

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



A study of two local development
groups in rural Sweden;
The role of social identities in the formation of
collective action

Maria Ivanova

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Keywords: local development group, village movement, construction of identity, institutional bricolage, Sweden

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© Maria Ivanova

Supervisor: Adam Pain, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Examiner: Karin Eksvärd, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

E-mail: maria.ivanova1985@gmail.com

<http://epsilon.slu>.

Abstract

In Sweden many local development groups (LDG's) have been formed at the village level during last 40 years. This thesis started as an investigation of the conditions for the appearance of these groups and possible explanations on why these groups emerged and spread in Sweden in contrast to Russia where such groups are exceptional. Before the field study the understanding was that LDGs were formed with the aim to develop the villages. After two case studies in two contrasting villages it became clear that the members of the studied LDGs perceived their activities more as "preservation" rather than "development". The study shifted to investigate also how these groups and their members constructed their identity, how they understand themselves, motivate their actions according to their understandings and how the groups changed over time. The two groups under investigation were formed in 1971 and their emergence was connected to the municipality reform. At that time other groups and association existed in Swedish villages and the formation of a new one was considered as normal. It was found that these groups were formed in order to save aspects of what were seen to be the village identity as significant places in the country's history which should not be forgotten. These two local groups differ in structure, organization and tactics which reflect their geographical locations and circumstances and have evolved over time in different ways. It is suggested that the idea of the local village groups has been used by national organization "All Sweden shall live" to construct a village action movement with the agenda of local development.

Keywords: local development groups, village movement, construction of identity, Sweden, institutional bricolage

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASSL – All Sweden Shall Live (the name of the organization)

KVC – Kårböle Village Council

BHF – Björklinge Hembygdsförening (Björklinge home village society)

LDG – local development group

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part is a short introduction to the thesis and the second one is an overview of the local development groups in Sweden.

Introduction

The first time I heard about local development groups in Sweden was during a Master's course field trip to Dalarna in February 2009. Our group undertook a short investigation of various perspectives on rural development in Dalarna. We interviewed different stakeholders. Some of the informants talked about village groups or local action groups that were involved in local development. They tried to address the problems of their villages, especially related to withdrawal of social services: the closure of schools, shops, health care centers. Almost every interview in our investigation discussed issues of local action in rural development and particularly the work of local development groups. I have never heard about such groups before. I am Russian and I didn't know how Swedish countryside lives, what activities people have there. In Russia people in the rural areas face the same problems of depopulation, closure of schools, shops and other services, lack of jobs. They sometimes complain about the wrong rural policies and lack of support from the state, but I have never heard about any form of organized action to address these problems in Russian villages. Therefore, the local development groups in Sweden were a completely new phenomenon for me. That was why I became interested in the process of their organization. One of the first questions that appeared in my head was the 'why' – question? Why did people start this local action? This initial curiosity has developed into this master's thesis enquiry.

One of the first sources of information for the research was the web-site of a national organization "Hela Sverige ska leva" (All Sweden Shall Live) (www.helasverige.se). About 4700 local development groups are joined by this umbrella organization.¹ The goal of "All Sweden shall live" (ASSL) is to support local development through the assistance of the local development groups with advice. This organization also seeks to influence the rural policies and public opinion about local development (<http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/in-english/our-tasks/>).² The organization ASSL was established in 1989. However, the first groups were formed before the establishment of this organization. In this thesis two of the earlier groups were investigated in order to understand their motives for mobilization as it was expected that

¹ <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/in-english/our-organisation/>; 2010-05-02

² <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/in-english/our-tasks/>; 2010-05-02

the groups formed after 1989 were likely to be influenced by the organization ASSL and its agenda.

The important background preconditions for the emergence of LDGs in rural areas were changes in Sweden in the 20th century, which is described in the next part.

Background

Mechanization, industrialization and urbanization processes changed the role of the rural areas in Sweden. The depopulation in rural areas has happened in a relatively short period of 30-40 years and was remarkable for many villages.

In the literature on local development groups in Sweden (Herlitz, 1998, 2000; Johansson, 1998; Waldenström, 2008) these processes in the rural areas were emphasized as background preconditions for the appearance of local development groups.

Mechanization in agriculture and forestry started in the end of 1800's (Isacson, 2008). More and more machines were used instead of manual operations. Although the first wave of mechanization helped to enhance rural economy in Sweden, later mechanization process decreased labor requirements for forestry and agriculture (Isacson, 2008; Johansson, 1998). On the other hand, industrialization created job opportunities in the urban areas, and many people moved there. According to Johansson (1998), during the period between 1950's and 1980's rural population of Sweden decreased by approximately 50 %, and many rural areas (landsbygd) were reclassified into sparsely populated areas (glesbygd). This depopulation led to the increasing costs of the social services (including schools, health care centers) in less populated areas in comparison to the more populated areas. This was why they were often closed in small villages and people needed to go to other villages or towns to receive these services. In 1950's -1970's about 2500 municipalities were consolidated into 300, because bigger Municipalities were expected to be more able to provide higher quality of services and it was also a mean to reduce costs (Waldenström, 2008; Herlitz, 2000).

Thus, rural areas, especially in the northern part of Sweden, have experienced depopulation and related to it social problems, and by 1970 rural areas in Sweden had been perceived as problem areas that required investments and support (Hansen & Waldenström, 2008).

The interview study was conducted in two different villages: Kårböle in Gävleborg County and Björklinge in Uppsala County, contrasted by geographical location and related to this different socio-economic conditions. The local development groups in both villages were organized in 1971 in connection to the Municipality reform which led to the merge of the

municipalities. During the study process I was surprised that people from the LDGs did not perceive themselves as “development groups” and they didn’t use the word “development”. They understood their actions rather as “preservation” than “development”.

This divergence in the views on local groups slightly changed my initial research interest. The new research interest was focused on how the groups construct the meaning of their action. How and why did they develop their position of “preservation”?

The objective of the study is to investigate the emergence and evolution of two local development groups in different parts of Sweden in relation to how they construct their collective identities. The main research questions for this thesis are:

- What were the motives for mobilization?
- How do the local development groups perceive themselves and why?
- What do the local development groups do and why?
- How did the groups change over time?

These research questions are investigated with the help of the theoretical contributions of two main concepts: the concept of collective identity and institutional bricolage. The concept of collective identity was found useful because it deals with the role of culture and identities for the collective action. The concept of institutional bricolage is used to explain the divergences between the LDGs and the umbrella organization ASSL.

In the rest of the thesis the two case studies are presented. Then the stories and identities of the two local development groups from these two case studies are analyzed in relation to the umbrella organization ASSL perspective and in contrast to each other. In the final discussion the reader will find an analysis of other issues related to the development of the LDGs.

Chapter 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Identity construction and collective action

The concept of identity has been used by scholars in many disciplines including sociology, anthropology, political science and philosophy (Jenkins, 1996). In relation to the theory of collective action it has been used to bridge the gaps in the theories that explain structural processes of collective action (resource mobilization and political opportunity theories) (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). The structural theories seek to explain how the agents of collective action mobilize resources for the action and how they choose their strategies according to the availability of those resources and opportunities to act in the political

environment (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). Another branch of collective action theory emphasizes the role of culture and social identity in the formation and development of the movements. The cultural theories are often called “new social movement theories” (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). They try to explain why people start collective action and what motivates them to act instead of free-ride (Ibid.)

What does “social identity” mean? According to Jenkins (1996), social identity “*is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others*” (p. 5). Thus social identity is constructed not only by the person herself (or group in case of collective identity) but it needs to be recognized by others. As Jenkins mention, identity is “negotiable” (Jenkins, 1996, p.5). Identity is always relational, as people and groups relate themselves to each other (Melucci, 2003). There is always division between “us” and “them”. People construct their identities according to their cultural values and their understanding of the world. The values are created by the society and therefore the identity is inalienable from the society. And the society in turn is formed by the identities people have.

One can distinguish two types of identity which are individual identity and collective identity. The main difference between them is that individual identity emphasizes differences, and collective identity – similarities. But both types are formed by the same social processes (Jenkins, 1996). In this thesis the focus is mainly on collective identity although individual identities are also meaningful in collective action.

Melucci considers collective identity as a process, which in itself is “interactive and shared” (Melucci, 2003, p.44). Collective identities are not fixed; they are constantly built according to “the ends, means and field of action” (Melucci, 2003,p.44).

Polletta & Jasper (2001) discuss the role of identity in the creation of the collective action, recruitment of the adherents, strategic choices and the outcomes of the action. They try to answer the question, why people become motivated for collective action. The “New social movement” theories suggest that not only material incentives can lead to the collective action. The groups of people may seek recognition of their identities and shift in cultural norms in the society (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). It is argued that people mobilize when they perceive their position or situation as unfair. But it is not always this perception that leads to the collective action. Why do people mobilize in some cases and do not do it in others? The perception of “injustice” is not enough to explain it.

To develop and sustain collective action the movement needs to recruit new members and receive commitment of the public to the values of the movement. In the beginning the movements might grow from the preexisting social networks, such as kinship, student circles or religious circles (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). But to have an impact on the society the adherents of the movement need to spread the ideas and values. Some scholars suggest that people might join because they find that sharing the identity of the movement can benefit them, they may perceive this identity as attractive and useful (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). The identity formation does not necessarily precede the movement. But in order to attract people and sustain a group, an identity needs to be formed in the process of collective action. One of the reasons for decreasing participation in a movement is the feeling among the adherents that the movement does not reflect their values and identities (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

The strategies people use in collective action are formed in the coherence with the identities, but they can be also adapted to the situation, to the opportunities and constraints and to the kind of opposition people have. Therefore identities as well as strategies for collective action are situational (Polletta & Jasper, 2001)

The role of the identities in the formation of the institutions is emphasized by Cleaver (2002). She studied the institutions for collective action in natural resource management arrangements in the Usangu Basin (Tanzania). The institutions were formed around irrigation and in the conditions of diversified cultural environment where actors have different ethnic, religious and social background. Cleaver (2002) argues that the institutions are often based on the blend of “bureaucratic” and “socially embedded” institutions (p. 13), which means that some formal rules and regulations are intertwined with traditional norms and arrangements. Cleaver (2002) calls this process “institutional bricolage”. The formation of the institutions is a process of adapting to the circumstances by the local actors, both consciously and unconsciously. Traditional norms and customs can be modified according to the new circumstances and used to legitimize newly introduced institutions. Thus, formation of the collective action has multiple levels. Neither old customs or rules nor new “formal” regulations are more important or effective (Cleaver, 2002). This idea emphasizes that institutions for the collective actions are formed by multiple actors with different purposes and motivations and can hardly be intentionally designed, which is what Ostrom (1990) suggests in her design principles.

Collective action develops in the frames of the circumstances. Official polices and norms can become new boundaries for the action, but they can also create opportunities.

Adapting to the new conditions, the actors of collective action are likely to change their strategies and reformulate their identities. Thus collective action is appeared to be framed not only by the actors themselves, but also by the outsiders and external forces. In this paper in the two case studies of collective mobilization in two different villages, the relational and situational character of the collective action is investigated with focus on the construction of the identity by the actors.

Chapter 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the beginning of the research process, when research objectives and research plans were formulated, I had some assumption about the local development groups, which motivated the choice of methods. The assumption was that LDGs are organized to develop the villages on the basis of their resources and to improve the well-being of people in the villages. The goal of the study was to understand preconditions for the emergence of these groups. The first stage of the study was a preliminary investigation about the LDGs with the help of secondary sources. The literature on LDGs often talks about successful cases of local development groups and positive changes that this work brings (Herlitz, 1998, 2000; Johansson, 1998; Waldenström, 2008). The field study was planned in order to investigate peoples' accounts on why and how they started LDGs.

Selection of the cases

The intention was to choose two cases – two local development groups in different parts of Sweden. Because of the time constraints it was not possible to choose more cases, and it was decided to make deeper investigation of two contrasting cases and devote more time for their analysis. The cases needed to be from the oldest groups in the movement and preferably organized before the European campaign for the Countryside and the establishment of association ASSL. This early period is important, because at that time such groups were not widespread and there were not so many sources of external support and experience of local development work that could be shared between the groups. It means that conditions for their emergence were likely to be different from that of later groups. Both of the studied groups were founded in 1971. The choice of the groups was made without intention to take the groups with the same year of organization, but it happened by chance.

One case is a development group located in the sparsely populated area in the northern part of Gävleborg County. The name of this group is the KVC (Kårböle byalag). The second case is a group called Björklinge Hembygdsförening (HF) located in more

populated area close to the city Uppsala in central Sweden. The geographical position plays significant role in Sweden, because the country is divided into more populated and urbanized regions and less-populated, mainly rural, regions. The difference in conditions and problems that people need to confront are expected to be different in these two cases and influential for the evolution of these two groups. For example, in more populated and urbanized areas, people usually have fewer problems with employment. More remote and less populated areas have bigger distances between the settlements and more problems with acquiring jobs and providing basic services. Investigating these two different cases was intended to capture the differences in geographical position and related to it difference in amount of resources that might have influenced development of the groups and strategies they have applied in local development work.

The Björklinge group was found with the help of the database of the organization ASSL (<http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/bygdebanken/>; 2010-04-27). It was chosen because it is located close to the city Uppsala and was organized in 1971. The second case also founded in 1970's, and remote from a big city was looked for. The contacts of Kårböle village in Gävleborg County were given by a person who was interviewed during the preliminary study. The names of the interviewees from both case studies were anonymized on ethical grounds.

Methods

In my research I used qualitative methods: interviews and participant observations on the meetings. To investigate my research questions the stories of people from local development groups were needed, because the questions considered emergence of the groups and their motivations for the collective action. The main source of this information was interviews with those people who participated in the mobilization in the beginning. Participant observations were chosen as additional method to investigate group dynamics on the meetings and to understand better the structure and the work of the organizations.

Participant observations were held on the meetings of the groups, one meeting per each group. I did not make extensive notes on what happened on the meetings, but tried rather to give more attention to the group dynamics, relationships between the members on the meetings and to what they talked about. These observations helped to understand better how the work of the local development groups is organized, but this material was not used extensively in the analysis.

The main methods used were interviews. In total I conducted 7 interviews; one of them was a focus group interview, and I also had some informal conversations that were not

recorded, but also contributed to the knowledge constructed in the interviews. Interviews were planned as open-ended, but in some cases I needed to change the mode of interviews to semi-structured. In two interviews, it was the wish of the interviewees, who preferred to answer concrete questions instead of telling the stories. It was also explained by the limited time available for the interviews. In other cases open-ended interviews were also converted after some time into the semi-structured when I needed to ask and clarify points that were not covered by the stories. The short focus group interview with 3 participants I have found very useful, because in that case people discussed the questions, helped each other to remember events and even helped me to conduct interview and asked each other about some relevant issues, that I was not aware of. The interviews were chosen as the method because according to the purposes of the intended study, the accounts of people on the reasons and motivation for mobilization should have been investigated. The advantage of the interviews is that this method can be used to obtain the narratives of people about their own “lifeworlds”, their perceptions and understandings (Kvale, 2009, p.29). The situation of conversation can help to reveal new topics and ideas that were not developed in the beginning. This happened to me, when after the interviews my perception of the studied LDGs changed and new topics for the investigation were discovered.

Changes in the research process

The new understanding came already during the interview, because the interviewees’ use of words and explanations of motives were different from those used by the literature on LDGs and umbrella organization “ASSL”. The people in the village did not talk about themselves as “development groups”; they never used the word “to develop”, but rather the words “to save” or “to support”. This finding shifted my interest towards interpretation of how the groups understood themselves and why their discourse about themselves was different from that of the umbrella organization and official papers about LDGs as will be discussed in chapter 5.

This change in the focus of the study caused reconsideration of the theoretical perspective. Initially I planned to use the theory of collective action and particularly political opportunity theory, but when the objectives of the study became clear, this theory was put aside. When the field study was conducted, I didn’t have any theory at hand. But as the issue of village identity appeared after the interview findings, suitable theories were found with the help of my supervisor.

In the analysis of the interviews I did not follow any specific technique. Sometimes I concentrated on the interpretation of meanings and words; sometimes I addressed the interview material and tried to juxtapose it with theories. As my choice of the theories was defined after the interview study, it means that interviews were conducted without consideration of these theories. If these theories were considered in the process of interview design, then the empirical material received in the study might have been different. On the other hand as my theoretical knowledge is not very extensive and it could have also limited my empirical material.

Validity

My interviews were conducted in Swedish and it is not my first or second language, therefore some misunderstandings are possible. When I conducted the interviews the meaning was often checked by asking the same question in different way and clarifying the meanings when the words were unknown. But it was not possible to clarify all the words because I was also concentrated on the stories that the informants told and it was hard at the same time to keep track of the phraseology. The stories sometimes were very extensive and by the end of the interviews it took a lot of energy to keep concentration on what was said, what it meant and how it related to my study and if it was relevant. When I listened to my interviews after, I realized that I missed many points that needed to be clarified and specified. In one case I came back to the interviewee to talk again about some questions, in another case I called to the person for clarifications.

Another weak point of my study is that my informants were mainly people from the local development groups. The accounts of outsiders would be important for this study, but I did not manage to conduct these interviews. Probably I could have had more time in the field for this purpose. The issue of age appeared to be meaningful in my study, but all of the informants were older than 50 years. Some interviews with younger people would have also improved the scope and quality of my interpretations of the empirical material.

Chapter 4 CASE STUDIES

Case study 1 Björklinge Hembygdsförening

The village Björklinge where I found the first case for my study is located 20 kilometers north from Uppsala. The name of the LDG is Björklinge Hembygdsförening (BHF), which can be translated as Björklinge “home village society” or “local heritage society”, as it presented by Swedish Heritage Federation (<http://www.hembygd.se/index.asp?lev=13444>; 2010-03-19) This chapter tells the history of the BHF, what they do and some background information about Björklinge.

Björklinge (background)

Björklinge belongs administratively to Uppsala Municipality of Uppsala County in Sweden. Closeness to the city Uppsala influences the size of the surrounding villages, because opportunities to find a job in the city draw people and they have settled in villages close to the city. That is why Björklinge has not faced a problem of depopulation as many remote villages have done. In 1960 the population of the village Björklinge was around 650 people, in 2005 this number was around 3100 (Statistics Sweden, <http://www.ssd.scb.se>; 2010-04-06), which means that the population of Björklinge village has increased by almost 390% during 45 years. According to statistical data for the year 2009 (www.uppsala.se/statistik, for 2009, 2010-04-01), 883 residents of Björklinge area - (which includes Björklinge village and nearby settlements) work in this area, 2533 persons work elsewhere which means that 2/3 of the working population receive their incomes from outside Björklinge. Björklinge has a primary school and a secondary school; it has grocery shops and small cafes, library, district nurse, elderly care, veterinary clinic. There are some businesses as well including woodworking enterprise, carpenters, gravel extraction and concrete production, small bus company and some other smaller businesses (Björklinge förr och nu, issue 32, 2008; <http://www.bjorklinge.nu/>, 2010-04-06). There are also some farms in this area. All these businesses together with public sector provide employment in the village, although some small businesses are threatened with closure after the main road was moved outside Björklinge in 2007 and shops, gas stations and some cafes on the old road have experienced a decrease of income and some have been closed down. “There is no development” says Martin, current leader of BHF, joking at the same time about my study subject.

Rich associational life in Björklinge

Björklinge has a number of local associations and clubs which join people around common hobbies, interests and charity work. Björklinge church still functions as organization

that joins people together and has a number of activities. The church has services regularly every holyday. It has activities arranged for children, young people and families; it has choirs and a sewing association. A volunteer group works with help and support of the elderly. Moreover, Björklinge Church is engaged in international work, supporting the international mission of the Swedish Church through collecting donations (Björklinge förr och nu, issue 32, 2008).

Other social organizations in Björklinge that join people around different activities and interests are for example a sport club (established since 1930), a hunter circle, two pensioners associations, folk music band and some others. Most of them are organized by people to spend their free-time according their hobbies and interests.

One of the associations is Björklinge Hembygdsförening (BHF), an association that deals with preserving the knowledge about Björklinge and its history and traditions. As Martin, current leader of BHF, said: *“The goal is to save the knowledge about the home village, not let it to die”*.

Björklinge Hembygdsförening, its history and present

BHF was established in 1971, the same year as Björklinge Municipality was merged with Uppsala Municipality. There was a merge of municipalities in 1952 when Björklinge and Viksta became one municipality and people from Björklinge knew that after the formation of bigger municipality many villages that did not have interaction with new municipality were in disadvantaged position. People were aware about the coming municipality reform in 1971 and they expected that similar situation could happen with Björklinge. They were afraid of being forgotten in the bigger municipality and tried to prepare themselves in advance. Michael, the former leader of BHF, told how the BHF started in 1971:

“BHF started in a very favorable position. We started BHF in 1971 and it was at the same time when Björklinge municipality went up in Uppsala [Municipality]. And it was a struggle. Many people didn’t want us to disappear in Uppsala but we would rather keep our small “enhet”(unity) and this way BHF became our small “enhet” that many joined. We had a great rise in the amount of members in one time...In the old Björklinge Municipality there was a cultural committee that did actually all that BHF took up later. The cultural committee worked as municipality division...It was politically elected and it did everything possible that people in Björklinge and Viksta were interested in...It [Municipality reform] was not unique and it was not unexpected for them. And municipality cultural committee was ready. And they wrote a proposal to the authorities ... and they used their contacts. They had disappeared

directly when they went up in Uppsala municipality, but it was useful for BHF. We received around 300 members in BHF in the beginning”

Activities of BHF do not match the title “development activities”. According to the leader of the group the goal of the BHF is to prevent knowledge about village from dying. In their activities they try to fulfill this goal, but they don’t present it as development.

BHF has worked with collecting and documenting information about Björklinge, its history and traditions. For example, they have an archive of photos from Björklinge area and a collection of all the newspaper articles concerning Björklinge from local and regional press. They have also collected folk music and folk songs that were written by local musicians.

Apart from collecting information, BHF has organized different feasts in the village, Christmas market, one-day hiking walks. All these events have become annual activities within BHF. Since 1977 they have published a yearly magazine “Björklinge förr och nu”, where they print articles about the history of the village and the present day, about events during the year, interviews with people and their memories about home village.

In 1985 the village received money for the demolition of the old cowhouse, but BHF used this money for renovation of the building and organized the village museum there. The time of renovations and organization of the museum was one of the periods of high activity and enthusiasm among the members of BHF. Now according to Michael it has more than 1400 items. They are the things of everyday village life from older times: instruments, dishes, devices and mechanisms related to the work in the household, forest, wool and flax production etc.

People in BHF

BHF has an issue with the age of its members. Most of them are pensioners now, although I met a few people at the annual meeting who are younger and still working. The group of people, who are retired but still healthy, has more time for social work. Michael, the former leader of the BHF who is now around 80 years old and continues to be engaged in the work of the BHF, told me about his understanding of his life and interest in the work:

“I receive all the possible assignments or tasks and I believe that person shall be helpful as long as one can. I believe it is better for oneself than just to lie on the sofa and rest.”

And later he also mentioned:

“Swedish pensioners are quite healthy generation, who can do many things with their hands and with their ideas”.

This is one of the motivations among the people to be engaged in collective action. One of my informants, a member of another local development group, said also to me, that his work with local development groups gives “*a quality of life*”. For the person it is one of the needs to feel himself/herself helpful. After retirement people who are still healthy to work can satisfy this need in collective work that is interesting for them.

Martin was worried a little that most of the members were old people. As I understood later, he meant by young people, those who are in 20's and 30's. But he himself joined the BHF when he was around 40 years old, although most of his life he has lived in Björklinge.

BHF has around 270 members. Not all of them are active during the whole year. During the year the BHF has a number of annual activities and some people participate more in some events and others are more active in other areas. In general half of the members participate and do at least something in the year activities, according to Martin.

Martin, the leader, stated that they would like to increase interest about Björklinge and BHF among the other age groups of people. During the year they collaborate with schools in Björklinge, organize excursions to the village museum for kids and they have a competition between school children in painting. Topics for paintings are different every year, but always relating to the history or culture of the village. Every year those who win competition are invited with their parents to the year meeting of the BHF, where they receive a diploma and a prize. Visiting the annual meeting by parents and kids is supposed to increase an interest in BHF among the younger generations. However in the annual meeting I observed that parents with kids left the meeting directly after the prize delivery. They were not interested in staying longer or it seemed that they didn't feel comfortable or appropriate to stay. It might have happened because this meeting was not their own initiative, but they were drawn there by their parental duties and not by the pure interest.

Most of the people on the meeting were pensioners and elderly with a few younger persons. The total amount of people was around 70 - 80 people. They had a list of the topics that would be reported or decided upon during this meeting. Everybody had received this list on the table in front of him/her. The meeting was not bureaucratic and long, and all the issues were decided quite fast. 4-5 people were the most active on the meeting and evidently prepared, the rest of the people were mainly observing and having small conversations to each other. After the official part of the meeting was finished, coffee was served, and those present could listen to the short lecture about the origin of Swedish names. Some people asked

questions after the lecture. And then many continued to talk to each other after the meeting. It seems that procedure of this meeting is the same from year to year and all the people are acquainted with it.

Stability and Funding

BHF seems to be quite stable in its work now. They have the same annual activities from year to year; many of them have known each other for ages. There are no new big projects, like museum was in the 1980's.

BHF receives financial support mainly from membership fees and the annual magazine brings some additional income to the association. They also have lotteries as another minor source of income. They have started to collect money with donations from private persons. When someone from the BHF dies, people are asked to donate to the BHF instead of buying flowers. They have never applied for any donations from outside and don't have interactions with municipality or county administration. Sometimes they communicate with other home land societies from other places in Sweden and have visits to each other.

Case study 2 Kårböle Byalag

The second case study was conducted in the village Kårböle which is situated in the area far from big cities in the center of Sweden. This village experienced depopulation, decrease in employment opportunities and withdrawal of social services. However the local development group in this village called Kårböle Byalag (KVC) doesn't seek to solve these problems. Their work has been mostly directed to the saving of local heritage. This chapter tells about the village Kårböle and the history, activities and structure of the KVC.

The village of Kårböle is located in Ljusdal Municipality, Gävleborg County. Kårböle is 56 kilometers from Municipality center – Ljusdal. The population of this village was 124 persons in 2005. (Statistics Sweden, <http://www.ssd.scb.se/>; 2010-04-08). Most of them are pensioners. Some people live only part time in Kårböle and use their country houses only on vacations. The number of people living in the village was about 300 people in 1960 (<http://www.ssd.scb.se/>) and the decrease in population from 1960 to 2005 was 50%.

Kårböle has three businesses at the moment. One is a gas station, which sells basic food and fuel. The second is a restaurant and hostel Pilgrim. The third is the hairdresser, who works part time. Apart from these I have observed a cattle farm with a few oxen. The school was closed around 3 years ago because there were only a few children. One of the informants said that there is only one family with kids in the village. Post office was closed in 1994, the office of the district nurse was closed 6 or 8 years ago.

People from the village have employment mostly outside the village. They commute to the towns in the area (Ljusdal and Sveg), or to other villages. Kårböle is one of the villages in Sweden that has experienced problems of depopulation and related to depopulation problems of social services withdrawal. In the age structure of the population people over 50 years old prevail. As Kårböle does not have employment opportunities apart from three small businesses, people need to commute to other places to work. This situation is quite typical in our times for villages remote from urban centers. But up to the 1950's –1960's Kårböle was very different in terms of population structure, activities and way of life.

Village life changes

Until the 1960's Kårböle was a village, where people lived and worked. There were occupations for them: there were some farmers, artisans, forest workers. Forestry was a big employer in the area. The Kårböle book that was published by the village council tells about history and buildings of the village, which proves that Kårböle has a long history and many interesting people have lived there. According to the Kårböle book (Kårböleboken, 2008) from 1900 to the late 1950s there were a lot of employment opportunities in the village. People came to Kårböle from other places, particularly – Värmland, for seasonal work. From 1940s first projects for building roads were started and forestry work changed and became more mechanized. In the 1950s forestry companies started to expand the village.

The population of Kårböle increased for some time because of newcomers. But along with development and introduction of new machinery in the forestry, the use of human labor and number of employed people decreased and people moved out.

According to Nils, the leader of the Kårböle village council, the population of the village was around 450-500 people in the most populated years.

Social activities in the village. Different groups

Social groups and associations have been common for Kårböle before KVC was established. Some of the associations in Kårböle were established around common hobbies and leisure, for example fishing association or music band. In comparison, the sewing associations were not only hobby clubs, but they also sold their products to collect money for the temperance society or for a street lightning association. Local associations have existed in Kårböle at least from the 19th century.

Kårböle still has a sports association that was organized in 1932. In 1944 a fishing association was organized which also works these days. Kårböle has two hunter teams, handcraft association, pensioners association, scooter association and an association called

“Bystuga” (“Village log house”). The latter serves as a meeting place for villagers. They have a little café in summer. All associations usually have membership fees that members pay every year. The money received from the fees is often used to hire the premises, to pay for electricity and other services or for some activities in the association.

The Kårböle village council doesn't have any membership fees and all the villagers are automatically considered as members of this organization. It differs from other associations in the villages in its purposes, structure and functioning.

Village Council

The KVC was founded in 1971 when the municipalities of Färila and Kårböle were merged with Ljusdal municipality. The leader of the KVC Nils was a member of this council from the beginning. He told about this process in the interview:

“And we started the village council already in 1971 and before Färila and Kårböle were a separate municipality. But then it was merged with Ljusdal Municipality. So it became a big municipality. And we expected anxiously that we became put aside even more. ...Then we would receive less support. So we started the village council. There were eleven similar groups at that time, eleven village councils in Sweden. It was quite early, at that time. And we continued and we dealt with things that were good for the village and so on. It was so good that we managed to buy this so called Pilgrim. We received money then and we had the luck to buy it then in 1988. In 1989 it was renovated. We received 5 million [Swedish kronas] at that time. First we received 3.5 million and then some million more. It became 5 million then and the building was renovated. ”

“...We had a meeting and we all agreed that we should think about our village because if it became one big municipality, we could become put aside. It had happened often with others, they had been put aside next year [after the merger of municipalities]. The governing body was elected from time to time. And I was there in the governing body even at that time...”

I would like to draw attention to the fact that Nils starts to tell about the process of arranging the village council in 1971 and then jumped over the period of 17 years and talked about the time when they renovated the Pilgrim house. This time of 1988-1989 seems to be remarkable for the village council. Nils spoke often about this time with many details, but could not remember some other periods in the village council's history. In 1988-1989 they worked with the renovation of the Pilgrim house and construction of a new Offer church. Nils emphasized that many people, including officials, came at the opening ceremonies. Nils

named several times a former county governor Fredrik Henrysson. When I asked Nils, where the money came from, he told the following:

“We had a county governor at that time, Fredrik Henrysson, who signed it. First for three and a half million. And we were quite early with this idea of village group and there were village means at that time. We received 75% of this money that came from the county board or they were probably from the government.75%, but then in the summer it would be reduced to 50% and then even county administration insisted on that we should have started, otherwise we would lose 25 %. So it was the right time, exactly then....At the same time we built Stavkyrkan (the new Offer Church)...”

This period of 1988-1989 is the time of the Swedish national campaign for the countryside that was initiated by the European Council and lead in Sweden by the Minister of Industry. After this campaign national organization ASSL was established. During this campaign the state supported and inspired local development initiatives with the help of county administration boards and Sparcely Populated Areas Delegation. (National public inquiry, SOU 2003:29) The grant that Kårböle received at that time is likely to be connected to this countryside campaign. After the campaign new local development groups were established all over Sweden.

I asked Nils about the purposes and goals of the village council. His answer was:

“...to save the village, to support the village. All that relates to Kårböle we should save somehow and have contacts with authorities, with Gävle County Administration probably and other authorities. It is a big task that we deal with... try to receive money for the village”.

Nils used such words as “to save” and “to support”, but never words “to develop” or “to improve”. Activities of the KVC have often focused on preserving local heritage places, history and culture. They organized people and received grants from Gävleborgs County Employment Board (Arbetsnämnd) for renovation of old historical buildings, such as the mill, power station, smithy in 2008. The Employment Board had grants for renovation projects and through them also provided employment to unemployed people. The village council also applied to the Road Agency to ask them to make a walking and bicycle path along the road, because during holidays and vacation traffic increases and it can be dangerous to walk or bike in the village.

The KVC is the owner of the Pilgrim house since 1988 and the building is hired out for different activities. The biggest tenant is the restaurant Pilgrim which takes the upper

floor. On the ground floor two other tenants occupy rooms. One of them is the “Handcraft association” that uses premises as a place for meeting and selling their goods. The other one is a hairdresser, who rents a smaller room. The governing body of the village council has made a decision to sell this house, because communal costs and insurance of this building are not covered by the rent they receive from tenants. They had a debt of around 50 000 Swedish kronas from the previous year. They do not think that their tenants will be able to pay a higher rent. Moreover the house has not been renovated for 20 years and requires repairs, which they can’t afford. Therefore, they decided to sell the house.

All people who live in the village are automatically members of village council and the council has a governing body. The governing body meets once a month when they discuss and try to solve different issues concerning Kårböle. The governing body membership includes apart from others a chairman (leader of the council), a secretary, and a cashier. I attended the meeting on March 22nd 2010 when the governing body decided to sell the house. At this meeting it discussed issues of the economy of the council, problems around the Pilgrim building, future plans and the future council annual meeting.

There were seven people on the meeting. Three of the governing body members live permanently in Kårböle, the others have only their holiday houses there and live in other places.

Navid, the owner of the restaurant Pilgrim and the member of the body, didn’t agree that the council should sell the house. He thinks that they can try to find other solutions and that this issue should be discussed with other villagers, because the building is a central and famous place of the village and Pilgrim restaurant in this building is one of only three enterprises that are located in the village. But the other members didn’t support him. Later I found out that some of them had discussed the fate of the house in personal conversations before the meeting. I suggest that the decision was also formulated before and on the meeting they just put it to the voting. They explained that in order to keep the house they needed to have more tenants, but it was hard to find them. In the 1990’s they had a post office and a district nurse office that helped to receive enough rent to support the house, but later these two services were removed from the village.

For money that they will receive from this house the governing body plans to buy a share in the wind power company. Wind turbines are to be installed in the area close to Kårböle. Nils has read in the newspapers and has seen on the TV information about wind power projects around the country. He became interested in it and contacted the wind power

company. He negotiated this issue on behalf of the council with representatives from the wind power company. Nils told about this option at the meeting. The village could receive cheaper electricity and dividends from power plant if they would buy the share in this company. At the moment the governing body of the village council considers wind power project as possible option for further work of the village council, as possible way to receive means for the village.

KVC has an annual meeting and all the people who live in the village are welcome, but often it is only one or two people apart from the governing body who come for these meetings, although the information about meeting is put on the notice boards. All the decisions are taken by the governing body. Other villagers are informed about decisions.

The village council receives money from the grants mainly. In the case with the Pilgrim building, money came from county administration board. It was an old beautiful building on the main road and it needed repair.

The grant they received from the county administration board in 1988 was around 5 million Swedish kronas and it was the most significant grant they have ever had. Apparently they have better relationships with county than with municipality. Nils mentioned also that there was a conflict with the municipality when the KVC received a grant for the Pilgrim building. Municipality required 500 000 kronas from the 5 million grant that Kårböle had received. Kårböle gave money to the municipality, but then they complained to the parliamentary ombudsman about this case.

Another source of funding is grants from hydropower plants. As Ljusnan River is regulated by the dams, some villages on the banks of the river are affected by the work of the dams. Hydropower plants pay money to Ljusdal Municipality as compensation for this impact and Municipality divides money to different projects in the area. This fund is called the Sveglaforsen regulation fund. The amount of money in this fund changes from year to year. Municipality receives applications from different associations and groups in the area, and then makes a decision which project will receive grants. In Kårböle village not only the KVC applied for this grant. Other associations, such as the fishing association, the sports association, and association "Bystuga" are also located in Kårböle, but they apply for funds separately. It appears that different associations in this village compete between each other for grants.

The other problem that Bo, one of the governing body members, raised is that the village should remind to the authorities about its existence in order to receive attention to the village needs.

“Municipality is a politically elected leaders, people... There is probably 30-40 people that are elected, they decide how municipality will be developed, but nobody from the village [Kårböle] is part of this political elite. I believe that nobody from the village is politically engaged or active in any union. If there is nobody from the village, who is speaking constantly on behalf of the village in the municipality, then the village is forgotten by the municipality somehow. Nobody speaks constantly that “Kårböle needs, Kårböle needs, Kårböle thinks that...””

This quotation contains one of the motives why the village council exists. The KVC appears to be a group that deals with representation of Kårböle and also they try to prove that Kårböle deserves being saved and supported. Preserving the village, its historical and cultural buildings might be one of the ways to prove it and have a right to claim the economic support. The village has historical buildings from the previous centuries, they are beautiful, they have value for the whole country – they should be saved, Kårböle should be saved.

My informants almost didn't talk about the demographic situation of Kårböle as a problem, although the most of the people in the village are elderly people and there are only a few kids. When Nils told me that school was closed 3 years ago, I asked him, if they had tried to save the school. He answered: *“Well. Those who had kids, they tried. But there were only a few children to run the school”*. I would expect this answer from someone from the municipality, but not from the leader of the village council. The closing of the school does not seem to be a problem for Nils. It was not concern of the village council. It was a concern of those who had children.

Another thing that surprised me was how easy the village councils governing body agreed to sell the Pilgrim house, although it is a central building of the village and the restaurant Pilgrim is a famous place and according to Navid, the restraint has been a profitable enterprise. Navid said that he paid 500 000 swedish kronas of taxes to the municipality annually. And last years his enterprise received more and more profit. He was even content to pay higher rent for the restaurant and tried to argue that they can manage the situation. But I was surprised that they didn't consider his arguments, although they seemed to be reasonable. It seemed to be not the problem of the village council. Navid said that he would probably

leave Kårböle and look for a job in another place if the Pilgrim house would be sold. But this was not heard.

I have realized that Kårböle is not a development group in the way I understand it and the way these groups are presented in most of the literature and on the web-site of ASSL. The members of the KVC do not use the same concepts that they use. Although the village Kårböle has experienced the depopulation and related to depopulation problems, they do not seek to address these problems and “to develop” the village. The KVC group is interested in looking for grants and funding, which they have often spent on renovation of the historical buildings and other activities related to preserving the culture and history of the village.

In this chapter the two LDGs were described. Neither of them are development oriented, but they are presented by the ASSL organization as development groups and included in the database of this organization as development groups. This puzzle has led to the analysis of these two LDGs in relation to the umbrella organization ASSL in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 THE CASES OF BJÖRKLINGE AND KÅRBÖLE IN RELATION TO THE POPULAR MOVEMENT COUNCIL “ALL SWEDEN SHALL LIVE”

The national organization “All Sweden shall live”

The organization ASSL was established in 1989 in the end of the rural campaign ASSL as part of the European campaign for the countryside that was initiated by the European Council and supported by the government of Sweden (Industry Ministry) (Johansson, 1998; Hansen & Waldenström, 2008). In the 1980’s the European Council’s campaign for the countryside was held and Swedish government supported this campaign in Sweden (Hansen & Waldenström, 2008). By that time some local groups had already been built in Sweden, but when the campaign was closed, around 1000 new local groups were established (Booklet “All Sweden shall live”, www.helasverige.se).

One of the points of this campaign was “*to adopt a territorial approach which should be integrated and multidisciplinary, in contrast to the traditional approaches which are sectoral or according to social groups*” (Parliamentary Assembly, Recommendation 1091, 1988) This approach paid attention to the territory and to the specifics of place. It focused on the rural areas in their territorial location and not only in relation to the certain production activities (such as agriculture) or in relation to the social groups of people (such as children or women). The question of “place” was central to this campaign. Another aspect of this

recommendation which is also useful to notice was *“to pursue endogenous development founded on the natural and human potential of each territorial unit or region concerned, as well as on a policy of partnership”* (Ibid.) Here the theme of territorial focus is reinforced, and this point emphasizes “endogenous development” which can be called the core idea of the local development groups.

Local groups that had been created in 1970’s and 1980’s in the villages can be seen as corresponding to the priorities of the European campaign as territorial units – they represented their own villages in different places in Sweden. At that time there were few such groups in Sweden and these few received attention and were considered as active agents.

The ASSL present their goal as to support local development groups. But in the two cases under investigation, people didn’t talk much about this organization. They don’t pay any membership fees. The Björklinge group even said that they are not a member of this organization; they just sympathize with this organization. The Kårböle group has sometimes communication with ASSL and the leader of this group was planning to attend the Rural Parliament, which is annually organized by ASSL. They also talked that sometimes they were invited to the meetings of all the LDGs from their Municipality. The initiative for this collaboration was not from the group, but from the organization ASSL. The ASSL present all the LDGs as a movement, and the purpose of the organization is to support this movement. But do all the groups themselves perceive themselves as part of the movement? Some groups are active in activities organized by the ASSL while some others evidently not. There is no real movement in this sense, with common ideology and way of acting. It seems that this organization seeks to present them in this way.

The organization emphasizes that LDGs is a popular movement and it is a manifestation of democracy as people in their local villages raising a voice to influence own future. Herlitz (2000) calls the popular movement council ASSL as “national voice of the village movement” (Herlitz, 2000, p.7).”The voice” is a concept representing the ability to speak. To speak about what? Do the LDGs need an organization ASSL to speak? The village action movement is presented as “protest movement against depopulation of the rural areas” and at the same time as “active agent of democratic development” (Herlitz, 2000, p.13). The organization ASSL is seen to express values of equality, democracy, sustainability and cooperation. These metaphors seem to be used for legitimizing for the organization and the movement. One of the purposes of ASSL is to influence rural policies and increase awareness

of the public about the problems of rural areas³. For these purposes such metaphors can be appropriate.

The case studies of two member local development groups of ASSL illustrate examples of the earlier groups within the village action movement, which appeared before the organization ASSL was established. The local development groups in these cases have a different understanding of their activities and situation in their villages than is presented by the official documents and statements of the organization ASSL. This analysis focuses on the differences in the perspectives on LDGs between the national organization and the two local groups. The main points of the divergences to be investigated here are: 1) difference in perception of their role, 2) difference in perception of the situation in the rural areas, 3) and difference in what the groups do and why.

“Is there any development?” Differences in perception of the local groups’ role

The local development groups in Björklinge and Kårböle were established in 1971, in both cases in connection with municipality reform. Their tasks and notions of what they do were formulated at that time, although they were changed during the later years. In both Björklinge Hembygdsförening (BHF) and Kårböle village council (KVC) group members did not perceive themselves in the way the organization ASSL presents local development groups. First of all, people in both groups did not see their activities as development activities and they didn’t consider “development” as their task. Informants in the interviews never called their association as local development groups, although on the web-page of national organization ASSL, it is stated that one of the main goals of these groups is “general development”⁴. However they didn’t use the term “development” themselves. Martin, the leader of BHF, was slightly skeptical when I said that I studied rural development. He said that he was not sure if some development had happened at all in the rural areas. According to him, the goal of BHF is “... *to save the knowledge about home village, not let it to die*”. In their activities they try to pursue this goal.

In the case of Kårböle the goal was stated as “*to save the village, to support the village*”. The understanding about the village support and saving is special in Kårböle case. The question is what in the village needs to be supported. The KVC has worked more with

³ <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/in-english/our-tasks/>; 2010-04-18

⁴ <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/bygdebanken/visa/foerening/bjoerklinge-hembygdsfoerening/foereningsinfo/>; 2010-04-07

preserving local history and culture. But when the school in Kårböle was closed three years ago, the village council did not try to save it. The village council applied to the Road Agency for the new walking and bicycle path. But on the other hand they made a decision to sell the Pilgrim building, because they were afraid of bankruptcy, and did not try to save it despite the cultural value of this place and its economic and social meaning for the village. It seems that the KVC does not prioritize activities that foster economic or social development. This may be explained by the fact that the majority of the population in Kårböle are pensioners and Kårböle is a place for retirement and rest for them and not a place for work. At the same time from the beginning this village council did not have an intention to develop the village. When it was established in 1971 they wanted to save their representation as a particular village, they did not want to be “put aside” or forgotten by the authorities.

The LDGs in Kårböle and Björklinge do not perceive their activities as “development” but more as “preservation”. But the national organization ASSL presents them as development groups. What is the difference between these two concepts? “Development” relates more to the changes, to the improvements, quantitative or qualitative, usually with the increase of complexity of the structure. The term “preservation” comes from the verb “to preserve”, which means to prevent from decay, to maintain. This is not about improvements or increasing complexity, this is about saving something which is valuable. People in Björklinge and Kårböle want to save their village as they are valuable for them, they don’t want to lose what they have. Therefore the discourse of the local groups BHF and KVC are different from that of the organization ASSL.

Different views on rural problems

The problem of the rural areas in Sweden is presented by the organization ASSL⁵ and by some researchers as a problem of depopulation (especially in the north) and related to depopulation problems of unemployment and withdrawal of social services (Johansson, 1998; Herlitz, 1998). Development was seen as the way to slow depopulation and to address the related problems. In the cases of BHF people did not face depopulation; on the contrary, Björklinge is growing. The leader of BHF was just a little bit concerned that Björklinge was not growing so fast as other villages in this area which have railroad stations. In the case of Kårböle depopulation of the village was evident, although they didn’t seem to be concerned about this issue. The decrease in population since 1960 to 2005 was 50%. (Statistics Sweden;

⁵ <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/in-english/our-history/>; 2010-04-28

<http://www.ssd.scb.se/>) But people in KVC didn't talk about the will to influence it, they only stated facts that the change had happened. For example, during my walk around the village with Bo, he showed me one of the houses and said that in this house the only children family lived. Then he showed some houses where nobody lived, they were used in most cases as holiday houses. Bo lived in Kårböle also only part time; he was a pensioner from Stockholm, who had bought a house in this village some years ago. Depopulation was a fact for the village, but it was like a natural order of things, which they could not influence. It is like when the person becomes old, he/she knows about it but realizes that it is inevitable and natural. Nothing can be done about it. For ASSL the depopulation and the related problems are the problems to solve, for BHF they are not a problem in their village and for KVC it is not things that they are able to change.

Different views on what the groups do and why

Both groups did not aim to address depopulation and do not perceive it as possible to solve so they did not have activities for it. The KVC did not try to save the school, because there was no sense to save the school, if they did not expect a baby boom in the village. They do not think about how to save the restaurant in the village, because the village does not depend on it. This restaurant is important for the owner of the restaurant and his family, because they receive income from it. This business is important for the municipality, because the entrepreneur pays taxes. But there is no direct value for the village. The village council does not consider it as a priority and as something that should be saved. Both groups are engaged in the activities for saving the cultural and historical heritage. For BHF this is the main goal of the work. For KVC it is only one of the possible tasks, but probably most of their activities can be referred to the saving of culture and history.

"It was the right time, exactly then..."

The groups such as BHF and KVC were organized in connection to the municipality reform and because of the expected threats of being forgotten by the authorities. Thus, from the beginning these groups did not have development goals. But the form of these groups fitted to the emerging discourse on local development. They were the ground for the emerging village movement, but their own discourse was not about development. New meanings of the development were attached to them later by the umbrella organization. Although the first groups were not development groups in their goals and activities, but the form of collective organization and the idea of the village representation in the form of action groups appeared to be a solid base to build a new "construction" of it within the discourse about development.

The values of the democracy, equality, sustainability were embedded in this movement later in correspondence with the modern views and currents in the policies.

So the village action movement was not created by the village groups themselves, it was rather built on the basis of the idea of these local action groups by the lobbies and activists of organizations dealing with rural issues. It was done in the right time, when political discourse on local development in Europe emerged. The construction of the new institutions on the base of the old ones is described as “institutional bricolage” by Cleaver (2002), who borrowed this notion from Mary Douglas. She argues that mechanisms for natural resource management and collective action are often adopted and rebuilt from existing or old institutions in a complex way. They are the mixture of formal and informal, traditional and new, which are put together both consciously and unconsciously by the agents acting “within the bounds of circumstantial constraint” (Cleaver, 2002).

In the case of Sweden and ASSL it is also unclear to which extent the village action movement is influenced by the “grassroots” and to which extent it was influenced by the official rules, policies and discourses. The first groups were often organized by the villagers themselves as can be seen from the cases of Kårböle and Björklinge. But they were shaped in the established form of the “association”. Different associations have been common in Sweden for a long time; they often have had similar structure and regulations. Associations usually have the governing body, regular meetings, bank account and membership fees. This is a bureaucratic or formal organizational structure. In Sweden collective action is often formalized as it is easier to act if people are organized in the association (förening). One of my interviewees told me in conversation that in Sweden it is easier even to talk with officials or other organizations, if people are organized in the group or association, than if the person is alone. Groups of people are more likely to be listened to and considered than individuals. On the web-site of another local development group, Järle Byalag (Järle village council), which was formed in the 1973, I have found the notice that was used to invite people to take part in the village council. Here is a quotation from this notice:

“Do you want to join and organize a village council? In order to feel village fellowship. In order to be able to arrange activities for children and young people and also for us adults. ...The only way to receive contributions and loans from the Municipality is to organize an association...”⁶

⁶ <http://www.jarlebyalag.se/byalag.php?text=Historia>; 2010-04-18

Thus, the formal organizational structure legitimizes collective action, gives a right to raise a voice and be listened to and to receive funding from the authorities.

Moreover, the village action movement was also influenced by the official national and international rural development programs and the policy discourses. In order to receive funding for the projects organization needs to express certain values. The organization ASSL also demonstrates some values, including sustainability, democracy, equality, partnership etc. and attributes them to the LDG's although the groups themselves can see their situation and activities in a different way.

Thus, the umbrella organization ASSL presents the role, goals and activities of the local development groups in a different way than they do it themselves. It may serve as evidence that initially the village action groups were joined in this movement from "above", by form, not by the content. The idea of "local" was useful at the time the organization was built, there was official support for "endogenous" and "territorial" and this opportunity was grasped. The new local groups were established within the discourse of development, but the former groups, such as BHF and KVC remained mainly unchanged in their ideologies. Nevertheless these two groups have evolved in a different way in the last 40 years. The differences between them and possible causes of this divergence are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

In this chapter the two cases are analyzed in relation to the processes of mobilization and evolution of the local development groups. An attempt is made to investigate how the identities of the groups were constructed by the members and how these have changed. The two rural groups that were organized in the same year in connection to the Municipality reform have developed in the different directions. This divergence in organizational evolution is explored through an investigation of how the identities of the groups have been constructed. The following themes were investigated in the analysis: 1) preconditions for the emergence of the groups; 2) formation of the groups and its motivation; 3) activities of the group; 4) issues of geography and population; 5) perceptions of the "outsiders"; 6) structures of the groups; 7) the Swedish context.

Preconditions for the emergence of the groups

The local development groups in Kårböle and Björklinge were not the only groups in their villages. Both villages had had a rich associational life for a long time before 1971, when

the LDGs were formed. Different associations and clubs are normal for Sweden; people do not perceive them as something unusual. But the reasons for the organization of collective action are different in different times and places. If people have common interests and goals, they can organize an association (förening). Not only the presence of the associations in the Swedish society surprised me, but rather the number of these associations in the studied cases, especially, in the case of Kårböle. It is a relatively small village of about 120 people, but it has at least 9 associations and clubs that I have heard and read about. Most of them are organized around hobbies, such as fishing, hunting, and hand craft. At least from the 19th century different groups, clubs and associations have always existed in Kårböle. There is a similar situation in Björklinge. It is hard to say why Sweden is rich in associational life. The ideas of cooperation and collective work can be attributed to the image of Swedish society and its national identity. But to elaborate deeper on this topic is not possible in the scope of this work. For this thesis it is important to emphasize this fact that associations have been commonplace for the Swedish society.

But in order to organize people need an issue around which to build a group – a motivation for collective action. In both cases under investigation, the cause of action was the municipality reform in 1971. People in the villages knew about the consequences for some villages of the previous municipality reforms in 1950's and 1960'. After the smaller municipalities were merged, many villages from the former municipalities found themselves in disadvantaged position, because political decisions were taken in the new municipality center, which had more villages to think about, than the former municipality. People in both Kårböle and Björklinge were aware about upcoming municipality reform, it was not unexpected. But why did this reform have such an impact on the villagers that they decided to organize an association? Why was it so meaningful for them?

Formation of the groups and its motivation

In the theory on collective action it is emphasized that in order to start collective action people need to have shared perception of “injustice” (Poletta & Jasper, 2001). People in the villages perceived the loss of the own municipality as threat for the villages. In the case of Kårböle the leader of the group explained the reason for mobilization in the following way: *“And we expected anxiously that we would become put aside even more. ...Then we would receive less support. So we started the village council”*. In this claim he expresses the perceived injustice by the phrases “put aside” and “less support”. It implies that someone took something that Kårböle had a right to have – the result was that Kårböle expected less support

than before. The expression “put aside” was repeated again and again in conversations about the formation of the KVC. But it was hard to receive information about how people organized the group, what they did for it. It might be because the informant could not remember this time properly, it was almost 40 years ago, but he still could remember his perceptions of the situation at that time because they were important for him. The other reason might be that he didn't consider the details of organization process as important to tell.

In the case of Björklinge the situation of the formation was described in a different way: *“We started HF in 1971 and it was at the same time when Björklinge municipality went into Uppsala [Municipality]. And it was a struggle. Many people didn't want us to disappear in Uppsala but we would rather keep our small “enhet” (unity) and this way HF became our small “enhet” that many joined”*. In this claim two binaries are important to notice: “to disappear” and “to keep “enhet””. To disappear is an active verb in contrast to the “become put aside”. It is a threat, but there is no other side that is responsible for it. And the group's perceived task is “to keep “enhet””. “Enhet” is a Swedish word that can be translated as “unity”, which associates with community, as united group of people. Having a municipality might mean having a center, which unites the community and it is a part of identity of united community. The sense of belonging to the certain group, to the community is important in this claim

Activities of the groups

Collective identities of the agents frame strategic choices, what people consider as important or meaningful to do to reinforce their distinguishing features. (Poletta & Jasper, 2001) The groups act in relation to the broader community – the village and to the outside actors, like the municipality and the county.

The dynamic of the activities is very different in these two cases. The KVC has had more ebb and flow in their work: some periods of activity are followed by the stagnation periods when almost nothing happens. The BHF is characterized by a certain set of annual activities which have been the same for several years. One bigger wave of activity was connected to the museum organization in 1985, but in general activities are the same every year, but regular: an annual meeting, organization of the painting competition among the children and holidays.

In the history of the KVC the periods of the higher activity were the periods connected to the funding that the group managed to acquire. For example, their work with the renovation of the Pilgrim house and construction of the new Offer Church received a lot of attention, and

in the conversations about the village council the leader recalled many times this period. On the other hand it is remarkable that he could not remember what the village council did before this time, before 1988, when the grant from the county administration was received for the renovation of this house. *“We sought the money from time to time...”* But he could not remember for what purposes or projects they sought the money. 1988-1989 was the period of the most activities, and later they had a few other projects. The village council works with fund raising and it seems that mainly the leader seeks the money. Although he constantly said “we”, it is he, who usually negotiates with the authorities on behalf of the village and the village council.

This position of the fund-raising and looking for the support from the outside was considered as legitimate for them.

He *“tries to receive money for the village”*. This might imply that village has a right to receive something from the authorities, and the task of the village council is to remind those in power about Kårböle. The role of the council as a representative of the village was emphasized by other member Bo, when he talked about the relation to the municipality and that nobody from the village was engaged in the politics and the Municipality work. (See quotation p.25) He concerns about being “forgotten” as a village, which implies “not to receive the money”. The role of the village council is to prevent being “forgotten”, it is a positive image of the self.

The culture and history serves often to legitimize that Kårböle has this right to receive the support from the authorities, because it has a historical meaning for the country, because the village has old buildings that have historical and cultural value. The village council published a book about Kårböle in which a history of Kårböle is told and it serves to tell the people about the unique history of the village. The leader said: *“All that relates to Kårböle we should save somehow”*. The objects of material culture, the texts about the history of Kårböle, the symbol of Kårböle as the most central geographical point in Sweden can be seen as manifestations of the collective identity of the village.

At the time of the interviews the village council started to think about a new activity for the village – wind power project. The leader said that he was going to attend the annual conference of the LDGs – The Rural Parliament - in May 2010 and he planned to take part in the workshop about wind power for the villages. The organization “ASSL” on its web-site also inspires the groups to become interested in the wind power projects as opportunity to receive income for development. In this situation the identity claims are being transferred

from the main organization to the local groups. The idea of sustainable energy which is completely new for Kårböle seems to reformulate the activities of the village council. It is an example how the village interests change from concerns over culture conservation to sustainability.

In a way the work of the BHF seems to be similar to the work of the KVC: they also try to save their historical and cultural heritage, but the way they do it and their activities are completely different.

The goal of the BHF is “...to save the knowledge about the home village, not let it to die”. “Save the knowledge” represent the perception of the own role as a “knowledge keepers” and this role is reinforced in the activities of the BHF. One of the tasks they have is to collect the information about Björklinge: photos, newspaper articles, material objects, and texts about history. On the other hand they try not only to keep this knowledge but also spread it – “not let it to die”. “To die” can be seen as forgotten. In order to prevent it from being forgotten they work with other villagers who are not members of the BHF, first of all with children and the youth. They also organize celebrations of the Björklinge day and some other feast for all the villagers. Everybody is welcome to visit the village museum. The museum is the expression of the collective identity as well as the annual magazine. It is important to save the knowledge, to save “enhet”, because otherwise it will die.

The position of the BHF can be called “knowledge keepers” who do not let Björklinge to be forgotten by the villagers themselves, and for the KVC it is “village representative”, “village defender” that prevents the village from being “put aside”, “forgotten” by the authorities. The differences in the roles are prominent although both groups use culture and history as objects for their work.

Issues of geography and population

Geography is meaningful in Sweden. The south part of Sweden is more populated and the northern part is less populated. The migration trend is that people move from the north to the south of Sweden. The north is often perceived as depopulated and deprived of human resources, but as a place for the rest, for mountain skiing, hiking and the south is place for work and life.

Villages Kårböle and Björklinge have different perception of themselves in relation to others because of their geographical location, which influence the structure of the population. Björklinge is a community in the south close to the city Uppsala and does not experience

depopulation in contrast to Kårböle, which is situated in less populated area, and the closest small town is 58 kilometers away from it.

Kårböle is one of the villages that were deprived of its human resources as many people have moved from Kårböle. The village has also lost its importance as place of timber production. Kårböle changed in a relatively short period of 40-50 years from the place where people lived and worked to the place where they retire and rest. For the people who lived in Kårböle the most of their lives, this change was remarkable. This has happened not only in Kårböle but in many villages around and in other parts of Sweden. When the south parts of Sweden have become more and more developed, the north has experienced a decline. It could be perceived as unjust by the villagers. And it put them in the opposition to the external world. Kårböle has a right to receive something back from the external world, has a right to have a share in the resources. The KVC is those people who claim this share, who reminds about Kårböle, protects the interest of the village. KVC uses external funding mainly for the activities as they perceive the legitimacy to have a share in the resources. On the contrary, BHF have never applied for external funding for their activities, they try to sustain themselves through the internal means, such as membership fees and work of the volunteers.

Björklinge is not deprived; it is growing, but mainly because of new people coming to settle. There are many families with children. The leader of the BHF was concerned that for the people who come to Björklinge to live, Björklinge is not a home village. They do not feel the same about it as he feels. If there is nobody who tells the new comers about the village, then it will lose its individuality. It will die as the entity of "Björklinge", as "enhet" and will become just one of the "sleeping towns" in the suburbs of Uppsala. Therefore, BHF has special activities that address children. They want to inspire interest to the village among the children and their parents. This concern is connected to the urbanization trend. The need to construct the village as historical and meaningful place appeared when people needed to relate themselves to the place, which represents their own individual identities.

"Place" is important for people, as they construct their own identities and "make sense of their world" (Melucci, 1995, p.42) through belonging and relating to the certain places. But construction of an identity implies the division of "us" and "them", particular view for those who are not part of the local group. How do the groups perceive "the others" and who are they?

Perception of “them”

When I talked to Martin, the leader, about the future of the BHF, he said that the future plans are to survive. He explained that BHF had lost members, because of the death of the members and new members had not filled in the loss. He reflected on the reason why many other people had not become interested in this association. He thinks that people in our days have less connection to the places than it was 30 years ago. In the last 30 years people have moved and changed jobs often and then it becomes a question: where is the home village for such a person? In case of Björklinge, many people have moved there in recent years, but they don't feel as much personal attachment for this village and place, as those who have grown there or spent most of the life there. In his opinion it might be an explanation of why members of this association are mainly the elderly. Among people of younger generations, Björklinge serves as a place to sleep between the working days. As they do not have strong personal feelings, memories, connections with other people from the village, they are unlikely to be engaged in the work of preserving the cultural heritage. But on the other hand, Martin said that he himself was not interested in it until he got older. He had other things to do, when he was a young person and issues of home village were not bothering him.

When he talks about BHF he uses the words “old” and “young”, representing often those are old as insiders, as members of the BHF and those who are young as outsiders. And in the work of the BHF it is one of the tasks to increase the knowledge of those who are outside, who are young and are not engaged in the BHF, about the village. The group of the “young” people serves as at least one of the objects of the BHF. Martin used to be a teacher of history and geography. And his understanding of the relation of the BHF to the villagers is similar to the relation of the teacher, who spreads the knowledge, to the students. People from the village can also be seen divided in his understanding in those who have spent most of their life in Björklinge and those who moved there for work and to settle. For the village with an increasing flow of the newcomers this division is understandable. The latter group is also a target group, probably less important than the group of “young”, who were born or brought up in Björklinge. The newcomers are expected to have less personal feeling to the village and interest in it than those who were born in Björklinge or lived there for a long period

Although in Kårböle the majority of the population is pensioners, they do not put weight on the division of young and old people. For the village council, those from outside the village are “the others”. One group of the others is “other villages” or “places” that take resources from Kårböle and “put Kårböle aside”. For example, in relation to the Sveg-

Laforsen regulation fund, the leader of the village council claimed that many villages down the river Ljusnan were not influenced by the dams, but they receive the money from this fund. Authorities and particularly the municipality are perceived often as the source of injustice. Kårböle had a conflict with the Municipality when they received the grant from the County Administration; the Municipality also decides how the Sveg-Laforsen regulation fund is divided between the villages.

People from the south of Sweden and other tourists are also perceived as “the others”, but in a different way. They go to the mountains through Kårböle and they stay sometimes in Kårböle. They can learn about Kårböle and its history, from the booklets in the restaurant and in the hostel. Some attention is also given to address their perception of Kårböle as a nice and interesting place.

Different perception of the people “outside” could have also influenced the internal structure of the groups.

Structures of the two groups

The big difference between the KVC and the BHF is in the organizational structure and the number of active participants. The Björklinge group has about 90 members who are more or less active during the year, while the Kårböle group has only 7 people who represent the governing body. Although all the villagers in Kårböle are considered as members of the council, they are not engaged in its activity and are not interested in it. At the same time the leader of the council was not concerned about this. He did not even mention it in the conversations. The other member of the governing body, who is relatively new in the village, was more concerned about it and even tried to inspire people from another association to join with the village council. But from the very beginning the KVC was represented mainly by the governing body, because people whom the council seeks to address are outside the village. This can be an explanation why they do not recruit more actively. The village council represents the village in front of the authorities. In order to do it they need to have only a few people and it may seem that even one person is enough for it. The team is needed to discuss the issues of management and problems. They do not organize any internal work in the village and does not seem to aim for it.

In contrast, the BHF depends on its members and also on their activity. The leader was concerned about the decreasing of the interest in BHF among the villagers. The BHF is aiming to save and spread the knowledge in the village and therefore they are concentrated on those people who are in the village. The BHF has a structure of an association, but there is no

a significant distinction between the governing body and other members. Most of the work in the BHF is volunteer work. As the Björklinge group does not claim a share in the resources from the outside, they need to focus more on the increasing of commitment among the villagers.

Some thoughts about Swedish context

One thing is common for both of the groups, which I consider important to emphasize. It is the social status of participants. In both cases they can be characterized as elderly people, mostly pensioners.

This group of people, who are retired but still healthy, has more time for social work. In Sweden people live relatively longer lives, than in many other countries. When they retire at the age of 65, they receive a sufficient pension and do not need to think a lot about their daily bread. They have time for hobbies and social meetings. I should mention that I found it hard to define the age of people in Sweden. People generally look younger than their biological age or than what I expect to be their biological age. In Russia people, especially from rural areas, have often shorter life-span and they tend to look old earlier than people of the same age in Sweden. Evidently this is connected with difference in quality of life and social situation.

After retirement people who are still healthy to work can satisfy this need in collective work that is interesting for them. In this way they also “make sense of their worlds”, their individual identities.

To summarize this chapter and continue to the final discussion, it is needed to come back to the original research questions of this thesis. The first question was: what were the motives for the mobilization. For both groups the motives were to save their village identities that were perceived threatened by the merge of the municipalities. In the case of Kårböle the threat was perceived as expected decrease in economic support, in the case of Björklinge it was more a threat of losing individuality as a village.

Two different collective identities were formed by these two local groups. The KVC's identity is a “village defender”, because they represent the village in front of the authorities and protect the economic interests of the village. The identity of the BHF can be called a “knowledge-keeper” as they seek to save the knowledge about Björklinge and promote it among the villagers, proving that Björklinge is not just one of the suburbs of the big city, but has its own face.

The local groups formulate their strategies according to how they perceive themselves. The BHF as a “knowledge-keeper” collects the information about the village and material objects of the culture and history; they organize different events in the village to increase the interest to local heritage. The KVC on contrary does not work much with the villagers, but try to address the authorities and others outside the village, to prove that Kårböle is an interesting place, that should not be forgotten. They apply for grants to receive economic support for the village, which they feel legitimate to do.

The last question on how the groups changed over time will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 FINAL DISCUSSION

In this chapter the issues of the organizational dynamics in the local development groups are analyzed. It appears that the groups investigated in this study experience a decline in the collective action and commitment to it. The analysis of this is built in relation to two aspects that are prominent for both groups: 1) ageing of the group members and 2) the roles of individuals in organization.

The issue of age and the decline of the groups

In both the case studies the local development groups are characterized by the old age of the members. Most of the members are pensioners. There are no members younger than 30 years. This age structure can be explained by the fact that people need time for engagement in the associations. Younger people often have jobs and children, which consume most of the time. And interests of those who are younger are often far from history conservation. The leader of the Björklinge group commented that his interest in the work of the HF appeared after the age of 40 years. Before this age he was not much interested to participate in the activities of local heritage preservation, although he was a teacher of history.

But on the other hand if we consider that to take part in the activity of the local development groups the villagers need to reach a certain level of maturity, then we should expect that new members should join as they become older. But they don't. Although the amount of elderly people grows, the amount of the members in the groups decreases. It is more evident for the Björklinge case yet, because they have membership in the group which is registered and one can see how the amount of the members changes from year to year. They lose the members because of natural death and newcomers do not replace them. Martin

suggests that the other villagers don't want to become members because they do not consider Björklinge as their home village.

When the BHF was established in 1971 those who are now pensioners were around 40-50 years old. The initial interest of saving the village identity presumably evolved in the form of the social club, where old friends can meet, do something together and feel themselves useful.

In the case of Kårböle the situation is different. They do not have formal membership in the organization; they imply that all the villagers are members of the KVC. But in fact the village council consists of only seven more or less active members who constitute the governing body. Two of them mentioned that the interest among the villagers in the work of the council was very weak. Here is one of the comments about the annual meeting of the council, which is open to all of the villagers:

“First time I was on the meeting, nobody came apart from the governing body, last year only one came apart from the governing body. It is always announced on the notice boards that it will be the annual meeting, time and place etc. No. Nobody comes. This is not a good sign that the village people are not interested”.

So the active group is limited to the governing body. They gather from time to time to decide on the upcoming issues such as the economy of the Pilgrim house and its upkeep or applications for grants. The leader of the KVC mentioned that they have always had an ebb and flow in their activities. The villages were interested in the village council in 1989, when a lot of events happened around it, but not now. When they manage to receive a grant, then they can do their projects (like the renovation of the Pilgrim house in 1988-89), and when they do not have grants, they only do some necessary routines.

Why did it happen? Probably, the collective identities of the groups are not attractive for the villagers. The collective action started in 1971 with connection to the municipality reform which was perceived as a threat to the identities of the villages. To save this identity was the goal of the groups. But 40 years passed by and nothing happened to cause a struggle that inspired people to join the group. People might prioritize other issues than saving village identities. In Kårböle the village council even made a decision to sell the Pilgrim house which represents the outstanding part of the village history. It played a significant role in the history of the village council, but the decision to sell was made quite easily. It might evidence that saving culture and history is not in the forefront of the interests anymore.

The group of Björklinge has had more or less same activities from year to year with minor changes. The active people in the BHF are also the same. In the case of Kårböle activities depend on the external funding. If there is funding available, then projects are being implemented, when there is no funding, almost nothing happens. The groups wish to have more engagement or commitment but they do not change their values and objectives to adapt to the situation and become more attractive to new members. In the Kårböle case some change can be noticed though, but it is unlikely to be a conscious choice in order to recruit the members. They have started to discuss the new project of investing in wind power. It can be considered as a shift in the strategies, as an attempt to change in order to receive more stable funding and not to depend on the occasional grants. In this situation material incentives have become more important than identity. And the group plans to use help of the umbrella organization in this issue as the leader of the council is going to visit the seminars on wind power projects that are organized by the "ASSL". This is an example that fits with the explanations of the collective action by the resource mobilization theory, which argues that actors are likely to mobilize if they expect material benefits from participation (McCarthy, J & Zald, 1987). Although in the beginning of 1970's they could not expect these material benefits and at that time saving of the collective identity was more likely to be an incentive for mobilization. But times changes and new situations require new decisions. These changes were mainly external. New possibilities appeared in the society and they were grasped and integrated in the world of the village. Collective action initiated as "informal" and "grassroots" have evolved in connection to the new opportunities provided by the state and official programs. This coincides with the concept of "institutional bricolage" and complexity of the collective action formation by the mixture of "bureaucratic" and "socially embedded" institutions (Cleaver, 2002)

On the other hand the shift in the strategies of the village council can be explained by the secondary meaning of the culture and history for the group. The identity of this group is formed around the idea of the "village representative" and "village defender". They do not let the village be forgotten by the authorities. The new wind power project can give to a village a new meaning and reason of not to be forgotten, and to receive an own share in the resources.

In the case of Björklinge there are no significant shifts in the strategies planned, although they seem to perceive the challenges and the decline of the group. They continue to act within the collective identity claims they have formed so far. Their advantage is a more stable structure of organization. They have more members than the KVC and their

dependence on the particular activists is not so high. The role of the individuals is discussed in the next part of the chapter.

The role of the individuals

In the literature about local development groups in Sweden, the authors often use the word “eldsjälar” when they emphasize the role of individuals in collective action (Herlitz, 2000; Hansen & Waldenström, 2008). This word means “fire souls” and implies the persons who are active and inspiring for others. The role of these people can be very significant in some cases. In the case of KVC, two or three “fire souls” are the main drivers of the activities. I would even say that the leader is the main person who seeks for funds and activities. One of the informants paid also attention to the fact that the figure of the leader is dominant in the KVC. This makes the village council dependent on the leader and, therefore, the organizational structure is vulnerable. In the absence of one single person the whole organization is likely to collapse. On the other hand it might be that domination of one single person in the organization discourages other villagers to become active in the group. One of the members of the village council commented when I asked him about the possible reasons for low level of engagement.

“I can only suspect that Nils [the leader] has probably been too dominant. And then people have not considered it as interesting to be engaged. And only he [Nils] has decided that we should do so, we should do so, we should do so. Then people do not engage themselves”

The structure of the KVC is clearly divided in two parts: the governing body that makes decisions and the rest of the village who are detached from decision-making process and do not take part in the activities.

In the case of Björklinge the group has more active members and there is no clear dominance of someone in the decision-making. The structure of organization is flatter, without sharp boundaries. Those, who are more active, tend to become the leaders, but the functionality of the group does not depend on a single person. Therefore such organizational structure appears to be more stable.

Although in the theory of collective action the main emphasis is on the collective identities, but in some cases individual identities can also be decisive especially if the size of the group is small and there is limited opportunity to attract human resources from the outside. Even in the big organization individuals play often significant role and success of the organization depends on the leaders. For collective action organizations the role of the “fire

souls” is expected to be even more prominent as their individual identities need to coincide with the group identities. The appearance of such leaders in organization is impossible to predict.

Construction of the village action movement

This study of two case studies, the history of the village action movement formation and establishment of the ASSL organization can be an example how collective action can be constructed by different forces in a form of “bricolage”. It was not only a process of development of the local groups. These groups and their forms were rather used to build the movement from above. The collective identities of the former groups have not even influenced the identity of the whole movement. The groups such as BHF and KVC remained “preservation” groups while the village action movement and its umbrella organization have “development” orientation. Polletta & Jasper (2001) describe in their theory the situation when the movement has one collective identity according to which it acts. But in the case of Swedish village action movement there is a divergence of identities within the movement. Particular groups within the movement live their own lives. Can this movement be called “social movement” if different parts of this movement have different goals and interests? Can “social movement” be constructed intentionally to promote certain ideas?

This chapter discussed the possible decline in collective action in two studied cases and its relation to the collective identity. The discourse of the preservation of the cultural heritage does not seem to attract new adherents to the group. In this situation one of the groups has refined its interests and identity while the other tries to act in the bounds of the existing identity. In the case of Kårböle, identity is more flexible and it is adapted to the opportunities to act and material incentives. In the case of Björklinge, the identity is more stable, but at the same time this stability and inertia can be a reason for the decline in the collective action. But the BHF has more solid organizational structure, because they have more active members, and more opportunities to take part in the activities and be active. This robust structure might help to make the process of decline smoother and slower. The organizational structure of the KVC appears to be more vulnerable, although they are more flexible in their strategies.

Conclusions

One of the arguments of this thesis is that formation of the local development groups in Sweden in the beginning of 1970's was connected to the perceived threats for village identities. These threats were probably recognized earlier, but the Municipality reform in 1971 increased grievances and triggered mobilization.

Another argument is that different geographical position of the two villages influenced the development of the collective action leading to the formation of different identities. In studied cases the local development groups chose to save their identity by preserving historical and cultural heritage of the villages. But in the case of Björklinge this was an initial choice and the group was formed around a former cultural committee. In the case of Kårböle orientation to the preserving of culture appeared later, in the end of 1980's after they received a significant grant which initiated interest in the fundraising for culture and history preservation. But the general idea of the KVC is a political representation of the village in front of the external actors. The geographical position in the relatively remote area, depopulation of the village and perception of being forgotten by the authorities forms the identity of the "defenders" of the village. Using this position they legitimize fund-raising for different projects in the village and claim resources and support from the outside. In the case of the BHF the group does not apply for external funds and not interested in it. This group has an identity of "knowledge-keepers" and their task is to save the unique history and culture of Björklinge in order not to become only one of the suburbs of the big city.

Therefore, in one case, in Kårböle, there are prominent material incentives for action. The identity is used here and adapted to the circumstances, to the opportunities to acquire resources. In the case of Björklinge saving of the social identity remains in itself a motivation for the activities, although this identity does not help them much to recruit new members. So within one movement two organizations have different motivation for collective action.

The groups differ not only from each other; they also have divergences with the umbrella organization ASSL that represents them. The both groups don't perceive their activities as "development" as it stated by the organization and they do not express same values as organization does. The groups of Björklinge and Kårböle were the first groups in this movement and their values and structures were formed before the formation of the organization. The idea of such groups was used to build this organization, but new values and claims were attached to this idea. At the same time, the earlier groups of this movement such as the KVC and the BHF remained unchanged.

Finally, some explanations are offered on why the local development groups appeared in Sweden and did not in Russia. One possibility is that in Russia the development of the countryside have happened in a different context. The state in Russia was very strong in the 20th century and it changed the rural life. The land was nationalized and the collective forms of the agriculture and social life were organized by the force and oppression, and the traditional old forms of collective organization were intentionally destroyed. For example, the church as organization was forbidden during the Soviet time, as well as traditional community system of the common lands sharing, which was similar to the Swedish “byalag”. In contrast in Sweden all these and other forms evolutionary developed and changed. The understanding of the collective action is positive. The word “collective” has a somewhat negative sense for the Russians still as something which you are obliged to do or forced to do. And the issues of the rural development are often considered as something that the state and the authorities should take care of. In the two studied cases of Björklinge and Kårböle the groups did not address these issues as well. In the Björklinge case they did not experience the problems of depopulation and rural problems related to it. In the case of Kårböle people did not see them as their interest. But the organization ASSL promotes the rural development among the public and politicians. The discourse of the local development has become popularized by this organization and it seems to be supported by the official policies. In Russia the rural development is seen as development of the agriculture and forestry mainly. The focus of “local development” is not popular.

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