have changed. Today, people work less and make more money. Working alone in a shop six days a week does not appear to be a desirable occupation. The market has broken through and created new expectations of profitability and consumption. Compared to other occupations in the town or its surroundings, it is not possible to feed on running a shop in a small town. But it is rather the conditions of the alternative occupations that have changed, not necessarily the revenues and hours of small rural shops. The framing of peoples acting space have changed, new alternative ways of breadwinning have occurred which has changed people's idea of acceptable working conditions. People's understanding of a good life has changed.

Ultimately, the story of the disappeared shops is a story of declining service, of population decrease and of an increased marginalization. It belongs to a shift from a constructing modernity which built up and improved the towns, to a dismantling late modernity marginalizing them. The shift presents new conditions, but also new possibilities. The actual close-downs are part of a description of actual events, but the narratives emphasize what has happened to the communities. The substance of the narratives is the claim of having been treated unfairly. It can be expressed very directly, as in the Norrland narrative told in Hammarstrand, or more subtly as in the Åmotfors stories about the previous self-sufficiency and the Charlottenberg shopping mall. All narratives contain an expression of marginalization and victimization. By expressing their marginalization, town inhabitants are protesting against this development (cp. Hansen 1998). Consequently, taking on the role as a victim does not mean to surrender, but standing up for ones right to existence.

5 The entry of the industry

I meet Ewert in the museum he built up after retiring from the paper factory. The walls of the corridor leading in to the well looked after museum-hall are decorated with old black and white pictures of Åmotfors and its inhabitants. Ewert is sitting behind a table, surrounded by historical objects from the town and the nearby barbican. He starts to tell me the story of his life at the paper factory. Ewert started working at the factory directly after school in the middle of the 40's. Having grown up in one of the workers houses on the factory hill with several older relatives already working at the factory, his future career was rather clear to him, as for many of the boys in Åmotfors.

"Well, it was like this, when someone went to confirmation classes and was done with school, then he was supposed to start at the factory. They stood there and waited for them. The only difference was that the ones that did not take off their confirmation suits, they ended up in the office and the others ended up on the factory floor. That's the way it was!" (Ewert)

In the 40's Ewert was paid 44 öre per hour and worked six days a week. In his spare time, he and the other boys from the factory played football on a field they had built themselves. Ewert describes a caring, family like work place, where the workers were taken care of and where the old-school men, who had worked at the factory since the beginning of the century, introduced the newcomers to their newly entered work life. In those times, the factories were already well established and a strong institution in the community, employing hundreds of workers each. Most of my Åmotfors interviewees started working at either one of the factories directly after school. The older generation, born in the 30's and 40's, started at the age of 13 or 14. Many of them followed in the footsteps of their relatives.

"You know, this company almost became like a family business." (Ewert).

Except for when he did his military service and two years at Norma during a time of crisis for the paper factory in the 80's, Ewert worked at the factory until his retirement in 1996. Bo, born in the middle of the 40's, went to a school for garage work after he finished elementary school and ended up at Norma, where he stayed almost 48 years. Waldemar started working at Norma in 1939, when he was 14 years old and stayed for 49 years. The three men tell me about a consistent working life, shortly interrupted by the mandatory military-service. In their lives, the well fare society has been experienced through work at the factory, in the patterns of everyday life consisting of biking or walking to work, fulfilling their duties, eating their lunch, having supper with the family, reading the paper and going to bed. Welfare exists in the everyday lives of people. Thus, the daily routine becomes the spine of the local welfare society. In their stories about past times, the factories are always in the center. They appear to structure the community and the local life. The stories present an Åmotfors where a large share of the population worked in the factories and therefore had similar working conditions and hours. It seems to have created an everyday pace that structured the days in the town. Since they worked together, most åmotforsers also knew each other. This is a re-occurring

theme during my time in Åmotfors. Åmotforsers, regardless of their age, remember a town where everybody did not only know each other, but also each other's relatives. When people from outside moved to Åmotfors, it was mainly because they had gotten a job at one of the factories and they quickly became integrated in the local life. Altogether, this created a feeling of a safe community without too large doubts and worries about the future.

"There were jobs back then, so one got a job immediately [...]. Three weeks after school I got a job at the factory." (Sune)

Since there was always work in the factories, young Åmotforsers did not have to worry about finding employment. Many of them had parents and grandparents working at the factories, which made it natural for the children to start working there too. The factories did not only structure the daily pace of the town, but also the longer time span, such as life courses. The informants describe the old Åmotfors as a cyclic community, where generations went by in a similar way. This created a feeling of safeness. On the other hand, this also seem to have created expectations on how they should live their lives. People who left Åmotfors to live somewhere else or for further studies, could be perceived as trying to be superior and thinking too highly of themselves.

"Well, people that maybe did not want to start at the paper factory then, or at Norma, [...] but wanted to do something else, maybe study further. I think it was mostly those things." (Ingela)

Anders, who moved to Åmotfors in the beginning of the 90's says that the motto 'never think that you are somebody' is strong in Åmotfors. He means that people who try new things or take chances are looked on with suspicion by the Åmotforsers. He experiences a doubleness in people wishing for things to happen, but meeting new things with great scepticism. Anders refers to this as bruksmentalitet, an industrial community spirit, which connects the attitude to the factories. It suggests that the factories and their structuring of the community have made people think in a certain way (cp. Svensson 2006). If life in Åmotfors has been structured by the factories, both in a shorter day to day basis, what I have called the pace of Åmotfors, and in a longer time frame, the cycles, these two units have made up a rather stable, reproducing community. All communities contain knowledge and symbols that allow its members to understand and ascribe meaning to things (Cohen 1985). There are things that are perceived as true, self-evident and natural. They are part of the understanding of the way things are, which creates local tactics and models for action (ibid.). The tactics are local ways of relating to strategies coming from the outside world and together they result in a set of possible actions locally (cp. de Certeau 1984). Being part of the community therefore also means being part of certain understandings, meanings and ways of doing things. To act within the community, to follow the pace and cycles, is to manage and mark the boarders of the community (Cohen 1985). This does not mean that the amotforsers are trapped within community structures. Communities do not exist independent of its members, they exist because their members perceive that they make up a community and through their recognition of its truths. When such truths are not recognized anymore, the community cease to exist. To think that you are somebody special, to leave town for further studies or to start a new

business becomes dangerous, since it challenges the common understanding of what life is supposed to look like. Through such actions, the given cycles and pace of the well-ordered Åmotfors are questioned, and through that, the community itself. To question the natural and the truth also means bringing great insecurity into people's lives. If the truth is not true anymore, then what is? If people questioning these truths are instead talked about as different or even abnormal, the questioning is not legitimate. Instead it legitimizes the truths of the community. Talking about people who go against the local expectations as trying to be superior becomes a way of accentuating who we, the members of the community, are and what we do. It is a way of marking the borders of the community and thereby confirming the existence of an us.

Today, the factories have lost some of their dominance over the everyday life of Åmotfors. Both the pace and cycles seem to have been diluted. The factories' demand for labor has diminished and the Åmotfors life-course is no longer given. Young åmotforsers both move and continue studying, without it being talked about as them thinking they are special. Children of factory workers are encouraged by their parents to go to university. Some of the old attitudes towards the different still linger, the åmotforsers tell me, especially among the older share of the population, but to continue studying does not seem to be perceived as a threat anymore.

No community is isolated from the outside world. Amotfors has always been part of a larger society. However, the intensity of the contact has increased with the ongoing process of globalization, with improved infrastructure, mass media and international markets (Harvey 1996). Today, Åmotfors is characterized by a closer contact with and dependence of the world around the local community. Norma is owned by a Swiss company, operative in several countries spread around the globe. The paper factory is part of a Swedish corporate group with factories in Värmland and Norway. The main share of the stocks is owned by a German investment company. The foundation of the local wealth and welfare is no longer as local as it used to be. Both businesses exist on a rapidly changing global market where international, free flowing capital decide the future of the locally situated factories and workers (cp. Massey 2005:4). The world is also brought closer to Åmotfors through mass media, the Internet and through increased traveling. Gardemoen airport is less than two hours away. The increased contact affects the local cultural identity, which arises in the meeting with others (Ehn 1993). Local identity is not static, but changes with cultural inputs. When put in contrast to something else, the local appears clearly and can cause the given and routinized to be brought into a conscious level (ibid.). This leads to certain features being emphasized as typical and important which creates expressions such as 'In Amotfors, we say hello to each other' (cp. Berg & Hansen 1991:34). However, meeting others can also result in features being changed or replaced by new truths, resulting in changes in the local identity. In Åmotfors, the scepticism towards education and a career outside the concrete factory walls is disappearing. Partly because the factories have decreased their workforce and thereby ruled out the old life cycle for most amotforsers, but also since increased inputs from surrounding communities have affected the truths of the local community and thereby changed the cultural identity of Åmotfors.

Hammarstrand has long been part of the Swedish industry through forestry and flotation. However, the hammarstranders came in direct contact with large scale industry and salaried employment through the construction of large-scale hydroelectric plants, that took off in the 1920's. Märta was born in Krångede in the late 1940's. In her childhood and youth, Krångede was strongly characterized by the hydro plant. The construction of the plant was the largest of its time when it started in 1931. The first stage of the plant was finished in 1936, but construction and expanding continued until the end of the 40's (Rolén 1990). The plant was the first to deliver electricity to middle Sweden and thereby contribute to welfare production in the south. For a limited period of time, the plant also contributed to local wealth. In average, the construction of Krångede hydropower plant employed 350 men. 75 of these were professional, specially trained Water-navvies (Vattenrallare), who stayed in one location until the plant was finished and then moved to the next plant. Some of them lived in barracks that were torn down or moved when the construction of the hydro plant was finished. Remaining workers were recruited locally. Märta describes a divided Krångede where the more well-paid plant workers did not interact much with the locals. Most of them lived closer to the hydro plant in an area called *Trångbo* (Crowdyville).

The construction of the plants created much work in the towns along Indalsälven way into the 50's (Rolén 1990). But, as in Krångede, the management of the plant did not require many workers, not more than some ten (ibid.). Even though the construction of the plants was of great benefit to the area, the management was never a large source of income of the local population. Today, Krångede power plant, as well as the rest of Ragunda municipality's nine hydro plants, are controlled from a distance. Employees are few and the maintenance of the buildings is bought from outside as services when needed. Today Krångede has lost many of its inhabitants, which 2010 were down to 67 (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016).

The power plants are an upsetting topic in Hammarstrand, since they are considered creating national but no local wealth. They employ few and the taxation of both production and the facilities accrue to the state or the municipalities where the head offices are situated, mainly in Stockholm or abroad. Ragunda municipality is, like many other northern inland municipalities, struggling with high expenditures and low incomes. All informants point out the potential of income from the property tax on the plants, a possibility that they perceive has been taken away from them. Between the 40's and the 80's, the property taxes on industry buildings provided municipalities with large income - then they were abolished. They were reintroduced in the 90's, but the receiver of the revenues was changed to the state (Månsson 2015). Today, the property taxes benefit other, more central parts of the country, which antagonizes the hammarstranders. Since they argue that the income from the property taxes on the nine plants would be enough for them to be a prosperous municipality, the deprivation of those taxes is understood and expressed as the reason why the municipality has been forced to accept government grants. By taking the revenue that righteously belongs to the

municipality, the state forces the town to be a burden instead of contributing to society. The hammarstranders mean they have been robbed of their incomes and therefore forced to poverty despite their great natural resources. The allowance check becomes a symbol of their exposure. The claim is part of the far spread and well-known narrative of the dying and exposed north, mentioned above. In the narrative, the hydro plants become a symbol of southern Sweden's far-reaching colonization of the North. Locally, the large concrete constructions are an everyday reminder and a proof of that colonization still going on. The power plants become material to the development of the Norrland-narrative, used to show how the north is a victim of a Stockholm colonization. The plants prove the narrative right.

For quite some time, the hammarstranders and Ragunda municipality have tried to affect the policymakers directly and through organizations. However, the chances of success do not seem very large. The hammarstranders ask themselves why Stockholm politicians would listen to one of the country's smallest municipalities and give up the source of income that the plants constitute. It appears to be a fight between David and Goliath, but the hammarstranders do not seem very self-assure concerning the story's supposedly happy ending. The hydro plant-issue becomes a proof of their marginalization and lack of influence. They are victims of exposure, dominated by the state. In their stories, the hammarstranders present a situation where they lack agency. But there is another side to it. The relation between the state and its citizens can be understood as a social contract, where both sides have rights and responsibilities towards the other (Trägårdh 2014). When exposing Hammarstrand, the state is breaking that contract. Since the hammarstranders do not seem to have the same rights as other citizens, they also do not have the same responsibilities. They too can break their part of the contract. The victimization creates a new space for action, since it blurs some of the restricting frames within which their act. Through telling the narrative of the colonization, the hammarstranders are not only protesting against the exposure, but also claiming their right to act outside the frames dictated by the state. To emphasize marginalization can therefore be viewed as a strategy of creating new action space (Hansen 1998:23). Thus, the Norrland-narrative makes up a protest song of the unfair treatment of the north, a Northern We Shall Overcome, and creates a space for action.

Apart from the hydro plants, the area around Hammarstrand did not house a lot of industries. I the 1950's, Hammarstrand was still mainly an agricultural district, dominated by smallholders. However, the domination of the market economy after the second world war began to put an end to traditional smallholder farms. They were considered inefficient and could no longer employ as many, which led to a high degree of unemployment and outmigration from forestry- and agriculturally dominated regions. Between 1950 and 1970 the share of the Jämtland population working in the agricultural sector declined from 43 to 14 % (Rolén 1990). To many of the young residents of the rural north, industry work offering permanent employment and higher salaries, was a tempting alternative. Since Hammarstrand lacked industry, such work often meant moving. According to Jan and Margareta many people from Ragunda have moved to Stockholm over the years. When the couple moved there in 1961 they were far from the first ones to leave Ragunda for Stockholm. Jan already

had two older brothers in the capital and the couple knew several people from Ragunda with whom to socialize.

"But if you think about this moving to Stockholm, it was almost like a fever." (Margareta)

"We had an expression here. You know what AMS is? The national labor market board. But here we said All Must South." (Jan).

During the 60's, the welfare state labor market policy aimed at supplying the growing industry with labor and to remedy the unemployment that was high in some regions (Rolén 1990). The policy included grants for moving and retraining for new jobs. By some, this was viewed upon as forcing people to move south, which can be seen in the expression mentioned above by Jan. Like the case of the hydro plants the hammarstranders express a feeling of being let down by the state. They express a sense of being exposed by a national policy which left few alternatives to moving, why it stripped the town of its inhabitants. Again, the narrative presents the hammarstranders as victims and therefore legitimizes disobedience towards the state. They do not have to support a state that does not support them.

The hammarstranders still experience that the young population moves. Since the closest high school is situated in Östersund, most teenagers leave the town at the age of 16. After that, most do not return home, my interviewees tell me. The hammarstranders experience that they are losing their young population, which is a threat to the town. Once again, they perceive the situation as hard to change. The solution would be to create more jobs locally, but without state policy working in their favor, the solution is not perceived as being realistic. The hammarstranders find themselves in the hands of the state, a state which does not show any interest in their well-being. The situation has created an expectation on young people to move.

"And the ones that said, I'm not going anywhere, I'm staying here, well, he was more or less, he was out of his mind. We already knew that there is nothing here. You're supposed to go to Stockholm, god damn it!" (Hans-Ola)

Just like many other hammarstranders, Hans-Ola spent a period of his life outside of Ragunda. If in past times, life in Åmotfors was structured in cycles of the factories, the Hammarstrand cycle was characterized by occupational multiplicity, irregular employments and periods away. Some left for good, others came back. Hammarstrand has a long history of out-migration. In earlier centuries, many hammarstranders left for America. Today, the hammarstranders talk about people leaving for Norway or southern Sweden.

Åmotfors too, has become more of a commuter town when compared to its older days. Additionally, an increased part of the houses in town are now owned by Norwegians, who, because of the short distance, can live cheaper in Sweden and work in Norway. Others use the houses as summer houses which has resulted in properties left empty during large parts of the year. The empty and poorly-managed houses and gardens upset the åmotforsers. It ruins the tidy appearance of the town and becomes a physical attribute of the Åmotfors decay. The influence of the strong Norwegian currency is also apparent in the giant shopping mall in Charlottenberg, which primary customers are the Norwegians. Johanna, born in the end of

the 80's, perceive the Charlottenberg shopping mall as job creating and claims that a weak Norwegian currency would be a threat to the area. To the older generation, the mall is merely a threat against the town and a sign of them not being the ones that count. The center exists for the wealthier Norwegians. Instead, the older generation of amotforsers put their faith in the factories. To them, they are the motor running Åmotfors. If they disappear, the town will die. The younger generation have not themselves experienced the "naturalness" of working at the factories. Even though many young amotforsers grew up with parents working at the factories, they now experience a more diverse labor market in which the mall is part. The fact that many people live in Åmotfors without working in the factories has resulted in more unknown faces on the streets. The characteristic of being a community populated by generations of the same families is not as strong as before. The new cycles and movement patterns cause less social control and a difficulty of maintaing symbolic borders of the community, which becomes less clear. The new aspect of unfamiliarity added to the Åmotfors community takes away some of the security that characterized the old, wellordered, cyclical community. To the people who experienced the cyclical times, the center, neglected gardens and unfamiliar people in the town center become a manifestation claiming that the days of safety and predictability are over. The threat sails under a Norwegian flag.

The transition from agriculture to industry happened earlier and more thoroughly in Åmotfors than in Hammarstrand, where smallholdings were still common in the 50's and 60's. Hammarstrand therefore lacks a past of a stream of workers flowing through the town in a regular pace, structuring the community. Amotforsers left their traditional breadwinning to work at the factories long before my informants were born. To them, the factories are seen as a given, almost natural part of their town. They have been and still are a strong force behind the order of Åmotfors, a structuring force that has heavily effected the development of the town and the community. In Åmotfors, the industry came to town and created jobs locally. It worked as a pull factor, attracting people to the town. In Hammarstrand the industry started putting an end to the traditional smallholdings. Instead of creating jobs and welfare locally, the industry worked as a push factor, lurking young workers away from the town to nearby or distant towns and cities. This development was encouraged by the state through the AMS. In hindsight, this demographic change is sometimes talked about as the escape from the countryside (cp. Rolén 1990:576). It is claimed that during the time of the industrial expansion in the 50's and forwards, a large part of the rural population left the countryside for the cities. The claim is contested by others meaning that the rural population always has been rather mobile (cp. Hansen 1998), which is also visible in Hammarstrand's long history of out-migration.

The general industrial expansion and welfare development took place in whole Sweden, but had different results in different places. Åmotfors managed to be part of the industrial expansion, while Hammarstrand lost to other places. In Åmotfors, the industry became a welfare-creating asset that secured the survival of the town. In Hammarstrand, it is experienced as rather having had the opposite effect. However, the safe pace and cycles of Åmotfors are now changing as a result of the further development of the industry and market.

This calls for new ways of relating to the industry and of acting based on these perceptions. It removes parts of the safe well-ordered Åmotfors, but it also opens new doors to possible futures not available to earlier generations.

6 Two municipalities, six towns

"It is nevertheless also urgent, that the municipality is constructed around a municipal center, which can work as a natural, spontaneous service center. The population of the municipality should therefore enjoy nearer and better public transport to "their" municipal center than to any other center, that can offer equivalent service" (SOU 1961: 137).

During the middle decades of the last century, the welfare state grew larger and stronger. To people, this meant a welfare state more present in several areas, such as medical care and municipal administration, but also in physical planning. After concluding that the 1951 merging of Swedish municipalities resulting in the number of municipalities being more than cut in half did not result in municipalities efficient enough, a new state investigation was presented in 1961. The investigation presented a concept, called the Center Principle, with a municipal center containing industry, public and commercial service and surrounding land, dominated by the center, belonging to it. The surrounding land was defined as the field of influence where the center dominates other centers (SOU 1961: 138). The centers were to be chosen from their ability to constitute natural and attractive service centers to their surroundings. They were regarded as having the potential of making the ongoing population decrease in rural Sweden less noticeable (ibid.). The investigation concluded that the Center Principle was to be central when setting the boundaries for the new municipalities and presented it as the strongest argument for a new municipal division (SOU 1961: 138). The 1961 investigation was followed by a second one in 1963 which stated that a municipality with several centers would mean unnecessary costs and travels and risk resulting in incomplete and rival centers (SOU 1963).

Hammarstrand and Åmotfors have in common that they are both municipalities without an obviously dominant center. They rather contain three. Hammarstrand is the administrative center of Ragunda municipality, which also contains the towns Stugun and Bispgården. The industry is somewhat concentrated to Bispgården, while Hammarstrand houses most of the shops and the municipal administration. However, they all have municipal services such as schools and geriatric care and commercial service such as grocery stores. According to the hammarstranders, the population of each of the three towns expect and demand a certain level of service. The municipality has tried to centralize schools and elderly care, to let one town specialize in one area and another in the other. Some years ago, Ragunda politicians suggested to close down the school in Bispgården and let the children attend the schools in Hammarstrand. They also proposed to concentrate the elder care to Bispgården, since the nursing home in Hammarstrand was considered too old and outdated. The suggestions were not well received and resulted in large protests in both towns. Today, Bispgården still has its school and a new, modern nursing home was built in Hammarstrand. The inhabitants were pleased, the protests stopped, but it was an expensive solution for an already financially challenged municipality.



Hammarstrand town hall

In Eda municipality, Charlottenberg is the administrative center, but competes against Åmotfors and Koppom, which are also large enough to have a certain degree of service. They all have a super market, a nursing home and schools. Charlottenberg and Koppom hold the junior high schools and the care center is situated in Charlottenberg. Like in Hammarstrand the local government has suggested to close down schools which resulted in name lists and protests. Nevertheless, the care centers in Åmotfors and Koppom have been closed down despite protests.

In Eda municipality, all three towns are industrial towns or working-class communities, long since dominated by one or several factories. The åmotforsers express that everything is being moved to Charlottenberg. They used to have both a pharmacy and a care center in Åmotfors. Ewert tells me that Åmotfors was initially intended to be the center of the municipality.

"The county administrative board had decided that Åmot should be the center. But they were stronger up there" (Ewert)

The stronger people up there are the politicians of Charlottenberg, who according to the story, managed to change the county administrative board's decision and make their town the center. The story goes hand in hand with the åmotforsers descriptions of the relation between the towns. They mean that the municipality contains a strong feeling of 'every town for itself'. They all want everything and placing something in one of the towns soon results in raised voices from the other towns. The rivalry between the towns, especially between Åmotfors and Charlottenberg is present in many of the Åmotforsers stories. Ingela remembers difficulties in junior high school when the children from Åmotfors were mixed with children from Charlottenberg. The children of Åmotfors mainly kept to themselves, as did the charlottenbergers. When Inga, now in her eighties, got older and chose to leave

Åmotfors, she moved to the next larger town Arvika, not to Charlottenberg. Ewert reasons in a similar way.

"And I think I will move to Arvika. Because they have everything. There you go, that is also such a thing - I can't accept to move to Charlottenberg as an amotforser. It is still there, you know." (Ewert)

According to Ewert and Ingela, Åmotfors, Charlottenberg and Koppom have a long history of not being able to cooperate. People's loyalties lie where they grew up, not in the municipality. Ewert adds that this attitude has to go away, but thinks that it will take a new generation for that to happen. Mikael, who works at the youth center, tells me that even today's teenagers have an idea of the difficulties of associating with teenagers from the other towns.

"That is when you notice who has lived a long time in Åmotfors and learnt the attitude at home" (Mikael)

Just as with the attitude towards people who try new things, the amotforsers refer to this phenomenon as bruksmentalitet. They talk about it as a problem, something they need to get rid of. Bruksmentalitet is a concept frequently used to describe the social climate of working class communities. Such communities used to be centralized around one or a few dominating work places and made up rather isolated units (Svensson 2006). The spirit is associated with a collective way of thinking, a lack of initiative and strong norms and values, looked after through a strong social control. Bruksmentalitet is normally talked about in negative terms, as a relic from the past that needs to change and adapt to the modern world. It works as a negative symbol. Even though benefitting the communities in the past, the attitude is now perceived as a hinder to modernization and success (ibid.). In Amotfors, the bruksmentalitet is seen as limiting intra-municipal cooperation and economic efficiency. The åmotforsers agree that it both has to and will go away, since Åmotfors is too small to cope in the late modern world. They need allies. The inability to cooperate within the municipality and not succeeding in being an efficient municipality becomes a proof of their community being wrong and backwards. Working class communities with their values of not sticking out and the high status of manual labor do not fit in a modern, individualistic, knowledge society. The stories about the bruksmentalitet concludes that Åmotfors is part of an old world and the ones to blame for that are the amotforsers themselves. It is because of their outdated attitudes that Åmotfors cannot be a town of success. Through blaming local understandings and attitudes, the source of the problem is identified as lying within the community.

However, that seems to be far from the truth. In spite of Hammarstrand not being the same type of working class community centralized around a few factories, the hammarstranders express the same thing as the åmotforsers. The towns in the municipality are unwilling to share and cooperate around functions, which hinders the efficiency of the municipality. Per, born in the 60's and very committed to the town, finds the situation difficult. He connects the rivalry between the towns with the old, smaller municipalities, that existed before they were merged into Ragunda municipality in the 70's. The old municipal borders still live in the

minds of people, he says. The residents still expect their town to be complete, to hold all functions. This claim goes against theories of globalization and of space time compression, suggesting that time and place are not very essential in a mobile world where everything is somehow reachable (cp. Harvey 1996). Here, the opposite is being claimed - the local matters. The hammarstranders as well as the åmotforsers mean that the towns have to be treated equally by the municipalities, which makes development work hard. If one town gets something new, they all want it. Hans-Ola, who used to be in the municipal council shares this view.

"We have three towns, that's the sick thing. I actually think, to be honest, I am not jealous of the ones governing the municipality. I don't think it's that damn easy" (Hans-Ola)

In contrast to Åmotfors, the hammarstranders derive the problems to outside the community. They wish for the towns to cooperate better, but mean that this is a problem caused by someone on the outside. According to Hans-Ola, the solution to Ragunda's problems lies in Stockholm. While the åmotforsers blame themselves, the hammarstranders ones again appear to be victims of outer structures and mistreated by the state.

When the situation in Hammarstrand and Åmotfors is compared to the statements in the state investigation from 1961, the conclusions made in the investigations seem to be accurate, at least in the case of the two towns. Åmotfors and Hammarstrand belong to the municipalities that seem to have been left when the division into new municipalities was made. They are part of areas without the natural center requested in the investigation. The ideal municipality was therefore not possible to assemble. The result is two municipalities with several rather equivalent towns, but without a dominant center. They suffer from a structural handicap inflicted on them during the construction of efficient units, a handicap which has become increasingly noticeable as the efficient units around them have grown and the resources of the own municipalities are running short. Both Eda and Ragunda municipalities also suffer from other structural challenges such as having small populations, which makes up a rather small basis of tax assessment. Cooperation therefore seems particularly important. As stated by the investigations, the inability to create a municipality around a naturally dominant center has resulted in higher costs for the municipalities, already subject to the structural financial difficulties that come with a small population.

The, for Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, unsuccessful municipality division has not only resulted in financial concerns. The inflicted cooperation between neighboring, previously independent towns brings rivalry, inherited from the past, to the surface. The rivalry is based on a strong sense of loyalty to the own town. This sense of loyalty is part of the local identity, the feeling of community, manifested in the meeting with others (Giddens 1990). The rivalry is one of the keystones to the existence of the community. However, this trait changes into a problem when the towns are required to cooperate. The two communities find different explanations to the problem, acquired from the dominating world understanding of each town (cp. Lundin 1992). In Hammarstrand, they do not seem to expect this problem to solve itself. Since it was inflicted upon them, it is hard to change it from the inside. They soldier on with

their impossible task and try to make the best out of the situation, well aware of the fact that they are suffering under structures benefitting others than them. Once again, the narrative of the exposed north appears. Eda municipality is also struggling with inflicted cooperation. There, however, cooperation is understood as the future solution to the problem. The amotforsers expect the increased interaction between the towns, caused by intensified cooperation, to eventually erase the old way of thinking and replace the outdated bruksmentalitet with modern partnership and collaboration. Today cooperation is hindered by old structures, based on a factory-community that does no longer exist. When the remains of the old community have disappeared, the Amotfors problem is thought to be solved and cooperation lies within their field of action.

The six towns are, despite of their smallness, the natural centers requested in the state investigations. People populating the surrounding land experience a feeling of belonging to a certain town. Unfortunately, they are too small to be suitable as centers. The merging of old units into new municipalities therefore becomes a way of politically deciding new units to which people should feel loyal. What becomes obvious in the cases of Åmotfors and Hammarstrand is that loyalty is hard to accomplish through a political decision. Instead the merging has resulted in an artificial loyalty that mainly exists on paper.

The merging of municipalities was an attempt by the welfare state to rationalize the country through creating efficient units based on the Center Principle. It was a consequence of increased welfare that demanded expensive tasks and experts from municipalities that made the old, small municipalities insufficient. The administrative changes, deciding how resources were to be divided, created a structuration of Swedish municipalities. It resulted in some areas having to be left over when the map was divided into well-functioning units. Eda and Ragunda municipalities appear to belong to this group. The stories of the non-functioning municipalities reveal that the structuration also inflicted on the local identities. In Hammarstrand they are victims of Stockholm politics, in Åmotfors, they are backward industry workers. Since the two municipalities yet again are too small to work efficiently, they will probably undergo further administrative changes in the future, which surely will involve further challenges towards the loyalty and the local identity.

The problematic of a three-center municipality in Åmotfors and Hammarstrand is mostly experienced through the conflicts concerning the placing of service. Again, declining service is perceived as a visual sign of marginalization. The service degradation becomes a sign of a dying town, since service is an important sign of life. The prosperous retail in Charlottenberg is a sign of the neighboring town surviving while Åmotfors is declining and dying. Moving the school to the neighboring town becomes threatening since it is a life supporting service. The act of moving the life-support from one town to another therefore means deciding which town should live and which one must die. When viewed from this angle, it does not matter that the actual transfer is only a few kilometers and could easily be overcome with ten minutes in the car.

7 Nostalgic Facebook groups

"HOW has Hammarstrand developed? History. How was it back in the days? Who lived in town? Interesting people. Anecdotes. Memories. Is any development going on? Belief in the future... Ideas... For our beautiful area." (Group description, the Hammarstrand Facebook group)

In both Hammarstrand and Åmotfors, I have partly used local Facebook groups to get in contact with informants. In both cases I have come across nostalgic Facebook groups with the main purpose of posting old pictures of the towns and sharing stories. In the Åmotfors group, nature photographies are followed by old postcards, black and white pictures and yellow newspaper clippings. In the commentary field members of the group ask about people and locations, or they simply want to see if anyone recognizes a certain spot in town. Together the members try to identify old houses, most of the time with success. Others tell personal stories from the location where the picture is taken. In an ongoing discussion, a group member suggests that the agency for rural areas (Glesbygdsverket, phased out in 2009 and its tasks now split between two other agencies) should be moved to Åmotfors, since it might help the politicians to understand rural problems. The suggestion is followed by a smiley, as if to stress the humor. Still, the post expresses an ounce of seriousness, a discontent over the way that rural Sweden is understood and handled by Stockholm politicians. The group is open also for people not living in Åmotfors, but who have a connection in one way or another. Some group members grew up there, others had a summerhouse or relatives in the town. In many cases out-migrants are just as active, or even more active, than the members still living in town. The Facebook group makes up an arena where the group members jointly remember the golden days of Amotfors.

The Hammarstrand group is rather similar to the Åmotfors one. Here too, hammarstranders and out-migrants post old black and white pictures and photos of old houses and people. Someone finds her or his childhood home in an old air photo. Other pictures show the power plants and roads being constructed. Several people have posted brochures from the world championship in toboggan held in Hammarstrand in 1967, 1975 and 1981. People remember dances, Vildhussen weeks and sports events from past decades and help each other to find out who is who. Others share memories in the form of shorter texts. More people join and the story develops in the commentaries. Someone has found a relative's old photographs, someone else a stack of newspapers which they wish to share with the group members. In the commentary field people share stories and start discussing. It becomes a way of getting the pictures out of the drawers and start remembering together.

The groups have overall positive atmospheres where people jointly remember the prime of the towns. Memories are indeed something personal, but remembering is also a social process where some memories are doomed to be forgotten, while others are enhanced and ascribed important meanings (Cresswell 2004). The groups enable people to propose their personal memories as being important and rememberable. It also allows for incoherent memories to

be examined and either straightened out and approved or rejected by other members. Through the discussions, the individual memories and stories are joint together into a shared patchwork-story about past Åmotfors and Hammarstrand. Like the present, the past is ever changing. It is not static, but in constant creation (Borgström 1997). The Facebook groups make up a platform for such creation of the past. Even though the memories are personal, the memories shared in the Facebook groups seem largely alike. The individual stories contain common features forming a frame story whose foundational pillars encapsulates the personal stories (cp. McFarlane 1986; Hansen 2009). By sharing memories, the åmotforsers and hammarstranders are contributing with pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that makes up the frame story of the towns. The creation of the frame story is simultaneously the creation and development of a local discourse and identity (cp. Hansen 1998: 20ff). Since the memories are personal, the putting together of the puzzle is also a way of interlacing oneself in the local historical writing. It is part of being rooted. The amotforsers' and hammarstranders' important roles in the past, their rootedness, is also what gives them legitimacy to be part of creating the past of the towns. Therefore, pointing out oneself and relatives in the pictures and stories told in the groups becomes an important feature of proving their roots and belonging to the community.

Many pictures and stories in the Åmotfors group concern the abundance of shops that used to fill the main street. People comment on the large supply in a clothes shop. One person shares a childhood story about candy purchases connected to one of the houses in an old black and white picture. Remembering the past is not a mere nostalgic activity. Telling stories from the past is a way of relating to the present (cp. de Certeau 1984). The romanticized stories about former Amotfors and Hammarstrand are a way of understanding what is happening to the towns today. The tales about the multitude of shops of yesteryears is therefore also a story about today's empty town center. The many shops of the past are a clear contrast against which the empty display windows become meaningful. Without the history of shops there is no present lack of shops. The stories about the past are filled with feelings and nostalgia. The ritualized, pink shimmering past differs from the practical past, containing sober stories focusing on content (cp. Loewenthal 1985). It is mainly the ritualized past that is presented in the groups. The stories are filled with appraisals and stress the positive sides of times gone by. By collectively remembering the nostalgic past the group members stress how it should be. The normative feature is often strengthened in the Facebook group commentaries where group members complain about the development. In that sense, the nostalgic comments in the Åmotfors group are also a critique against the close-downs and the way that Åmotfors has been treated by the outside world. The stories are political in the sense that they support a certain standpoint. The way a story is told is determined by what the people behind it want to achieve in the present (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). When posting and commenting pictures, the amotforsers and hammarstranders present certain parts and angles of the history, which fit it for a certain purpose. The activity states a certain interpretation of a situation and imposes the narratives with meaning (Appadurai 1981). However, history is not completely plastic. It cannot be unlimitedly stretched and twisted.

The debatability of the past in restricted to a cultural framing. The story can only be changed within certain norms, which are cultural (ibid.). Consequently, the ability to contribute to the making of the frame history confirms that the contributor holds knowledge of these cultural norms. It becomes a verification of belonging to the community.

The Facebook groups, especially the Åmotfors one, are also used to discuss today's towns more directly. In the comments of a post, some members discuss the pity of neglected houses owned by Norwegians, these Others who are part of the outer threat against Åmotfors. Others are those clearly separated from the own group who are used as a negative mirroring of who the own group wants to be (cp. Said 2000; Eriksson 2010). As Others, the Norwegians lack the legitimacy-creating roots and heritage that the "real" amotforsers possess. They are represented objects and not subjects in the discussion. In these discussions, however, the Others seem to be offered a possibility to represent himself as a subject. Further down the commentary field the claims are questioned by a Norwegian amotforser. He brings in a new perspective and counter the so-called truths about the part time amotforsers. This challenges the universally accepted narrative of the Norwegian-driven decay which exists in Åmotfors. The former consensus of the discussion is lost and the group members are forced to reevaluate their standpoints and explain themselves to avoid conflict. Through countering and falsifying claims, the Norwegians puncture the previously so logical story, which has existed unchallenged within the local community. The narrative has lost its legitimacy and has to be redone. In the commentary field, claims are exchanged for questions to the Norwegians. The present truths about the development of Åmotfors is being negotiated. By engaging in the negotiation and construction of the Åmotfors truth, the Norwegians step away from their roles as Others. The engagement in the general narrative of Åmotfors becomes a way of writing themselves into the community.

The story about the towns also becomes the story of the people in the groups, the story of who they are. Almost all pictures and stories in the Facebook groups are connected to relatives. Someone had a father who worked in the grocery store shown in a picture. Another person thinks the main character in a story might be her relative. A third person finds her father in a photograph of the Åmotfors male choir. Through sharing stories of the past based on experiences from that persons own life, or by pointing out relatives in the local history, the person also stresses his or her part in history. It becomes a way of marking that they belong to the place. To belong to a place, to be rooted somewhere seems to be increasingly important to people in a modern, globalized world (Cresswell 2004). Massey formulates the need of historically belonging to a place as "the modern desire for heritage" (Massey 2013). The desire is an identity-shaping phenomena appearing both at a national and local level and it is, as in the Facebook groups, transmitted through stories. The need to belong to the towns becomes especially clear as some members both in the Amotfors group and the Hammarstrand group chose to write in the local dialects, which can be understood as one of the attributes of the places. The ability to write in dialect becomes a proof of that person's authenticity, since it is a skill that must be obtained locally. It becomes a way of being local, a way of belonging and being rooted.

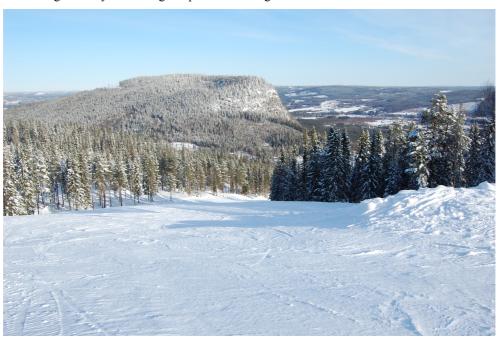
To be rooted in Hammarstrand and Åmotfors becomes a part of the members' identity. Local knowledge is a proof of their belonging, of them being able to consider themselves as part of the communities. This might be why it appears to be very important to be able to place the motives of the pictures in the physical town. Being able to point out a shop or knowing when a building was torn down is considered an asset, since it proves thorough local knowledge and authenticity. When group members come together in order to solve the puzzle of identifying people in an old photograph, they show their ability to put this knowledge into practice, of proving themselves worthy of the identity. Just like the events in the Åmotfors People's Park or Hammarstrand's *Vildhussdagar*, the process of photograph-identification is a way of collectively celebrating that identity. The act of remembering becomes a way of exercising local identity - to be åmotforser or Hammarstrander. Members without farreaching memories of their own can take part of the memories of others. Learning about their history makes up a part of a process of socialization where they learn how to be åmotforser or hammarstrander (cp. Liliequist 1993). It strengthens the strings that connect them to the places.

The amotforsers and hammarstranders also claim their rootedness by connecting themselves to the physical town. One hammarstrander points out his parents' grocery store on a photograph of a house. Through sharing memories of a kiosk, an amotforser transforms the old stall into a part of his personal history. At the same time, he fills the building with activity and meaning. Personal memories can be consolidated through monuments in the landscape (Cresswell 2004). A statue is a permanent reminder to people about something that happened and should not be forgotten. It is a historical reminder in the physical landscape (cp. Hansen 2009; Massey 2005). Connecting one's life to buildings on photographs in the Facebook groups seems to be a way for the group members to write themselves into the history of the town and into unforgettableness. By pointing out their childhood home, people show that their lives and their stories have left traces in the landscape. Through connecting oneself to a physical object in the town, people make the object their memorial, since other group members now connect it to that person. It becomes part of a public memory (Cresswell 2004). In this way, people who have already left the towns can claim their belonging to them. It is part of their identity, their history and heritage. The everlasting connection between an out-migrant and the town is stressed through that person's engagement in the group, which might be a reason why many of the most active group members are out-migrants.

To take part in the discussions and sharing activities of the Facebook groups is to claim a role in the community. The Internet becomes a new forum to create a sense of community. Because of its immediacy, the Internet diminishes the consequences of being physically distance and lets people, regardless of their physical whereabouts, be part of negotiating the towns in real time. It is part of the modern speed (cp. Virilio 2006). This enables out-migrated inhabitants to take active part in the community. The out-migrant participation shows that the towns exceed the physical town. They are part of a *shade town*, an extension of the towns network which enlarges the town beyond its geographical boundaries (Ekman 2006). As far as the shade town is concerned, Åmotfors' and Hammarstrand's communities are larger than

their population number. Both Facebook groups have a members-base that stretches far from the physical places. The Åmotfors group has members living in central Europe. The distance is great, but the immediacy of the internet makes it possible for them to engage on the same terms as the out-migrants in neighboring Arvika. The shade town influences the social life of the physical town, since its members engage in local activities (ibid.). In the case of the Facebook groups, that local activity is digital. Ekman considers the shade town a resource available for the towns and their inhabitants in times of need. The members of the Facebook groups possess knowledge, networks and capital which becomes available to the community through the Facebook groups. They thereby extend the local acting space.

The existence of shade towns points towards people's experience of belonging to a place which they have left. To the out-migrant, it is meaningful to be locally anchored even after a move. A part of that person is left, he or she has extended roots still nurturing from local soil. To take part in the Facebook group discussions is a way of confirming those roots and one's own belonging. It is also a way of confirming the importance of that place to those who are still there. This can be considered to counter the structural process of close-downs and deterioration experienced in both towns. The shade town engagement and the wish to belong to the towns, confirm their continuing existence. It is also part of their construction. Since places are products of social relations, they are always in the making (cp. Massey 2005). As the relations develop and change, so do the towns. Through Facebook the shade town takes active part in their ongoing construction. Just as the place becomes part of who its inhabitants are, the inhabitants become part of what the place is. Consequently, the practice of Facebooking is a way of making the places meaningful.



The hilly landscape surrounding Hammarstrand

8 Concluding words

I started this thesis by presenting it as a story about the Swedish welfare society, about the entering of modernity, service establishment and dismantling. Now, I have told my story. On these previous pages, I have presented and discussed the recent history of two small Swedish rural towns. However, I have also told a story about today's towns, as a result of the stories about the past. My aim was to use local narratives to examine local manifestations and perceptions of the welfare society. I wanted to study how the welfare state has been locally formed, but also how the welfare society created local places Åmotfors and Hammarstrand.

The stories have revealed how the increased speed of modernity caused an impression of shorter distances, which brought the world closer to the local. Modern welfare and inventions made life easier and let locals take part in a new, simpler world. The prosperous economy caused an improved public welfare, the welfare state, but also a private welfare experienced as increased wellbeing. Low paid jobs and subsistence farming were exchanged for a money economy enabling consumption. Welfare made purchases possible and created spare time to enjoy them. When the åmotforsers and hammarstranders talk about what their town should be like, they mainly describe the 50's. The decade has been established as a reference point, and has the function of a starting position. Anything below that point is a degradation. This is visible in the stories about the shops and the new products, both in the interviews and in the Facebook groups. It is the reference point from which the story of the welfare society is told and which makes up a peak in the development against which the present is compared.

Late modernity brought rationalization, which first simplified local life, but later on it introduced the risk of being rationalized away. Efficient, but impersonal self-service gas stations which undermine the possibilities for social interaction, imply that community reproductive functions are stripped off the communities. This type of far going rationalization has not benefitted Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, which instead seem to belong to the old, small and inefficient, those that need to be cut off for a rational state.

Modernity and speed also brought competition from a global market. This resulted in shop close-downs in both Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, which has led to less room for co-action and social organization. This too has become a sign of a dying town and the helplessness before external forces. Modern speed also took away local administrative and commercial functions, previously placed in the towns by the welfare state, since the experienced shorter distances to larger cities made it possible to centralize them. And so did more shops, care centers, banks and local newspaper offices leave the towns. Parallel to the decisions about municipal merging, staff cut backs and tax recipients reached Åmotfors and Hammarstrand, which resulted in a feeling of marginalization locally. The towns did no longer constitute the place where things happen, but the targets for decisions made by absent Others somewhere out of their reach.

Increased welfare and modernity also meant increased contact with other places, which has brought new understandings of one's own town. Now, the local communities are contrasted against communities further away and with features more different from their own. Modern speed made it possible to experience these Others in real time. Some things, such as stockings and hotdogs, were incorporated and imitated. Simultaneously the increased contact with others marked the own uniqueness and make the local identity develop and become increasingly visible.

Industrialization too is a structural force connected to the welfare society, that had different effects in different places. In Åmotfors, it contributed to local wealth and attracted new inhabitants. In Hammarstrand, industrialization put an end to small-hood farming and lurked people away to other locations where the factories were situated. The lack of profit creating industry resulted in the municipality and the state accounting for a larger part of the development of welfare in Hammarstrand. The transference was supported by the state through labor market policies, which were regionally perceived as a letdown - All Must South. Today's market has resulted in a smaller proportion of the åmotforsers now working at the local factories. The same market forces have put an international mark on the factories, which have also decreased their workforce. Because of its location relatively close to neighboring cities, people can stay in Åmotfors and commute. However, it still contributes to a feeling of unfamiliarity and insecurity in Åmotfors. The åmotforsers do no longer know everyone in town and Åmotfors has lost a part of its localness and role as a safe haven. The ordering, predictable cycles of the community are gone and the future is once again uncertain.

The changes have appeared differently in the two towns. They have also caused different reactions. Hammarstrand is part of a region that has been marginalized for a long time. It has become part of the regional identity, which is also expressed locally through the Norrlandnarrative. The feeling of being marginalized has resulted in hammarstranders actively opposing the development. The state has broken the social contract which implies that the hammarstranders can do the same. By emphasizing their marginalization, they create more acting space. The accentuation of the marginalization can be understood as a local tactic to widen the acting space within structures or strategies coming from outside. In Åmotfors, the protest is subtler and mediated through romanticizing stories about what used to be. When the amotforsers cannot cooperate within the municipality, they search for the solution inside the own community. They stress an industrial community spirit, bruksmentalitet, as being the reason. The spirit stands for an outdated and backwards way of thinking and it has to perish, die with its representatives, before the community can be modern and efficient. The hammarstranders, on the other hand, find the reason in structures imposed by the capital city. It becomes yet another example of their perceived marginalization, which makes up a large part of the local world understanding and identity. The merge of municipalities also shows how administrative reforms of the welfare state structure places and communities, through offering possibilities and restrictions to action.

The welfare and technical development has also brought about new ways of being local. Internet and Facebook groups let people exercise identity jointly and enable people to be part of the local from a distance in real time. They constitute forums for remembering and storytelling and enables a shared story about the towns and their history. Ongoing discussions

and formations of truths show that also history, not only the present, is in the making. The groups also contain normative stories and critique against the way things have come to be. It is too to be considered a part of the action space-creating protests of the local level.

Sharing memories and pointing out one's links to the towns becomes a way of proving one's roots and claim one's heritage. Through their aggregated knowledge, the out-migrants can prove themselves worthy of still belonging to the community and the rights to their roots. Additionally, the Facebook groups are a possibility to educate new generations about the local history and to pass down knowledge and local identity. By lodging more members than the physical community, such as out-migrants and part-time åmotforsers, the Facebook groups make up a possibility for Others to represent themselves and present their say. It becomes a foregather between us and them, which might help including Others into the physical community. Through the Facebook groups, distant community members, the *shade town*, affect the towns and the communities through part-taking in the creation of history and presence, but also through broadening the base for resources in the villages.

Together, Hammarstrand and Åmotfors constitute two examples of how the welfare state has turned out and shaped rural Sweden. The Jämtland hydropower and the Värmland industries mark the early 1900's industrial expansion which enabled the welfare state to develop. The brick buildings of Ragunda town hall, the schools and libraries still stand like monuments of a growing municipal organization. These official welfare institutions were complemented by private shops, service and restaurants. Altogether those businesses created two towns where the good life could be led. The obvious historical reference points in Åmotfors are the factories, while the corresponding institution in Hammarstrand is the smallholding farming. The factories became winners in the welfare society. They still exist and constitute a central part of the everyday life of Åmotfors. The smallholdings, on the other hand, were rationalized away and became losers of the development. The hammarstranders have been pushed into other activities and forced to adjust to new conditions, resulting in a strong feeling of marginalization. Amotfors did not go through the same change of activities during that same period of time. There, the majority of the changes brought about by welfare policies and modernization improved the everyday life of the amotforsers. However, the following close-downs of the local shops are perceived as a threat and a sign of Åmotfors too being marginalized.

The creation of the welfare society was a national project, but the effects were local. Several factors have influenced these effects. One is the places themselves; their location and locality which bring factors such as degree of rurality, sparsity, communication, infrastructure and industry. Hammarstrand is located more rurally than Åmotfors, which is closer to other towns and cities. This has led to Hammarstrand housing more shops and service functions, but also to greater problems with depopulation and an aging population. Another factor is the community which contains the inhabitants of the towns and of the shade towns. It is the gathered people in a place that make up the actors within the structural framing of the welfare society. The structural frames constituted by the welfare society and the local factors have decided the acting space for the inhabitants. However, the differing local factors

and actors have resulted in local differences of the welfare state - it has been locally structured. At the same time, it is the welfare society that has given the towns the forms and functions they have today. They both have transformed from small trivial villages to local service centers. This role has been particularly apparent in Hammarstrand, as the town is also the municipal center and is situated far away from other centers. Both towns had their administrative tasks ascribed by the welfare society. The further development of the welfare state together with late modernity and globalization have implied further changes in the towns, which are often understood as dismantling. In this sense, the welfare society has had and still has a structuring effect on the local towns, which themselves have had a structuring effect on the local manifestations of the welfare state. It is the local conditions that create the welfare society in which we actually live.

Many of the memories that my informants have shared with me have the character of being part of the real or natural way of doing things. It can be life at the smallholding or the nuclear family of the 50's and 60's. When people tell stories about the way things were, they present it as the way thing should be. When commenting the future, the stories emphasize that this proper way have been disrupted and brought out of its natural state. However, as stated above, both the present and the history are constantly in the making. The stories are there to fulfill a certain purpose. History is just as non-static as the present. The "natural" ways of doing things are also gradually changing and in the making. What people remember as natural lasted for a short period of time. It is a part of a process, a phase. History as well as the present is a ride, not a stopping point.

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