FINNISHNESS IN FINLAND AND NORTH AMERICA:
Constituents, Changes, and Challenges

Edited by
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Guest Editor

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Editorial

Once again we have the privilege of presenting a guest-edited Special Issue of the Journal of Finnish Studies. Our guest editor, Dr. Pauliina Raento, holder of the Nancy and David Speer and Finnish Government Chair in Finnish Studies at the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis 2003–2005 as well as positions as senior researcher at the Academy of Finland, is an accomplished geography scholar with a special interest in issues of culture and identity in an increasingly globalizing world.


I wish to thank Pauliina Raento for her conscientious and meticulous work editing this issue. I also invite our readers to enjoyable, rewarding and challenging experience reading these articles. We hope our subscribers and other readers appreciate the special theme issues as we hope to continue publishing special volumes from time to time. This volume doubles as a monograph and additional copies can be ordered from Aspasia Books, Inc. for $20, plus applicable taxes and shipping.

We hope you will feel inspired to renew your subscriptions for 2006.

Börje Vähamäki
Figure 1. The distribution of Finns in North America today (Data sources: US Census 2000; Census of Canada 2001)
PAULIINA RAENTO
GUEST EDITOR:

INTRODUCTION TO
FINNISHNESS IN FINLAND AND NORTH AMERICA
CONSTITUENTS, CHANGES, AND CHALLENGES

Major political, economic, and cultural changes in Europe and the world have challenged Finnish national identity since the end of the Cold War. In the contemporary context of European integration and global exchanges, traveling and working abroad is routine for ordinary Finns. Foreign tourism in Finland is booming and the number of foreigners residing in the country has risen from 20,000 in the late 1980s to about 110,000 today. These numbers may be minuscule in European or global comparisons, but the speed and clustering of the change have had a notable local and regional impact especially on cities in a country of 5.25 million people. Information about Finland (or any other place in the world) is now easily available online and news reach people irrespective of their location. Artifacts, ideas, and impressions move with people and mix in novel ways. These flows of exchange are increasingly interconnected in today’s ‘shrinking’ world.

THE IDEA AND ITS PURPOSE

This theme issue about Finnishness in Finland and North America examines how these changes and contexts affect Finnish identities. One the one hand, the six articles show how identity is a complex, highly subjective and personal matter which may have multiple, simultaneous, and overlapping layers and points of reference. What ‘being Finnish’ means to an individual in Finland, the USA, or Canada may vary greatly according to age, sex, citizenship, ethnic, racial, or linguistic background, socio-economic class, daily environment and social contacts, and personal life experiences. Talking about one ‘Finnish identity’ would there-
fore be misleading. Instead, each experience—and response to change—is unique and depends on time and place. On the other hand, the contributions exemplify how this complex whole has common denominators and constituents. This shared foundation allows the tracing and understanding of general trends which represent a multitude of unique constituents.

The theme issue builds the ‘big picture’ of Finnish identities around five broad foci. First, each of the articles addresses change. The authors make comparisons across time, asking how the present differs from the past and what this may mean in the future. They examine spatial patterns by detecting how and why one place differs from others. The foci of each case study vary, including such themes as demography, settlement patterns, artifacts, consumables, employment, and identity-political ideologies. Second, the six articles recognize that all these changes leave traces in the landscape, as people, their behavior, experiences, and views modify everyday environments. In this volume landscape is treated as a broad concept that includes the whole of one’s daily environment—its looks, smells, and sounds. Mundane material-cultural constituents of landscape (such as food, houses, and photographs) receive special attention. Third, the articles emphasize (but are not limited to) the academic field of geography, one of Finland’s national sciences and one prominent, early constituent of Finnish North American studies. Drawing from these traditions and the growing interest in visual culture in social sciences, each article uses maps and photographs to illustrate the trends found in the landscape. Fourth, loyal to these interdisciplinary traditions, the volume is based on a comparative ideal, which seeks to unite Finnish and Finnish North American Studies and scholars from a variety of backgrounds across the Atlantic. Fifth, the articles, their references, and the selected bibliography wish to serve the interdisciplinarily oriented reader as a useful source for further information about the theme and its academic foundations.

THE ARTICLES

Jouli Håkki opens by addressing the globalizing context of identity formation and maintenance, pointing out the fundamentally subjective character of Finnishness. Being ‘Finnish’ is increasingly a conscious choice, but it may not be equally available to everyone. At the same time, ‘traditional’ constituents of Finnishness are being questioned and re-examined in Finland. Paul Wilson shows in his article how this critical new look applies to the concept of national landscape in Finnish photo-
graphic art. This deconstruction of one ‘national’ landscape ideal and its significance in the maintenance of ‘one Finnish nation’ also takes place in quotidian spaces. Especially in cities such as Helsinki–Helsingfors (but also elsewhere in Finland), new immigration, search for local and regional roots, international travel experiences, and the global economy transform food cultures, related identities, and quotidian landscapes. In her examination about the changing food culture in Finland, Paulliina Raento shows how ‘Finnish food’ and ‘ethnic food’ are highly subjective concepts which depend on time, place, and personal experiences. Kaisa Kepsu and John Westerholm examine how the identities of Finland’s established minorities likewise face a variety of challenges, despite the increased space given to expressions of cultural diversity and legal improvements in contemporary Finland. In this theme issue, Finland’s largest and legally best protected minority, the 300,000 Finland Swedes, exemplify these demographic and cultural pressures. As a whole, the four articles shake the myth of Finland as one, ethno-culturally uniform nation, following a critical approach which has gained strength over the past couple of decades.

Similar questions and themes are relevant in North America. Jouni Korkiasaari and Mika Roinila show how ‘Finnish identity’ is increasingly a choice and an increasing variety of views exists in the USA and Canada about its constituents and meaning. According to these authors’ findings, based on an extensive survey and interview data, generational and socio-economic differences, living environment, and life course now matter more in defining North American Finnishness than the well-known ideological and religious differences characteristic of the early migrant generations. The transfer from rural to urban environments and from blue-collar to white-collar jobs among contemporary Finnish North Americans is strikingly evident in Canada’s Prairie Provinces. In his contribution Arnold Alanen investigates those material-cultural changes of ‘Finnish landscapes’ that have resulted from these demographic and societal changes among Finnish North Americans. Concrete challenges to Finnishness in contemporary North America therefore include the preservation, maintenance, and redefinition of Finnishness at home and in relation to the changing ideas and faces of Finnishness in Finland.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some of the contributions to this volume are loosely based on papers presented at the VII Finn Forum Conference held at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis in 2004. Special thanks go to Klaas van der
Sandén, Kristian Slotte, John Adams, Varpu Lindström, Osmo Lipponen, Roger Miller, and Raimo Väyrynen for their invaluable help with the arrangements. Generous financial support for these paper sessions were provided by the Government of Finland/David and Nancy Speer Visiting Professorship in Finnish Studies at the University of Minnesota, Finland's Ministry of Education, Swedish Cultural Foundation of Finland, Finland Society, and the Academy of Finland.

The contributors humbly thank Kirsti Lehto of the Department of Geography at the University of Helsinki, Finland, for polishing up the cartographic design. All maps and graphs in this volume are her work unless otherwise noted.

ENDNOTES

1 Finland joined the European Union in 1995, together with Austria and Sweden.
2 Statistical information about Finland is available online at <www.stat.fi> (Statistics Finland). Tourism statistics are accessible through the Finnish Tourism Board at <www.mek.fi>.
4 A national science is an academic field considered to have particular importance in nation-building and the construction of national identity. Geography and History are such fields in Finland, whereas Celtic Studies qualify in Ireland.


JOUNI HÄKLI:

WHO IS THE FINN?
GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY IN FINLAND

I begin this article with a personal note, one that captures well the circumstances within which national identities are experienced and negotiated in our interconnected global world.

IN WHAT SENSE A FINNISH TEAM?

I am not a big sports fan, but one game never fails to catch my interest: that is ice hockey played at the World Championship level. In view of national identification, I suppose it is only natural that, as a Finn, I have fervently supported the Finnish national ice-hockey team since my childhood. Watching ice-hockey World Championship Games at the age of six ranks among my first memories of excitement related to both television and nationality. Since 1970 I have followed, with undiminished interest, the changing fortunes of the Finnish team in its efforts to beat the teams of other countries. Some rivals continue to occupy a prominent place on the world map of ice hockey, others no longer exist (most notably the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic). No other television experience has caused so sweaty hands and such trembling as watching these tournaments.

I am sure that all those who have watched sports with something special at stake are familiar with these reactions. In my case this 'something' is the feeling that this team, wearing symbols of nationhood I have learned to distinguish from all other similar symbols, represents the Finnish nation, and moreover, myself on the most personal level. Therefore, as a member of the Finnish nation, I have come to share both losses and victories of the Finnish team. I think it is thus safe to say that watching World Championship ice hockey ranks among the strongest contemporary experiences of Finnishness for myself—and for many others, for ice hockey is the most popular spectator sport in Finland. It
is, therefore, a particularly revealing case for considering how the relationship between the Finnish national team, the Finnish people and the rest of the world has evolved over the recent years.

We can begin this by looking at the changing composition of the Finnish World Championship ice hockey team. Until the early 1990s, most of the players came from teams playing in the national league. Professional players, mainly from the North American National Hockey League (NHL), were an exception, even though they were important role models for domestic players. The predominantly domestic profile began to change, when the International Olympic Committee allowed professional players to participate in Olympic ice hockey for the first time in 1988.1 By that time, and given the general professionalization of sports, an increasing number of Finnish players had already followed the example of Matti Hagman, who in 1976 was the first Finn to play professional hockey in the NHL. Since the mid-1990s the share of foreign-based players in the Finnish national team thus grew rapidly so that all members of the team representing Finland in the 2004 World Cup tournament lived abroad and worked for foreign teams (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Place of birth (all in Finland)</th>
<th>Abroad since</th>
<th>Employer (team)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aki Berg</td>
<td>Raisio</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Toronto Maple Leafs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niklas Hagman</td>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Florida Panthers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riku Hahl</td>
<td>Hämeenlinna</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Colorado Avalanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jukka Hentunen</td>
<td>Joroinen</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Fribourg (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olli Jokinen</td>
<td>Kuopio</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Florida Panthers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niko Kapanen</td>
<td>Hattula</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Dallas Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikka Kiprusoff</td>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Calgary Flames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saku Koivu</td>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Montreal Canadiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jere Lehtinen</td>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Dallas Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari Lehtonen</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Atlanta Thrashers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toni Lydman</td>
<td>Lahti</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Calgary Flames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teppo Numminen</td>
<td>Tampere</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Dallas Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ville Peltonen</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Lugano (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarkko Ruutu</td>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Vancouver Canucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuomo Ruutu</td>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Chicago Blackhawks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Salo</td>
<td>Turku</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Vancouver Canucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teemu Selänne</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Colorado Avalanche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimmo Timonen</td>
<td>Kuopio</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Nashville Predators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossi Väänänen</td>
<td>Vantaa</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Colorado Avalanche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The composition of the Finnish national ice-hockey team in the 2004 World Cup tournament.
In terms of place attachment these players could just as well have represented Florida or Colorado instead of Finland. However, there is no question about the focus of loyalty of these players. They all are Finnish nationals born in Finland, and veritable icons of Finnish ice hockey. The example suggests that one’s Finnishness is still determined at the moment of birth rather than by events in later life. Moreover, increasing international mobility—globalization at the level of individual experience—has failed to unsettle the foundation of the representational relationship between native Finnish players, the Finnish national ice-hockey team and the Finnish nation—no matter where the these players currently live, what language they speak in their daily life, where their children go to school and what country collects their taxes.

Clearly, place of birth rather than place of residence forms the basis of Finnish national identity. This observation may block any quick progress toward a post-national, cosmopolitan, and global future, at least for the Finns. Studies on the sense of Finnishness among immigrants show the flipside of the “ethnocratic” definition of Finnish identity. For example, Veronika Honkasalo, a scholar of comparative religion, interviewed in the spring of 2000 young first-generation immigrants to Finland and found that they considered Finnishness an attribute reserved exclusively for “native Finns.” None of the interviewees believed that they might ever become “proper Finns”. Moreover, sociologist Outi Lepola has pointed out that immigrants do not become ‘Finns’ simply by obtaining citizenship. The process is much more complicated and first-generation immigrants as well as their children may always be ‘excluded’ from ‘Finnishness’. Also more generally, studies on globalization and national boundaries have shown that national identities still figure strongly in our quotidian lives, despite the profound changes brought about by processes of cultural, political and economic globalization. It is therefore appropriate to ask, ‘Why does the idea of nationality still command our loyalties and what are national identities?’

Identities interest us, but why?

Identity is clearly one of the catchwords of current times. Politicians use the word as much as academic researchers, government officials, business people, and laymen. We engage in identity talk whenever we reflect upon who we are, where we come from, and where we belong. The upsurge of interest in identities can partly be explained by the rise of ethnic and regional political movements, the growing flows of migra-
tion and displacement, and the breakdown of the geopolitical certainties of the Cold War era. Arguably, however, globalization stands out as a key factor in making identities interesting.

*Globalization* is used broadly to describe various processes of political, economic and cultural integration on the global scale. In an increasingly interconnected world the movement of information, capital, goods and people is easier and faster than ever before. In this context, the relationship between globalization and national identities is complicated. Instead of thinning out cultural differences, globalization has, in fact, accentuated awareness of these differences by multiplying the points of contact between individual and collective agents from different ethnic and national cultures.

If we are not rapidly becoming 'the same' because of growing global interconnectedness, what, then, is happening with national identities? What is happening with Finnishness? We may begin to answer this question by examining what identities are. Some authors argue that the term applies to individuals rather than collectives. In psychological analyses identity is usually understood as a view of the self that people develop as acting agents, while being objects of their own and others' observations and interpretations. In this view identity is connected to the experience of individual particularity and the key question is, 'Who am I?'. However, identity cannot be analytically reduced only to individual experience. The logical flipside of difference is similarity, which points to collective, or shared, elements. Locality, region, nation, gender or ethnicity, for instance, may provide frameworks for the rise of collective identities. Even though their existence depends on individuals who produce and reproduce such identities, their construction also requires social practices and shared narratives that join people together. Therefore, it can be argued that individual identities are always *social* identities.

Moreover, identities have to be practiced before they can become fully meaningful in social life. They have to be performed to become actual. For example, in discussing national identities the social scientist Michael Billig states that one should not ask 'what identity is' but rather what it means 'to claim to have' one. Identities have no stable essence, as they change and evolve with the acts by which we acknowledge difference and sameness. Historically and geographically specific circumstances condition these acts and make up the conditions for 'identity talk'. The question 'who is the Finn' has been answered differently through the history of the Finnish nation-state. Finnish identity is not
permanent, for each generation interprets the symbols and narratives of Finnishness anew and assigns fresh meanings to them.¹⁴

Here we return to the relationship between globalization and the Finnish national identity. The question I pose in the title of this article can be read and answered in at least two ways. On the one hand, we may ask where Finns have come from and how. On the basis of historical research it has become well established that people living in what today is Finland have not always identified themselves as 'Finns'. Until the late nineteenth century collective identifications among the population had other, more particular and concrete points of reference. These were typically family and kin, village, local community, and sometimes region.¹⁵ National identification was not relevant at all in the practices of everyday life. Hence, from this perspective, the question gets rephrased as, 'How did Finns come about in the first place?'

On the other hand, it is perhaps more important in the context of this volume to ask who the Finn is in the face of current globalization. What are the processes and activities that prompt us to reflect on who Finns are in the contemporary world? Here we must turn to the major events and developments that have caused this question to become more current than perhaps ever since Finland gained independence in 1917. Among these major developments are the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the opening of the Finnish economy to the international market, the membership of Finland in the European Union (EU) in 1995, and the concomitant growth of foreign population living in Finland.¹⁶ The two questions I will seek to answer in the following, therefore, are: (1) Who were the Finns in historical terms? (2) Who are they becoming as they encounter the processes of global rescaling and deterritorialization?

THE CREATION OF FINNS: NATION AS A "ROOT METAPHOR"

A brief look at how Finns came into being is offered to prepare and set up the discussion of more recent developments. I begin with the idea of nation-building as the creation of unity within difference. Every nation believes, or is made to believe by its leaders, that it is eternal and has the right to a particular homeland.¹⁷ Finns are no exception. Still, they did not always exist. The political and cultural elite had to build awareness of nationhood among the population. Before Finns became Finns, their primary collective identities were to be of a particular kin or from a certain village.¹⁸
At the core of nation-building, therefore, is the challenge of superseding the local, regional and social differences that people identify themselves with—that is, of creating a reality that unifies people without erasing their peculiarities. It is necessary for the protagonists of nationalism to show the masses that all their differences somehow belong to the same family—that the family resemblance is strong enough to accommodate differences.

Creating unity that surpasses various kinds of differences is not an easy task, not least because personal and collective identities truly mattered even before the age of Finnish nationalism from the 1830s onwards. Therefore, to be able to accept Finnishness as their primary collective identity, ordinary people living in the Finnish territory had to rearrange their priorities and loyalties. A social order founded on the internalization of roles and social schisms based on the four-estate society (nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants), as well as several other deeply rooted distinctions such as differences in occupation, region, ethnicity, kin and status had to give way to a new layer of modern collective identification: the Finnish nation as “an imagined community”.

This is precisely what happened in Finland during the nineteenth century and early into the twentieth. The idea of Finns as a unified nation was actively reiterated by the political and cultural elites by means of elements of shared language, culture and tradition. These elements were crucially important in achieving a sense of unity that accommodates other differences. However, the unifying elements did not simply lie there to be found and to be used for ‘waking up’ the nation. In the process traditions were molded and utilized selectively, the Finnish language and grammar were normalized, and cultural products were deliberately ‘nationalized’. The Finnish national epic Kalevala is a prime example of how the oral tradition of a certain group, the Karelians, was converted into a unified literary product that ended up being a central symbol of Finnishness. The tradition for sure was genuine, but the road from Karelian folk culture to the intellectual circles of mid-nineteenth century Helsinki was long and winding.

Therefore, it is correct to say that what brought Finns into existence was more the awareness among the masses of the unique cultural tradition or particular language than the tradition or language itself. This consciousness has not been an easy achievement. It has demanded persistent efforts by the protagonists of the ‘Finnish cause’ to establish ‘Finland’ as a nation on the cultural world map. Moreover, the Finnish nation-building has required conscious dissemination of the idea among
the population by means such as national schooling system, general-
conscription military, mass media, literature, arts, and national monu-
ments, cultural institutions, and buildings.\textsuperscript{22}

The end result of successful nation-building is best described as the
naturalization of the idea of Finns as a nation. In the philosopher Chaim
Perelman's terms, Finland has then emerged as a root metaphor, that is,
as an interpretative framework that is automatically applied without ever
recognizing that it is only a metaphor. According to Perelman, thinking is
often based on conditions that are not reflected upon. When something is
described through a "root metaphor" it is seen as the reality—the only
way of looking at things. As a "root metaphor" nation has seized to be an
idea and become reality in itself, a reality that transcends difference and
unites what is seen as different.\textsuperscript{23}

The nation might be a "root metaphor" that goes unquestioned in the
everyday life of a national polity, whereas the negotiation of a national
identity is an ongoing, never-ending process. The continuous search for
what it means to be a Finn has been possible precisely under the shelter
of the metaphor of nation. That Finns exist as a nation has opened up a
space for the deliberation of the question 'who Finns are'.

Since the early 1990s the questions concerning the Finnish identity
have centered on influences brought about by several major shifts in
Finland's geopolitical position. I consider three developments particu-
larly interesting in this context: (1) the breakdown of the Soviet Union;
(2) the globalization of the Finnish economy; (3) and Finland's member-
ship in the EU. All these processes have increased the foreign population
living in Finland (Figure 1).

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a dramatic event that opened up
space for the renegotiation of the position of Finland among either west-
ern or eastern nations. In the late 1980s Finland was still positioned as
a political and cultural borderland between East and West. The foreign-
policy doctrine of Finland's self-proclaimed neutrality during the Cold
War was so hegemonic that it was also reflected in the way in which or-
dinary Finns saw themselves. This borderland neutrality was seen as an
unquestionable 'truth', based in geopolitical and economic realism and
touted on innumerable occasions—in newspaper editorials, governmen-
tal speeches and statements, and politically correct elite discussions.\textsuperscript{24}
However, in some countries such as West Germany and the USA
Finland's neutrality was treated with suspicion. The notorious term
Finlandisierung (Finlandization) was coined to denote how the Soviet
Union could influence the domestic politics of some small countries located outside the ‘Iron Curtain’ but still within its sphere of influence.25

![Graph showing the number of foreign-born population living in Finland from 1980 to 2005.](image)

Figure 1. The number of foreign-born population living in Finland. The figure for 2005 is an estimate (Source: Statistics Finland; see www.stat.fi).

The collapse of the Soviet Union suddenly made it possible to re-think the question of who Finns are with less or no concern about what the reaction in Moscow might be. As the political situation in Russia was unstable for quite some time this change in thinking did not happen overnight. However, an opportunity for renegotiating the Finnish identity emerged in the early 1990s. This could be seen most clearly in that the West was talked about as Finland’s ‘true’ geopolitical group of reference. After a long period of foreign-political realism that—behind
the façade of geopolitical neutrality—emphasized connections to Soviet interests, it was only a matter of 'normalizing' Finland's geopolitical position. New identity talk started to gain ground with the specific aim of showing that Finland was the West's gateway toward the East rather than a neutral watershed. In other words, Finns now began to highlight their identity as an unquestionably western nation.26

The opening of Finland's economy to the global market paralleled the new geopolitical tone of the Finnish identity talk. The first steps included liberalization of the movement of capital and an increasingly relaxed regulation of trade across the boundaries of the Finnish national economy. A corollary development was Finland's full membership in the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) in 1986, an economic component in the ongoing European integration process.27 Since the late 1980s, then, Finland has gradually adjusted to living in the turmoil of the global economy. The Finns now realize that their most important economic, social, and political contributions are weighed up in the context of global competition. This realization has fundamentally shaken the citizens' conception of Finland as a 'bird nest' offering shelter from the world's hardships.

The feeling of shattered 'nest' has had a real impact on Finnish identity. Talking about Finns and the Finnish identity is increasingly based on comparing and positioning Finns within the globally competitive field of national achievement and characteristics. Often this reflection on 'who we are' has focused on Finns' cultural achievements. Celebrities such as conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen of the Los Angeles Philharmonics, Formula 1 world champion Mika Häkkinen, or hockey players Jari Kurri and Teemu Selänne who built prominent careers in the NHL have become national icons. Rock groups, such as Bomfunk MC's, Nightwish, The Rasmus, and HIM have added to Finland's international fame and their service to the country has been given acknowledgement from Finland's President Tarja Halonen. The success in global competition of large Finnish companies, such as the Nokia Corporation, has also evoked national pride.

However, not all reflections on Finnish identity have been positive. Especially before Finland's EU membership in 1995 much of the identity talk centered on showing how badly Finns do compared to more 'civilized' European nations. This negativity has its origin in the tradition of stigmatizing Finnishness that the ethnologist Satu Apo has, poignantly, termed "self-racism."28 The core premise in this line of thinking is that
Finns are uncivilized, backwoods people. Leading up to the EU membership vote in 1995 newspapers presented this self-mocking statement in the following variations:

- Finns are impolite
- Finns are socio-emotionally too serious, not playful, and lack dancing skills
- Finns do not know how to communicate, they fail at small talk and speeches
- Finns are too straightforward and realistic, incapable of complex discussion
- The Finnish language is so archaic that it prohibits intellectual activities
- Finns are biologically and culturally pathological with severe problems of drinking, violence, suicide, and male mortality.\(^{29}\)

Curiously, the reflection on what Finns are like in the European context produced discourses looking for the low points of Finnish culture, instead of, for example, celebrations of the remarkable achievements of a country rising from the ashes of the Second World War. Satu Apo explains this self-mockery with reference to the fact the Finnish elites have commonly come from a peasant or working-class background. Hence, many nation-builders and opinion-leaders have seen ‘development’ and ‘progress’ only as a reflection of their own distancing from the banal culture of the commoners. What results is a long tradition of seeing ‘Finnishness’ as falling short of what it ought to be. Moreover, that the Finns’ habits and customs should, it was felt, change to measure up with those of other nations.\(^{30}\)

Her argument is credible, yet fails to address why the masses have adopted this bleak ‘self-portrait’. From a slightly different vantage point negative identity talk could be seen as a social-psychological means of coping with certain aspects of Finnishness that cannot simply be ‘swept under the carpet’, such as heavy drinking. By deliberately exaggerating undesirable characteristics of the mainstream Finnish way of life, or by being more modest than necessary, Finns may discharge or even invert the negative meanings of these cultural traits.

Clearly, joining the EU was a watershed in the negotiation of who Finns are, occasioning much debate about identity. Discussions about EU membership as the crucial political choice that once and for all settled Finland’s belonging to the West represent a positive turn in this debate.\(^{31}\) Greater ambivalence characterized questions of the position of
domestic food production in the European market and the future of rural areas—their landscapes and traditional ways of life. The rural identity had already been strained because of urbanization and the increasingly dynamic economy based on information technologies.

Concerns about the future of rural Finland have found expression in various forms of localism that have recently questioned the thesis of globalization as a homogenizing force. It seems that the early 20th-century idea of who Finns are is being adapted and revised as a series of localized identity markers in the rapidly changing world. Examples of this ‘revival’ are comic books and novels written in regional dialects or with a strong connection to particular localities, and the rise of domestic pop music with lyrics depicting ordinary places (about the contribution by visual artists, see Wilson, and about food and localism, see Raento in this volume). It is difficult to predict at this point whether these localisms gradually will erode the unity of the mainstream Finnish identity or whether they are a passing fashion. It is nevertheless clear that they have changed the way most Finns currently see themselves and how they experience their quotidian environments in the context of globalization.

Increasing international mobility has also influenced the setting in which Finnish identity is negotiated. The oft-touted (but somewhat erroneous) image of Finland as a country of a homogeneous national culture reflects nation-building processes that succeeded in establishing the nation as a strong root metaphor superseding ethnic, local, cultural, religious, socio-economic and political differences (some of which had existed for centuries). Because the absolute number and proportion of foreigners living in Finland has been smaller than in most European countries, even small changes that increase the visibility of the outside world within Finland may be significant for the way in which Finns see themselves as part of the world.

The number of foreign citizens residing in Finland has grown rapidly since the 1990s (Figure 1). Today Finns accept foreigners living in Finland more readily than before (Figure 2). The growth of positive attitudes toward immigrant workers is paralleled by the growing interest of Finns in the international job market, especially Europe. Still, all foreigners are not treated equally: the farther the foreigners are from the ‘most desirable’ group of foreigners (i.e., white, young professionals with a steady income) the harsher the attitudes become. Umayya Abu-Hanna,
a Palestinian journalist who moved to Finland from Israel 25 years ago, writes:

Because there are few immigrants in Finland, and Finns are a homogeneous group, foreigners represent first and foremost ‘Otherness’, for better and for worse. The unique and individual aspects of foreigners are overshadowed by this Otherness. The majority population sees primarily ‘difference.’ Elsewhere in the media and politics the myth of homogeneous Finnishness is reproduced—more persistently than Finnish history would support. “This is what we Finns are like,” they say. Therefore, Otherness is mainly not so good, and never the best. When ‘good’ has already been defined and embedded within the dominant national identity, Otherness and change can not be for the better. Foreigners remain mirrors for the Finnish culture, not bearers of new languages, cultures and historical backgrounds.

Figure 2. Respondents’ attitude (%) concerning the statement “More immigrants working in Finland would bring useful international influences to our country” (Source: EVA attitude surveys, 1986–2000).

Nevertheless, new foreign-based population groups now exist in Finland and are slowly carving spaces for themselves in the Finnish mainstream culture that is becoming less homogeneous, more open to outside influences, and less culturally protectionist. New loyalties and sources of identity are emerging, not replacing the national identity but perhaps making it less rigid and monolithic. It appears that the question ‘Who is the Finn?’ is currently answered in at least partly novel ways.

CONCLUSION: WHO IS THE FINN?

Having begun this paper with a personal note, I will conclude with another one. Anthropologist Mary Douglas notes that “nothing else but
institutions can define sameness. Similarity is an institution. National identity is simultaneously about similarity (what ‘we’ have in common) and difference (how ‘we’ differ from ‘others’). The Finnish nation-building process succeeded in creating the idea of Finns as a strong “root metaphor,” one that has withstood much critical consideration on who we are and what we are like. This identity talk is an ongoing process that reflects the changing cultural, economic and political circumstances in which people live their lives.

Globalization and the related rise of various localisms perhaps best describe most of the changes that now condition the negotiation of Finnish identity. It has shaken the foundations of Finnish unitary culture by opening up new possibilities of interaction with the world and its cultural richness. Today Finns consume products from all over the world and travel more broadly than ever before. Finns also encounter more cultural difference in their quotidian living environments than just two decades ago. The ensuing challenge is to accept as Finns also those who wish to become ones.

The revival of local cultural traditions, dialects and loyalties, have challenged the nation-state-centered hierarchies of identification by offering a more nested and multi-layered context for identity talk—one that brings together local ties and global flows. Entirely new kinds of communities now command loyalties that previously were reserved only for the nation-state. Among these are ethnic minorities (for example the indigenous Sámi or the Swedish-speaking Finns; on the latter, see Kepsu and Westerholm in this volume), company-based ‘tribes’ (for instance the employees of the Nokia Corporation), or localities (home town or region).

Clearly, in approaching Finnish identity there can never be an exhaustive answer to the question, ‘Who is the Finn?’ Yet, my observations concerning the composition of the Finnish hockey team in the 2004 World Cup or the Olympic team in 2006 are revealing in several ways. These players represent a generation of Finns for whom an international job is the rule rather than the exception. They move in and out of Finland flexibly and make important choices based on opportunities rather than necessities. They probably feel very ‘Finnish’ yet have also acquired a cosmopolitan mentality. They are very loyal to their professional teams, but consider it an honor to represent Finland in international competition when invited to do so. These young professionals can never shake off the heritage of having grown into the Finnish national culture, but they fluently adopt new habits, styles and tastes from oth-
ers. They are ‘Finns’, just like many others of their generation: people who have no choice but to be Finns, yet still choose to be Finns.

ENDNOTES

1 Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
12 Ibid., 95.
22 Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness*; Hakli, “Cultures of Demarcation”.
24 Alasuutari and Ruuska.
27 Ruuska and Alasuutari.
29 Ibid., 85.
30 Ibid., 86.
31 Harle and Moisio.
35 Excerpt from presentation “As a foreigner in Finland” by Umayya Abu-Hanna in the seminar *Puheitta ja pohdintaa suomalaisuudesta* (Discussion and Reflection on Finnishness), University of Jyväskylä, Finland, April 9, 1999 (my translation).
Paul Wilson:

Banality as Critique:
Contemporary Photography and Finnish National Landscapes

Regarding his 1997 exhibition *National Landscape*, the photographer Kari Soinio writes,

Figure 1. Kari Soinio: *Koli* from the *National Landscape* series (1997). The original artwork is in color. Courtesy of the artist.

A landscape is like an altarpiece, which one comes to bow before something learned long ago but already long since forgotten. As a symbol, it
is like a fading memory whose contours disappear and only a feeling remains.¹

Landscape images such as those that Soinio’s work (Figure 1) references are what the critic Roland Barthes defines as myths—a form of depoliticized speech that turns historical constructions into natural signs of “blissful clarity”.² Landscape images create an origin myth that naturalizes the links between place and identity; they create the memory that they presume to recall.

What is it about a landscape image that prompts a viewer to approach it “like an altarpiece”? The metaphor of an altarpiece evokes the traditions of Christianity where an image mediates the relationship between the worshipper and the divine. An altarpiece attempts to visually represent the divine—that power which always exceeds the boundaries of visual or verbal representation. What power does a landscape altarpiece represent and what relationship does it mediate? Landscape, broadly defined, refers to natural and built environments and representations of such environments. However, it denotes a particular expanse—a view—delineated by the scope of human vision. As such, landscape is a culturally mediated way of seeing, experiencing, and representing place.³ Soinio’s photographic series, as its title indicates, points out landscapes are not just culturally mediated but politically constructed. Social scientist Benedict Anderson argues that the idea of the nation meaningfully links time, space, and fraternity together, facilitating the formation of an “imagined community” based on the presumption of a shared political and cultural identity.⁴ Geographer Petri Raivo states that national discourse has a “powerful imaginary geographic aspect in which the nation’s history and cultural traditions are seen as anchored in specific places and landscapes.”⁵ Within a state’s sovereign territory, a nation draws legitimacy from the identification of landscapes that seem to encapsulate its historical inevitability. Art historian W. T. J. Mitchell emphasizes the political and ideological functions of landscape, arguing that it

naturalizes a cultural and social construction, representing an artificial world as if it were simply given and inevitable, and it also makes that representation operational by interpellating its beholder in some more or less determinate relationship to its givenness as sight and site.⁶

National landscapes exploit their intertwined status as real and representation to naturalize the legitimacy of the nation. Like an altarpiece, an image of a national landscape works to distill complexity into iconic visual clarity.
Since the origins of Finnish nationalism in the 19th century, landscape images have played a central role in the creation of Finnish national and diasporic identities. In Finnish educational and cultural discourses, national landscape images act as mnemonic aids for national identity, helping citizens to learn the territorial and mythic contours of the nation and encouraging them to affirm their identity through the recognition and consumption of such images. Finnish North Americans often come to know their Finnish identity through a similar process; images provide visual form to an otherwise distant and abstract homeland. In either case, the unseen god (to keep the metaphor of the altarpiece) or ideology (to accept Barthes’ contention) behind the mythic landscape image is the nation.

Interdisciplinary visual-cultural studies have attempted to politicize and demystify landscape imagery by reading it as a historically situated social construction layered with cultural, economic, and political meanings. Central to this critical project is a reorientation of the questions researchers ask of these images. Mitchell argues that landscape should be understood as a verb rather than a noun, emphasizing the function of landscape as a discursive cultural practice. This is a critique of art-historical interpretive methodologies which focus on questions of style, patronage, or authorship rather than recognizing landscape imaging processes such as painting, engraving, or photography as being embedded within structures of political and economic power. Soinio’s photographs focus attention on the ideological work of national landscapes which I define as the discursive spaces in which national identity is imagined, naturalized, and performed through the production and consumption of particular landscapes. I want to emphasize that the performative and imaginative qualities of nationalism offer possibilities for resistance and subversion—possibilities that artworks may exploit.

Within contemporary societal discourses, national landscape imagery has become the site of renewed contestations and renegotiations of cultural and political identities. Landscape photography plays a particularly important role in problematizing national discourses—which it consistently bolstered throughout the twentieth century. One might thus consider the following questions related specifically to the intersections of photography, national landscapes, and the politics of aesthetic critique: What kinds of national landscape images are politically and aesthetically relevant when both the ideology of the nation and the ontological status of photography are in question? What visual strategies might best articulate the complicated contemporary status of the national landscape?
As a historian of contemporary art, my interest is in how contemporary photographers manipulate aesthetic discourses of landscape such as the beautiful, sublime, or banal as a means of engaging with discourses such as nationalism or globalism. In this article, I will address three photographic projects relating to Finnish national landscapes: Soinio's *National Landscape* series from 1997, Pekka Turunen's *Greetings from Finland* postcard series from 2003, and Petri Nuutinen's *Places* from 1993. These revisionist projects respond to the official designation of national landscapes by Finland's Ministry of the Environment in 1993. They are also part of a larger academic and political critique of nationalism in Finland that began with the end of the Cold War, the entrance of Finland into the European Union in 1995, and the ascendance of the idea of globalization in popular and academic discourses. Soinio, Turunen, and Nuutinen utilize a visual language of banality as a means of critiquing conventional national landscape imagery. I will consider this strategy as a mechanism of critique, especially as it relates to national landscapes in an era characterized by globalization.

**EVOLUTION OF FINNISH NATIONAL LANDSCAPES**

The critiques at work in these three projects depend upon an understanding of what constitutes a Finnish national landscape, the historical development of that idea, and its corresponding canon of imagery. Finland is often cited as a model case study of the formation of national landscapes and several authors have outlined the intertwined processes of the development of a canonical set of landscape imagery and the emergence of the Finnish nation-state in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The production and popular distribution of landscape images functions as a part of the same matrix of "print capitalism," including newspapers and novels, that, according to Anderson, links a broad spectrum of people into the "imagined" nation. In the middle and late 19th century, a series of key nationalist texts such as Zacharias Topelius' *Finland in Pictures* (1845–1852), *Travels in Finland* (1873), and *The Book of Our Land* (1875) juxtaposed patriotic texts with engravings of landscapes, offering a visual encyclopedia of Finland's people, towns, and landscapes. These books allowed national elites to vicariously survey the physical and cultural spaces of the nation, beginning from their homes in the populated south and traveling outward to the exotic peripheries. In the late 19th century, painters Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Eero Järnefelt, Pekka Halonen, and others also invested national significance into landscape images. Their emphasis on depicting the unspoiled hu-
man and natural landscapes of central Finland and the eastern border regions of Karelia was part of a wider political project by national elites to claim Finnish-speaking folk culture as the source of national culture. Landscape imagery in books, paintings, and illustrations served to make the otherwise abstract and nascent idea of the Finnish nation legible and natural for its viewers.

Already in 1896, Finnish photographer I. K. Inha produced the first popular photographic survey of the country titled *Finland in Pictures*. His photographs often depicted the same landscapes and mimicked the aesthetic conventions already familiar from earlier engravings and paintings. By the turn of the 20th century, a fairly consistent canon of national landscapes had emerged. It included historical monuments and cityscapes but more often featured panoramic views of lakes and forests—landscapes that invoked the imagined primordial origins of the Finnish folk. Finland’s relatively small population and short national history facilitated the exceptionally thorough penetration of this canon of national landscape imagery across the population in the 20th century.

While the content of Finnish landscape photograph books has responded to cultural, social, and political changes throughout the 20th century, the depictions of several landscapes remained remarkably consistent. Cultural historian Maunu Häyrynen argues that these landscape images create a “systematic ‘imagined topography’” of the nation, a “narrative logic” which always situates these images into a “hierarchically organized totality within a national framework.” Once this logic is in place, national discourses can appropriate almost any landscape image and use it to reaffirm the underlying framework of the nation. Thus, the emphases can variably be on Finnish- or Swedish-speaking regions, Karelia or Lapland, wilderness or urban development, and ethnic homogeneity or diversity at different historical moments, depending upon the ideological needs of national elites and their intended audiences. The power of the national landscape, now, as in the past, is in its remarkable ability to accommodate change while still maintaining the same basic narrative logic.

The medium of photography has been critical not only in the dissemination of national landscape imagery, but also in its ideological work. Its commonly perceived status as a neutral, objective index of the real world, though contested in intellectual and aesthetic debates, makes it an ideal mechanism for national discourse. The very titles of typical photobooks such as *This is Finland* (1946), *Look at Finland* (1946), or
the numerous books somehow indicating “Finland in pictures” declare the seemingly natural coherence between the photographic image and the nation. Remembering Mitchell’s argument that landscape derives its ideological power over subjects through its “givenness as sight and site,” the supposed truth value of photography only reinforces the ideological equation between the production and consumption of ‘real’ pictures of ‘real’ places and the experience of ‘real’ national identities.

While both national landscapes and photography as proof of their ontological status have come under sustained questioning since the 1990s, the Finnish state officially recognized the concept of a national landscape only in 1993 when the Ministry of the Environment completed a designation process. This project originated in the interests of the state in historical preservation and environmental conservation and is loosely modeled on preservation programs such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. The designations formally commenced only in 1992, but seem to have stemmed from the conflict over development plans for the Koli landscape area in the 1980s that led to the creation of national park there in 1991. Although the designation does not legally protect any particular landscape, it acts as a powerful symbolic gesture of protection. The Ministry’s publication National Landscapes (1993) singled out twenty-seven landscapes from Maritime Helsinki in the south, to Koli in Karelia, and to the Utsjoki River Valley in northern Lapland that were found to “reflect the special qualities of our country.” Confirming the role of visual representations in creating the notion of a national landscape in the first place, the lavishly illustrated book follows the format of a typical photobook with brief written descriptions of the natural characteristics and history of the landscapes bolstered by maps, drawings, paintings, and photographs.

Indeed, ideological power accrues to the concept of the national landscape precisely because it is made to seem ahistorical and natural. In the book under discussion, the rationale for the designations is explained:

The idea in naming certain areas ‘national landscapes’ was to find settings which best represented ‘the full picture of Finland’, the factors which decisively influenced the development of our nation and our culture, and the results of centuries, even millennia of interaction between man and nature. The concept of kansallismaisema (national landscape) is a relatively new one in the Finnish language, and has yet to be precisely defined. This is just as well; the main thing is that the word has a rich, broadly understood emotive content.
Despite the admitted conceptual ambiguity, the author is nevertheless confident that *national landscape* is rather self-explanatory. The passage imagines an organic, unquestionable connection between the Finnish land and people; the national landscape (and consequently the nation itself) seems to have *always* existed on some primal, unconscious level. From the perspective of political purposes, Nature functions as a seemingly neutral space in which class, ethnic, and linguistic divisions can be replaced with a single national identity. Finnish national discourses have consistently emphasized the close relationship between people and Nature in Finland and the Ministry's designations continue this emphasis on idyllic wilderness and pastoral landscapes. However, in keeping with the trends established in 20th-century photobooks, it also includes historically and architecturally significant urban and industrial areas, such as the suburb of Tapiola in Espoo (Metropolitan Helsinki) of the 1950s and the 19th-century industrial area around the Tammerkoski Rapids in Tampere. The national landscape project weaves together elements of national discourse that would otherwise seem to be at odds: nature and culture, rural and urban, antiquity and modernity. While the 1993 designation process is attuned to the intellectual and political currents of the late 20th century and even acknowledges the national landscape to be a 'cultural agreement' that evolves over time, it still reaffirms the links between landscape, photography, and national identity perpetuated in the concept of a Finnish national landscape.

**BANALITY AS AN AESTHETIC INVERSION**

National landscapes produce national subjects by affirming them as viewers through the use of familiar pictorial codes such as the picturesque or the sublime. Theories of both aesthetic modes of representing landscapes coalesced in the late 18th century in Europe. The picturesque, by the very structure of the word, refers to a landscape that is like a picture; namely, one that incites an aesthetic response through its harmonious and pleasing formal composition that balances the natural and the man-made. By contrast, the sublime landscape incites an aesthetic response because it overwhelms the viewer with an intoxicating rush of fear and exhalation elicited by the realization of one's powerlessness before Nature. Although these modes are often cast in opposition to one another, national discourse can appropriate both to represent the nation—either as a benevolent, pacifying, and organizing force or as a terrifying, violent, and overwhelming power. That said, a simple and consistent description of national landscape imagery is that it consists of
beautiful pictures of beautiful places. Of course, ideas of what constitutes a ‘beautiful’ picture or a ‘beautiful’ place are inherently subjective and are neither consistent across time nor space. Thus, there are corresponding shifts in the aesthetic conventions applied to visual imagery as well as in the types of places invested with national significance. However, it is precisely this mythic coherence between the aesthetic legibility of photographic images and the legibility of the nation that the three contemporary Finnish photographers attempt to undermine.

The projects of Soinio, Turunen, and Nuutinen expose a critical paradox: while subjects readily consume beautiful images of national landscapes, it is actually they who are being consumed. National discourse interpellates viewers as national subjects through their willing visual consumption. Art historian Carol Duncan’s work on the politics of art museums provides an analogous case of this process of interpellation. She argues that public art museums affirm the identities of those visitors who recognize, understand, and perform the rituals of the museum. In a similar way, national landscapes affirm the identities of those who understand and perform their part of the ritual by recognizing the landscapes, associating those images with their own experiences and memories, and thereby remembering their identity as Finns. Just as the neoclassical architecture of the museum or the white-cube aesthetic of a modernist gallery mark the ritual spaces of art, the aesthetic modes employed by national landscape images provide the formal and iconographical cues that signal the terms of their ritual exchange. These photographers utilize banality as a means of interrupting this process. Images that disrupt the aesthetic codes conventionally associated with the national landscape are presumably harder to consume and demand critical engagement from the viewer.

In contrast to the picturesque or the sublime, banality, as a visual mode, has a less clearly articulated theory or historical development. The use of the term in relation to visual imagery became common in modernist critiques of popular culture. Modernist art theory regarded conventional national landscape imagery as inherently banal—that is, trite, unoriginal, pedestrian, and kitschy—precisely because it utilizes conventional visual modes and subject matter. As such, a modernist critique of a national landscape might involve eschewing the subject matter altogether or, alternately, redeeming the banal (the ordinary or common) as beautiful through formal innovation and originality. Embracing banality itself as a critical visual strategy is a postmodern phenomenon, though it is related to the modernist avant-garde strategy of inversion.
Within the contemporary art-photographic world, banality is a widespread photographic aesthetic. These photographers call upon it as an internationally critical visual language that opposes the sentimental nationalism associated with the picturesque and sublime. However, a politics of banality is unstable because inversion reaffirms the logic of the very binaries it reverses. An anti-national landscape has critical power only because there is an opposing national landscape. Without the viewers having an understanding of conventional national landscape imagery, they cannot appreciate the irony or satire at work in the critique. Beyond this basic issue of the legibility of a critique, the interrelationship of criticism and object of critique complicates the effectiveness of inversion as mechanism of subversion on a more fundamental level. Photographic historian Deborah Bright, for example, argues that most "environmentally concerned" contemporary photography in the USA reinforces, rather than undermines, standard tropes of the 'human' versus the 'natural' or the 'beautiful' versus the 'unbeautiful'. Inversion tends to oversimplify complexity, thereby maintaining the unproductive conceptual binaries that it claims to reject. Upon close examination of the three artists' projects, it becomes clear that repressed particularity, beauty, and national metaphor continue to haunt the images directed against them.

**National Landscape**

Kari Soinio takes a deconstructive approach toward the aesthetic and political ideologies of the Finnish national landscape and responds directly to the 1993 designation process. His photograph of Aulanko, taken from a panoramic point and showing a single tree rising above the surrounding forest and distant lake below, directly quotes Taneli Eskola's photograph of the same place which appears on the cover of the Ministry's National Landscapes book. Soinio's *National Landscape* consists of a series of large-format prints depicting prototypical Finnish landscapes including Aulanko, Koli, Olavinlinna, Punkaharju, Saaristomeri, and Saimaa. Soinio's series seeks to problematize the presumed natural relationships between landscape and national identity by questioning the photographic conventions that create that coherence. All the images are uniformly out of focus; the forms and colors are all discernable but the crispness and clarity typically associated with nature photography is reversed. In spite of the fuzziness, the series utilizes the visual grammar of previous representations of these places so effectively that an average
Finn educated in Finland should recognize, if not the precise location, at least the ‘Finnishness’ of the images.  

The photographs engage the viewer through a process of identification that is based on *simulation*—what philosopher Jean Baudrillard defines as a copy of something that was always already a copy.  

These photographs thus dramatize that there is no real landscape apart from its representation. The innumerable representations of these landscapes ultimately refer more to other images than they do to any physical landscape. Even upon visiting the actual, physical landscape, the visitors see the space through the images they have previously consumed. In Koli for example (Figure 1), Soinio has recreated the primordial simulacrum of the Finnish national landscape. The photograph positions viewers on top of the famous bedrock dome in Koli National Park. The rock in the foreground literally gives viewers a place to imagine standing as they gaze over a panoramic expanse of lake, forest, and islands. The photograph, like countless others before it, produces viewers as national subjects and invites them to reenact their identification by visually mastering the quintessential Finnish national landscape.  

Yet the photograph’s lack of focus confounds their attempt to visually master the view. Likewise, the size of the image appropriates the epic scale of a national landscape, but is almost overwhelming since the gaze cannot fully possess it.

The project also disrupts the national gaze by exposing the institutional apparatuses that create national landscapes by revealing the means of production of the photographic image and highlighting its place of consumption within the art gallery. Museums in Finland have helped to enshrine representations of national landscapes and link them to larger projects of nation-building. One need only to climb the grand, processional staircase at the Ateneum Museum of the Finnish National Gallery to the radiant, light-filled space containing mythological and landscape paintings from the ‘Golden Age’ of Finnish national romanticism to see the connections between the state-owned museum, landscape images, and the sanctification of national identity. Soinio’s series was not displayed in the Ateneum, but all art institutions and venues (including the municipal Kluuvi Gallery in Helsinki where the series was displayed) are part of the same artistic public sphere and are embedded within discourses of the nation.  

The *National Landscape* project attempts to de-familiarize the ritualistic identity-producing space of the museum. Along the outer edges of the photographs is a series of nails or tacking devices deliberately made visible by the artist. These sorts of materials are necessary for gallery
installation but are usually hidden from view so as to not disrupt the experience of the art object with a reminder of the physical—or ideological—labor that produced the exhibit. Soinio conflates the structured vision of the museum with the disciplined vision of tourism in his photograph of a row of tourist viewfinders facing a bank of mist. The viewfinders literalize the production and control of vision in the physical space of the national landscape and act as metaphors for the camera as a disciplinary apparatus. Soinio’s photographic and installation strategies literalize the discursive mechanisms and apparatuses that hold together the discourse of the national landscape by making them visible.

The project is an ironic inversion: it demystifies the ideology of the national landscape through a playful mystification of the photographs. Soinio’s critique depends upon this appropriation of the sentimental tradition of national landscape imagery. The project revels in the triteness of the picturesque, pushing the soft, the beautiful, and the sentimental to the verge of being aggressive, ugly, and ironic. However, his engagement with the conventional pictorial codes of the national landscape works *Finland in Colour Pictures* (1952) by Erik Blomstedt in which the early color reproduction process resulted in photographs with bright, slightly off-key colors, blurred edges, and undifferentiated fields of fuzzy color. Soinio’s photographs play a cat-and-mouse game of identification for the visually literate viewer, nostalgically invoking the Finnish nation and the picturesque even as they frustrate the desires for visual and political mastery that they create.

**GREETINGS FROM FINLAND**

In contrast to Soinio’s work, in his *Greetings from Finland* Pekka Turunen depicts places that would be unlikely candidates for the official national landscape program. The cheery *Greetings from Finland* logo and the postcard format suggest that the images will depict the typical array of Finnish tourist sites, but, instead, they feature abandoned town centers, bland architecture, construction sites, lumberyards, power plants, roads, and parking lots. Whereas Soinio’s photographs tease with withheld possession of the national landscape, Turunen’s postcards provide an overabundance of unwanted detail and force the viewer to take possession of the landscapes. While Soinio’s project is more of a theoretical critique of national landscapes, Turunen’s postcards are aimed at specific political and cultural policies that he finds objectionable.

The set consists of nine postcards and four greeting cards and includes images of cities, small towns, and rural areas from across the
country. Turunen ironically juxtaposes text and image. In his postcard from Rauma, old cars parked in front of a chain kiosk contrast with the caption that announces Old Rauma’s designation as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. The image of the desolate market square in Joensuu makes a stinging critique of the 1960s modernization program as the text on the back of the card recounts how the historic Market Hall was razed. The postcards of Lieksa, Juva, Kirkkonummi, and Viitasaari also depict abandoned town centers that consist of empty pavement, fast-food stands, and chain supermarkets. They make a pointed comment about rural depopulation and the decline of community life in small towns—problems that the artist seems to link to the European Union, whose flag appears prominently on each postcard. His postcard of a construction site on the Lutakonranta lakeshore in Jyväskylä (Figure 2) seems to embody the contemporary welfare state itself.

![Image: Jyväskylä, Finland](image.png)

Figure 2. Pekka Turunen: Jyväskylä, from Greetings from Finland (2003). The original artwork is in color. Courtesy of the artist.

New park benches and a garbage can sit empty, surrounded by a desolate construction wasteland that was once, presumably, a pleasant lakeshore, while apartment buildings, warehouses, and an office tower loom in the background. Everything appears to be well planned, maintained, and funded but the scene is devoid of either the picturesque
scenery or the tourist crowds one would expect on a postcard. The welfare state (or what is left of it in 2003) apparently still funds public works but with what seems to be a bureaucratic disinterest in both the people and the natural environment that it is meant to serve and protect. The most directly political images are those of a lumberyard in Liperi that, according to the postcard’s text, contain “birch trees from clear cuts in Russian Carelia,” and of a coal-fired power plant in Helsinki. These photographs question the environmental practices of transnational capitalism condoned by the Finnish and Russian states and presumably the EU as well. While the English-language captions mimic tourist postcards intended for national and international audiences, the artist dedicates the project to “municipal leaders” in his introductory text. Greetings from Finland utilizes a national scale as a means to compel local audiences and leaders to consider the degraded condition of their everyday landscapes.

Just as Turunen juxtaposes text and image for ironic effect, he places these images in a dialogue with conventional national landscape images. His critique derives its power through the national landscape; it is the noticeably absent Other that gives meaning to his strategic inversions. The images play off of a contradictory aspect of national landscapes identified by the Ministry of the Environment: they are exceptional examples of typical Finnish natural or cultural landscapes. However, Turunen points out that conventional national landscapes—and images of them—eschew the typical in favor of the exceptional. Greetings from Finland seeks to reverse this tendency by arguing that the national landscape consists of those quotidian landscapes that ordinary Finnish citizens see and inhabit. Banality is reconceived as the perpetual condition of the national landscape rather than its opposite.

Even as Turunen’s work speaks out against the degraded state of quotidian landscapes, his postcards play into a nostalgic commodity culture. The project exists within the context of a much wider, international elevation of the banal postcard to the status of a cultural object valued for its kitsch aesthetic. Martin Parr, a British photographer known for his own banal photographs, has published a popular series of postcard collections including Boring Postcards (1999), Boring Postcards U.S.A. (2000), and Langweilige Postkarten [Boring Postcards] (2001), which feature postcards depicting gas stations, freeways, industrial complexes, and hotel rooms from Great Britain, the USA, and Germany, respectively. The idea has been copied in Sweden and Tommi Pylkkö has compiled a Finnish version, Terveisiä kaikille [Greetings to All] (2003). The popularity of these collections derives from their subtle solicitation of both
sincere nostalgia and detached irony from the viewer. Turunen's postcards, if stripped of their overt political commentary, could fit into any of the books. Remembering the instability of inversion as a critical strategy, the boring postcard phenomenon shows that inverting the binary of the beautiful/exceptional/pure landscape and the ugly/typical/contaminated landscape demonstrates that the latter is potentially just as marketable as the former.

The boring postcard books affirm, rather than undermine, the logic of the national landscape. Critical characterizations of globalization often presume that consumerist spaces are inherently devoid of history and lack identity (the anthropologist Marc Augé has termed these "non-places") and therefore should be nearly indistinguishable from country to country, reflecting the homogenization and disappearance of local or national cultures within global capitalism. However, in a review of Parr's books, the critic Tom Vanderbilt argues that the appeal of the books is in finding the subtle, nationally legible details among the undifferentiated mass that call out to the readers, confirming their national identity. Pylkko's *Terveisiä kaikille* takes this impulse even further. It is carefully organized by region and takes the reader on a simulated road trip from south to north in the same manner as in its 19th-century prototypes. The trope of a journey is updated from Topelius's horse-drawn carriage to a nostalgic road trip with the inclusion of roadmaps of the 1960s. The book becomes the consumerist counterpart to the Ministry of Environment's *National Landscapes* book. Reading them together shows how intermingled the official landscape designation is with the tourism industry. On one hand, this is ironic, given that the designation process began, in part, in response to concerns about tourist development in Koli. On the other hand, it is not at all surprising since the very notion of national landscapes developed in conjunction with state-sponsored tourism. The contemporary notion of tourism in Finland links back to the nineteenth century and the traveling done by the same writers, artists, and readers who first conceived of these landscapes as being nationally significant. Similarly, the photobooks that are so central in the dissemination of national landscape imagery have always been primarily marketed toward national and international tourists. While Turunen and Pytkko use banal postcards for opposite ends, both projects end up reaffirming the underlying nationalist logic of the banal landscape as national landscape.
PLACES

In contrast to Soinio and Turunen’s familiar, colorful images, Petri Nuutinen’s *Places* consists of 120 black-and-white photographs of decidedly unfamiliar and unremarkable landscapes in the Häme province in south central Finland. Nuutinen began the project by noting the intersections of the latitudinal and longitudinal grid lines on a map of the province, marking thirty points of intersection. Next, using a compass and detailed topographic maps, he located the exact intersection points on the ground. Once at the sites, he set up his camera at a consistent height and took one photograph facing each of the cardinal directions. For example, in the photograph in Figure 3 he documents the intersection of 60° 45' latitude (N) and 23° 30' longitude (E), which falls in the middle of a barren field located at the edge of Tammela Township.

Figure 3. Petri Nuutinen: 60° 45' Latitude 23° 30' Longitude (East), from *Places* (1993). Courtesy of the artist.

He writes that these elaborate, self-imposed strictures and the use of a cartographic grid in his photographic practice are the results of his “desire to consciously avoid all personal preferences and aesthetic values when taking a picture.” Although he does not specifically mention the concept of the national landscape, he claims that his work is a reaction
against conventional landscape photography and an appraisal of both the practice of photography and the everyday Finnish landscape. The project connects with Soinio’s challenge to the aesthetic conventions of landscape photography and Turunen’s critique of the dissonance between canonized national landscapes and everyday landscapes.

Nuutinen’s work literalizes the premise behind New Topographics photography from the USA. In 1975, the curator William Jenkins brought together a group of landscape photographers in a pivotal exhibition which included Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Joe Deal, and others. He argued that all of them employed a “passive frame,” or a certain degree of arbitrariness, as they photographed the contemporary “man-altered” landscapes of the American West such as tract homes, suburbs, warehouses, parking lots, and littered, torn-up land. The exhibition title alludes to the 19th-century photographers such as William Henry Jackson who worked for the early geological expeditions and whose work possessed the presumed scientific objectivity of a topographer. Although the objectivity of both the topographer and the documentary photographer are critically untenable, for these photographers in the 1970s, referencing an earlier and supposedly dispassionate photographic tradition allowed them to circumvent the conventional depiction of American national landscapes epitomized then—and even now—by the work of Ansel Adams.

Nuutinen’s Places carries a strong resemblance to New Topographics, although it is unclear how familiar he was with it when formulating his own project. However, his work goes even further than that of the American photographers by purporting to eliminate any possibility of artistic subjectivity. Janne Seppänen, who wrote the exhibition essay for Places, claims that, once Nuutinen had conceived of the project, it could have been carried out by a “robot.” The project connects to several strands of 20th-century conceptual art practice, but seems to be chiefly directed against the sentimental subjectivity traditionally associated with landscape photography and its celebrated author, the heroic national artist.

Through his elaborate attempts to exorcise his own subjectivity from the production of these photographs, Nuutinen has tried to eliminate the possibility of deriving meaning in the images through appeals to traditional interpretive methodologies of photography (such as artistic expression, authorial intent, or socio-political context). As Seppänen puts it, “There is nothing but landscape, that is, random places, where the western cartographer’s lines of latitude and longitude meet, as ordained by Greenwich.” However, even if Nuutinen reduces the landscape photograph to a conceptual ground zero, as Seppänen implies, this does not
necessarily remove these photographs from the discourse of the national landscape. The issue becomes about who determines meaning and how that determination is made. These photographs—stripped of the usual aesthetic signifiers of artistic subjectivity and nationalist metaphor—beg the question of what a viewer is supposed to make of them. The photographs appear so banal, so arbitrary, that one seeks to invest them with meaning and significance. It does not take much effort to overcome the indexical emptiness of the plain in the photographs of the field in Tammela Township (Figure 3) and link them to the long tradition of rural imagery invested with national mythologies of the rural folk. Similar readings present themselves when looking at other photographs taken in other fields or forests. Those photographs in Places that record parking lots, buildings, or roadways offer interpretive possibilities similar to those of Turunen’s mock postcards of the quotidian national landscape. The emptiness or banality offered by the photographs prompts the viewer to invest meaning into them—meaning readily supplied by nation discourses. Remembering Häyrynen’s claim that the logic of the national landscape can appropriate almost any image, Nuutinen’s intent is not paramount in determining whether or not an image can read through the framework of the national landscape. Similarly the interpretive possibilities of viewers, as national subjects, are also circumscribed within national discourse. Viewers can easily fill in any of the aesthetic or iconographic signifiers of the national landscape that may be missing from the deliberately banal photograph. Banality as means of critique is restricted in as much as viewers have internalized the ways of seeing provided by the nation.

Just as the relationships between artist, viewer, and national discourse complicate Nuutinen’s gesture, so do the relationships between global, national, and local scales at work in the images. His method seems to offer the possibility of transcending the traditions and myths of the heroic national artist, which have been pervasive in Finland since the 19th century. The rationality and rigidity of the grid aims to oppose the subjectivity and fluidity of art, just as universal cartographic conventions offer to transcend the organic contours of the imagined nation. This opposition, however, presumes that the nation depends only on the ‘subjective’ naturalization of landscape in art or popular culture when, in fact, it relies equally, if not more so, upon the ‘objective’ appropriation of landscapes through discourses such as science, geography, and cartography. The national-romantic landscape painters of the late nineteenth century worked in tandem with the cartographer and surveyor; if
the sweeping views of forests and lakes in paintings and photographs targeted the heart, then the highlighted borders and numerical statistics of the first Finnish national atlases targeted the mind. The landscape photograph and the atlas are siblings in the ideological family of the nation. The dichotomy between the national landscape and the global grid system assumed in Places is, in some ways, false. The universality of the grid is itself a historical artifact of imperialist and nationalist discourses of the past centuries, just as the aesthetic mode of the picturesque national landscape is an international phenomenon. Global banality works together with, rather than in opposition to, national sentimentality. Thinking of these images in terms of the local or the everyday might offer some possibilities for reaching beyond the global/national binary. For example: What might the intersection of 60° 45' latitude (N) and 23° 30' longitude (E) mean to a person who experiences it as a place and not just as an image? Yet, local identities and everyday landscapes are just as thoroughly embedded within discourses such as nationalism and globalism.

BEYOND THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

These three photographic projects all utilize banality as a means to critique the conventional understanding of the national landscape, compelling viewers to think critically about imagery that they passively consume every day through print and visual media. Soinio, Turunen, and Nuutinen seem to conceive of aesthetic banality as a universally critical visual language as opposed to the particularity and sentimentality of national landscape imagery. However, banality as a critical strategy is unstable and, consequently, the aesthetic and political discourses of the nation persist in their projects. The unacknowledged relationship between banality and nationality in the projects concurs with the social scientist Michael Billig's argument that the nation endures precisely because of the banality of its message, not its exceptionality. He claims that national discourses, such as that of the Finnish national landscape, prompt a constant remembering of the nation even as the ubiquity of these promptings encourages a forgetting of their ideological work. Billig's thesis necessitates a fundamental reconsideration of the notion of using a visual language of banality to critically undermine the nation. Uncritically relying on banality or elevating the quotidian may, in fact, sustain an even more subtle sort of nationalism.

That the nation persists even in the banality of these photographs does not necessarily mean that they fail in their revisionist aims. Häyrynen suggests that the resurgence of interest in national landscapes
within Finland in the 1990s attests to both the resilience and flexibility of national discourses and the challenges presented to them by globalization and European integration. As viewers interpret these works both through and against the nation, there is a shift in the location of power away from national discourses. National identity remains relevant as one discourse of identity, but no longer speaks with the same univocality or holds the same hegemonic power over the interpretive possibilities of the viewer that it did in Finland throughout most of the 20th century. In their exploration of the mythologies and conventions of national landscapes, these photographic projects might facilitate a reconceptualization of these landscapes as less ideologically fixed places. Geographer Doreen Massey argues that the meaning of place (or landscape) need not be negative or reactionary, as it has often been characterized in critiques of nationalism and discussions of globalization. She writes that “It is people, not places in themselves, which are reactionary or progressive.” Perhaps it is possible, then, that empowered and critical viewers might re-script national landscapes as complex, multivalent intersections of social relations across time and space. Landscapes might serve as sites to rearticulate local, national, and global identities as fluid and performative, as places to hear formerly silenced voices and histories, and as focal points for articulating transnational environmental concerns. Landscape photographs might subvert the hegemonies and ideologies they once naturalized, changing the relationship between viewer and landscape photograph from one of a supplicant before an altarpiece to a more critical and equitable exchange.

Following Mitchell’s challenge to see landscape as a verb rather than a noun has largely meant exploring how landscapes work on behalf of national discourses, but it also means recognizing that they can work toward other ends as well. In his essay “Dissemination,” the critic Homi Bhabha articulates his hopes for landscapes’ other labors. He writes,

These imaginative geographies that spanned countries and empires are changing, those imagined communities that played on the unisonant boundaries of the nation are singing with different voices.

To transpose his aural metaphors to visual ones, the univisuality of the nation is now unraveling with the introduction of other eyes, seeing new geographies. However, even as this begins, critical attention must still be directed at the center of hegemonic nationalism, to those landscapes that appear to be the least contested and most representative of an essential, natural Finnishness. To undermine national discourse is to
recognize that it has always been what Bhabha describes as an unstable “splitting”; nations, at once, claim a mythic, ahistorical continuity, but need to be constantly reaffirmed and performed. Even as Finnish national discourses work to appropriate the subversive subject matter and aesthetic interventions of the three photographic projects I have examined, they begin to visualize national landscapes as complex and contradictory places where the Finnish nation is continually being inscribed and erased, appearing in brilliant clarity and fading into oblivion.

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ENDNOTES

1 Kari Soinio, "About Landscape in Photographic Art," artist statement, 1998. The full statement is posted on his website: <www.karisoinio.com/maisemasta.html>. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
7 For example, This is Finland (1946), published immediately after World War II, was directed specifically at North American Finns.
10 On performativity and its subversive potential, see Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 1990). Till’s own critical theory of "everyday landscapes" also depends on performativity and she highlights artworks and cultural interventions as means of political resistance.
Paul Wilson: “Banality as Critique”

12 For a paradigmatic example of a critical approach to Finnish national identity, see Tuomas Lehtonen (ed.) Europe’s Northern Frontier, trans. Philip Landon (Jyväskylä: PS-Kustannus, 1999). Specifically relating to the visual arts, the 1998 exhibition at Kiasma titled This Side of the Ocean captures the early terms of the debate over the Finnness of Finnish art. See the exhibition catalog: Maaretta Jaukkuri and Tuija Kuutti (eds) This Side of the Ocean (Helsinki: Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998).
13 I use the term globalization here cautiously, but purposefully, to denote the increased economic, cultural, and political interdependence of peoples across time and space facilitated by transnational capitalism. I emphasize the complex processes that are reshaping contemporary identities, bolstering national or local identities in some ways and challenging them in others. Two provocative, if very different, understandings of the meaning of globalization are: Steven Flusty, De-Coca-Colonization (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) and George Yudice, The Expediency of Culture (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
16 I follow Häyrinen’s idea of a historically shifting “inner mover” or ideal viewer of national landscape imagery. See Häyrinen, “Landscape Imagery Defining the National Space”, in Pitkärinta and Rahikainen, 47–48.
18 Häyrinen, “Kaleidoscopic View”, 7.
19 Ibid., 5.
20 Ibid., 6.
21 Häyrinen addresses the shifting aesthetics and places highlighted in national landscape imagery, see “Kaleidoscopic View”, 11–15; “Landscape Imagery”, 44–45. The topic is also the focus of a 2002 exhibition at the University of Helsinki Library. See Pitkäranta and Rahikainen.
22 Debates about whether photography is objective and scientific or subjective and artistic characterize its entire history from the 1840s to the present. An increased interest in the ideological constructions of photographic meaning has marked photographic theory in visual-cultural studies since the 1970s.
23 The project committee included representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, the National Board of Antiquities, the Ministry or Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Education.
25 Ibid., 4.
26 Häyrinen, “Kaleidoscopic View”, 16.
27 The claim of closeness between Finns and Nature is endemic to almost all literature on Finnish history and culture. For one example of how the state has reinforced this connection in the twentieth century, see Paulina Raento and Stanley Brunn (2005), “Visualizing Finland: Postage Stamps as Political Messengers”, Geografiska Annaler Series B 87 (2), 145–163.
33 See Palin, 215-218.
34 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983).
37 Pekka Turunen, "Introduction", from *Greetings from Finland* (Kimito: Carbon Sink, 2003).
38 The Ministry's national landscape committee includes the selection criteria in the book. See Harö et al., 63.
41 Tom Vanderbit (2001), "This Bland is my Bland", *Interiors* 161 (2), 59-61.
43 Ironically, as the project predates the widespread commercial availability of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) by a few years, his method now seems almost quaint.
44 Nuutinen and Seppänen, vii.
45 Ibid.
48 See Seppänen, xiii.
49 Ibid., xv.
50 Ibid.
51 The first two editions of the *Atlas of Finland* were published in 1899 and 1910, well before Finland's independence in 1917.
52 For example, both the "boring postcard" aesthetic and the "passive frame" of the *New Topographies* may be thought of as aesthetic conventions that have circulated rapidly throughout a global art world and have been utilized to critique and/or bolster specific national visual discourses.
54 Billig appropriates Barthes's notion of a simultaneously remembered and forgotten ideology. See Billig, 37-43.
55 Häyrynen, "Kaleidoscopic View", 15.
56 Andrew Nestingen argues that while national culture continues to shape subjectivities in Finland, it no longer has the same hegemonic position over identity production that it once did, for example during the early and mid-twentieth century. See Nestingen, "Why Nation? Globalization and National Culture in Finland, 1980-2001". Doctoral Dissertation, University of Washington, 2001.
Paul Wilson: "Banality as Critique"

57 Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 141. I have removed her italics.

58 Ibid., 154–155.


60 Bhabha defines these dual aspects of national discourse as the *pedagogical* and the *performatives*. Anderson, Billig, and others identify a similar dynamic. See Bhabha, 208–209.
PAULIINA RAENTO

CHANGING FOOD CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN FINLAND

Constant change characterizes all food cultures. This change matters because food and foodways are fundamental constituents of identity. Everyone must eat and drink, but what, where, and when individuals (can or cannot) consume, and how (much), maintain strong individual and group boundaries. These boundaries may relate to lifestyle, world views, or health, and are conditioned by culture and understanding of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Shared foodways bind people together and separate one group from another. Ethno-cultural identity is typically (re)produced and celebrated through food. Skills required to produce, prepare, or evaluate food define groups of professionals (such as gourmet chefs and wine connoisseurs), whose expert vocabularies contribute to their sense of exceptionalism and professional identity. The type, style, and price of food, and the manner and spaces of its consumption have marked socio-economic class boundaries throughout history.

Food also defines places, regions, and their products, typically enhancing the residents’ sense of belonging to, and pride of, a particular place. The centerpiece of an ethno-cultural celebration may be a local specialty or, in the case of migrant communities, something imported from the ‘old country’. Certain products and production regions carry an aura of prestige, which may support global reputation and sales. Regional products may represent a ‘national cuisine’, which supports stereotypes of countries and peoples (pasta is ‘Italian’). Generalized, widely accepted representations of ‘our national way’ of eating and ‘our’ culinary sources of pride are one form of ‘banal nationalism’, for they gather an “imagined community” of ‘us’ around mundane items and activities and mark meaningful, symbolic spaces through socialization, ritualization, and routinization. Reversely, alien products and ways of ‘others’ from ‘elsewhere’ may cause suspicion and fuel negative stereo-
types. It is well known that disgust and fear of the unknown are among the most powerful emotions related to food and foodways.

These kinds of identity- and boundary-related themes are currently prominent in Finland, owing to major changes in Finnish society over the past two decades. The Cold War ended, the Finns went through an economic depression in the early 1990s, and joined the European Union in 1995. The subsequent influx of immigrants to Finland (see Figure 1 in Häkli’s article), the increased foreign travel of ordinary Finns, and the restructuring of the Finnish economy (including food production and market chains) challenged the mainstream understanding of ‘our’ ways of eating and added to the range of available culinary options in Finland. The current change of Finnish food culture thus contains new characteristics, but nevertheless represents only one episode in a long continuum. This evolution has been studied by tracing regional patterns and profiles (see Figure 1 in Häkli’s article) and by examining socio-economic groups and class culture. I employ both approaches for a comprehensive overview.

My review of Finnish food culture and its relationship with identity relies on information gathered through the method of participant observation—my own participation in Finnish society and social networks as an insider (a Finn who likes to eat) and observations as an outsider (one who has lived several years abroad). My discussion about the media draws from a comprehensive examination of food reporting in Finland’s largest national daily newspaper Helsingin Sanomat in 2002. I used basic content- and discourse-analytical approaches, asking, ‘What can be learned from examining what is reported and featured; how; by and to whom; and in what soci(et)al and temporal contexts?’

A History of Change and Regional Differences

Understanding Finland’s geographical location and its historical position as a borderland between East and West contributes to the understanding of how food culture and identities have evolved over time in Finland. Physical geography maintains food-cultural differences between north and south, and coast and inland. Finland’s climate and other physical features set harsh limits to what can be grown and where, for the country extends over one thousand kilometers northwards from the sixtieth parallel in the northern hemisphere. Wheat, for example, does not survive north of Kuopio, but rye and oats grow as far north as Oulu and barley even further north (Figure 1). Also characteristics such as the number and type of waterways have influenced diets throughout history—
it makes sense that people along coasts and major lakes consume more fish than those residing inland.

Figure 1. Examples of local and regional foods and foodways in Finland (map modified with permission from Raento & Raento, 2001, Figures 1 and 2).
Both eastern and western cultural influences are prominent in Finnish food culture. Vernacular architecture and infrastructure (see Alannen in this volume)—especially oven types—have historically determined the frequency of baking and the texture and acidity of bread. People in the west have baked sweeter bread only a few times per year in separate ovens heated for the purpose, thus storing the bread and eating it dry and hard. Easterners have preferred more sour flavors and have made soft, fresh bread in ovens used for regular heating. Other well-known markers of regional culinary difference within Finland are the historical texture of buttermilk, the remaining know-how of home-brewed ale-making (sahut), (Figure 1), the acceptability of wild mushrooms as consumables (popular in the east, detested in the west), and the setting of, and manners at, the table (for example, age in the east, but wealth in the west determined the order of serving).

Many ingredients of ‘Finnish’ meals are imports, which have made their way to the country through commercial and military endeavors. For example, soldiers returning from the Swedish empire’s war in Central Europe brought along the potato in the mid-eighteenth century. However, innovations diffused slowly at that time, so over a century was needed before the plant replaced the turnip, despite the suitability of the potato to Finland’s climate and soils.

Improvements in transportation and communication technologies and liberalization of the Finnish economy accelerated these processes. New items typically arrived in coastal cities and other centers of trade. Their wealthy upper classes were the first ones to adopt such novelties as spices, fruits, and coffee. With new foodstuffs came new recipes, kitchenware, and fashionable rituals of consuming and socializing, which boosted the elite’s group identity and symbolic connections to ‘Europe’. Sailors and maids of wealthy families were important in introducing the novelties to other socio-economic groups. Perhaps the most triumphant of these imports was coffee, which gradually permeated Finnish society so that in one hundred years Finns became the world’s leading coffee drinkers.

Finnish food culture homogenized over the course of the twentieth century, for several reasons. First, in a society with strong agrarian roots, traditional self-sufficiency and Nature’s offerings maintained their value even after a shift towards a purchasing economy during the Great Move to industrial and urban centers in the 1950s and 1960s. Second, religious and moral values enhanced uniformity. The mainstream population of a small country shared Lutheran virtues of mod-
nesty; memories of scarcity; a nation-building myth of ethno-cultural homogeneity; and, typical of small peripheral communities, suspicion towards difference. Third, increased mobility of people weakened regional contrasts. Particularly influential and rapid cultural encounters were the resettlement of over 420,000 people from the territories ceded to the Soviet Union after World War II (east meets west) and urbanization in the 1950s and 1960s (city meets country). Fourth, civic organizations and national institutions (schools, the general-conscription military) crossed socio-economic and cultural boundaries in their promotion of health information and particular food items. Fifth, industrialization and technological developments in Finnish food production and manufacturing expanded distribution chains nationwide. Storage technologies improved—the refrigerator, for example, became common in Finland in the 1950s.

Figure 2 (A) Black sweet bread from the Åland Islands (Ahvenanmaa) is a regional specialty and a marker of distinct identity, as suggested by the flag of the autonomous province on a loaf sold in Helsinki–Helsingfors (Author’s photo, 2005).

The same products could now be sold across the country while the demand for preprocessed food items rose with the mass entry of women in the workforce. Buttermilk is now the same everywhere, but old habits die hard: The products of local bakeries and home-baked bread still reflect historical regional preferences, which have become marketable vehicles of regional pride (Figure 2A).

Rural romanticism and national identity markers are also used in the marketing of food (Figure 2B). Sixth, the media have influenced attitudes and foodways—both by promoting novelties and by reporting
about consumer concerns and the politics of production and consumption. Necessity, sufficiency, and education have given space to entertainment-, image- and identity-related themes about food and foodways, to health risks, and to food scandals.

Figure 2 (B) Finnish national identity is evoked in the romanticized image of a lumberjack on a Koskenlaskija cheese wrapper. The paprika (red bell pepper) flavor is one change in Finnish food culture since the creation of this cheese in the 1930s.

An unquestioned definition of 'Finnish' food and foodways has emerged from this combination of physical geography within the national territory, hybrids of regional cuisines, and homogenization of Finnish society. However, the 'Finnishness' of this food culture follows the country's politico-administrative boundaries in a sense that a food item or a foodway has come to be considered 'Finnish' because 'Finns' (people who identify with this particular territory) have accepted it as one part of their quotidian life and self-definition. Many contemporary staples of 'Finnish' cooking are imports, including meatballs, pizza, and macaroni and meat casserole that are among "the most popular dishes in Finland." Avocados, shrimp, and bell peppers promoted as exciting novelties in the food pages of Helsingin Sanomat in the 1970s are now available in any grocery store. Furthermore, many dishes now considered "most typically Finnish" by contemporary youngsters of the majority population have regional roots (Karelian stew and pies) or relatively short histories beyond the kitchens of the wealthy or the self-sufficient (quality sausages). That 'Finnish' kitchen is based on imports, regional specialties, and constant (if gradual) change suggests that its 'Finnishness' is relative and imaginary—that is, socially constructed (Figures 3A & 3B). In the current context of open borders, global migration and travel, and the subsequent diversification of 'Finnishness', 'Finnish' food culture and identities continue to be exposed to new influences.
Figure 3 (A) In a market hall in Downtown Helsinki, imported, 'exotically' spiced seafood delicacies (such as chili-marinated river crab and tiger shrimp) are marketed in Finnish. (Author’s photo, 2005).

Figure 3 (B) Reindeer produce from Lapland is marketed in multiple languages as a national specialty (Author’s photo, 2005).
Figure 4. Two types of contemporary Finnish fast food: (A) Traditional Karelian-style pirogi and fish baked in open rye shell, typical of the Savo region; (B) A snack stand serving a variety of meals with kebab meat (Author's photos, 2005).
Figure 5. Spaces and ways of shopping for food in Finland have changed from small corner grocery markets with personalized service towards self-service in big, standardized chain stores, as these two experiences of buying milk exemplify. The first photo was taken in 1961 (photographer unknown, courtesy of the Raento Family Collection), the second one forty-five years later (Author’s photo, 2006).
CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS OF CHANGE

Food-cultural shifts typically follow upheavals in geopolitical, economic, and social circumstances. Finnish mainstream society experienced an economic boom, political and socio-cultural liberalization, and a shift towards individualistic values in the 1980s. The economic downfall in the beginning of the geopolitically confusing 1990s was fast and devastating. The gradual recovery from the depression and Finland’s membership in the EU brought about accelerated movement of people and goods, a sense of relief, curiosity towards novelties, and a prominent desire to identify with ‘Europe’. Conditions were thus ripe for a notable phase of food-cultural change to emerge by the 2000s.

The scale of this change stands out both temporally (speed) and spatially (scope). One example is the intensified dependency of individual consumption and local production on big, distant, and abstract entities, such as global cost-efficient networks of multinational corporations and EU directive-makers. Three somewhat contradictory, yet simultaneous trends thus profile food culture in contemporary Finland: (1) diversification, (2) homogenization, and (3) polarization.

The accelerated speed of change supports each one of these trends. Information about food fashions and scandals is immediately available through the media. The flow of information is increasingly visual, underscoring the entertainment-, image- and identity-related aspects of food and foodways, and encouraging experimentation and imitation. Access to specific products from distant lands can be arranged overnight and emergency measures can reach across the national territory within hours. Permeability of national boundaries supports—or complicates—these activities in the aftermath of the Cold War and within the EU. The immediacy of information flows and the prominence of supranational and national actors in these networks arguably homogenize ‘Finnish’ food culture, for the same can be everywhere at the same time. Yet, people and local markets react to identical options in diverse ways, depending on resources, life experiences, and interests. Outcomes influence regional patterns, individual experiences, and quotidian landscapes, as the following discussion exemplifies.

NEW CENTERS AND PERIPHERIES

Immediate information flows and increased mobility of people and goods modify patterns of spatial diffusion. The historical directions of food-cultural diffusion in Finland—from big centers to small ones,
from transportation nodes to hinterlands, from coast and national borders to inland, from south to north, and from west to east—have not disappeared, but novel patterns complement them. Major southern cities, such as Metropolitan Helsinki (Helsingfors), still serve as the principal entry points of novelties. The growing relative demographic weight and cultural heterogeneity of these cities enhance their leading role as centers of diversity and fashion. For example the politico-administrative and economic capital Helsinki hosts the largest concentration of every population group in Finland, including the country’s ‘old minorities’ and all new immigrant groups. However, some relatively small and geographically peripheral towns now stand out as new pioneers of food-cultural change because of their specific economic and demographic characteristics.

One example is Ivalo, a regional center near Lapland’s leading ski resorts, which cater to middle-class southerners in search of exoticism. For these visitors Lapland’s culinary peculiarity (specialties of reindeer, fish, wild berries, etc.) is an additional attraction. Many seasonal tourists who cook in their cabins also expect convenient access to the same ingredients they use at home year-round, so these items—including fashion foods—now travel directly and overnight from the south to the grocery stores in the north rather than making their way northwards gradually through major population centers en route. Foreign visitors to Lapland, seasonal workforce in the resorts, and a cooking school in Ivalo further broaden the available selection of food items in this northern town of 4,000 inhabitants.

A similar example is the town of Salo, a Nokia cell phone technology center in southwestern Finland. The multinational corporation’s employees form an ethno-culturally diverse, wealthy, and well-traveled group of consumers, who are familiar with a broad range of consumables from all over the world. Local grocery retailers respond to this demand by stocking their shelves with products that would be hard to find in a peripheral mainstream town of similar size (25,000 people). The accelerated speed of diffusion and ethno-cultural diversification have thus expanded the selection of available products, but, at the same time, these trends have brought about new hierarchies of diffusion and regional polarization by creating new centers and peripheries.

EXPANDING EXPERIENTIAL REALMS

The group of individuals who spread new influences has diversified as well. The traditional determinants (wealth, education, and work-related travel experience/cultural encounters) still describe many ‘food pioneers’, but their profile is becoming more ‘democratic’ and ‘ordinary’. 
More Finns, with various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, now spend time in foreign lands, making contacts with the previously unknown and bringing new knowledge back home. Immigrants to Finland come from all walks of life and from all over the world, bringing their own foodways with them. Even if the absolute numbers of foreigners or foreign-born citizens in Finland is minuscule in European and North American comparisons, their influence is notable in selected parts of the country. New foods and foodways are now ever more broadly entering quotidian life within Finland's boundaries.

However, regionally, locally, and individually, the degree of contact between the mainstream population and the newcomers varies considerably. Even in towns with relatively high proportion of foreigners (the southern cities and some inland towns which settle arriving refugees), interpersonal contacts between population groups can be close to non-existent. University towns stand out as relatively vibrant nodes of intercultural culinary contact, because of the growing number of foreign students and scholars in Finnish universities; that of academic Finns with experience abroad; the characteristically curious and socially busy academic lifestyle; and the broader-than-average employment opportunities in these towns. The experiences in culturally diverse urban neighborhoods with well-traveled thirty-something-year-olds and peripheral, rural small towns with aging, culturally homogeneous population are in the opposite ends of the spectrum.

The immigration-induced challenges to the national schooling system both diversify and homogenize culinary experiences and food cultures in Finland. Elementary and secondary schools offer at least one free daily meal to each pupil. On the one hand, the diversification of the student body has compelled the authorities to approach dietary requirements more flexibly than before. After adjusting to food allergies and ideological eating habits (such as veganism) in the 1980s and the 1990s school kitchens now need to observe religious customs and requirements regarding the ingredients, preparation, and consumption of food. The changing culinary landscapes of schools ideally concretize the educational ideals of multiculturalism, which were prominent in the national curriculum reform in 2004. On the other hand, the cultural and demographic profiles of schools vary considerably even within cities, which means that pupils are exposed to this diversity unevenly, adding to experiential polarization. Peer pressure and special meals may create social polarization or force adjustment to mainstream ways by labeling differently eating individuals negatively in the eyes of the majority—
suspicion about 'strange' culinary habits is deeply rooted and draws strength from evident differences in faith, speech, skin color, dress, and the like. Furthermore, the menu choices made in school (or any mass-feeding institutional) kitchens are likely to follow routines and mainstream preferences to maximize cost-efficiency. Meals served at school thus promote homogenization by making food a tool of citizenship education through emphasizing commonly accepted 'Finnish' foods and 'our' (the mainstream population's) conventional ways of consuming them.

COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES

Increased immigration, travel, and interest in culinary experiments have broadened the selection of specialty food stores, restaurants, and produce in regular grocery stores especially in Finnish cities. Food business has offered employment options for immigrants, who now own an estimated one-tenth of restaurants in Metropolitan Helsinki. The location of these enterprises and a glimpse at their clienteles suggest that new culinary clusters are emerging in the capital city, changing its quotidian landscapes. A row of broadly defined 'Asian' and 'African' grocery stores has developed in Hakaniemi (Hagnäs), a major public transportation node next to an old (delicatessen-style) market hall and open-air market. This concentration is conveniently accessible from the eastern suburbs where many new immigrants reside, from the wealthy lifestyle-conscious Downtown, and from adjacent neighborhoods with a youngish, 'bohemian', and multicultural population profile. The numerous Chinese and middle-eastern diners and pizzerias in these neighborhoods are modest in appearance. In contrast, the concentration of 'ethnic' and regional specialty restaurants in the pricey Downtown area, their variably mainstreamed menus and serving styles, and onsite observation of their clientele verify that these enterprises target the wealthy middle classes and foreign visitors. In turn, Helsinki's eastern suburbs have relatively few 'ethnic' restaurants (including corner pizzerias and kebab places), suggesting that the primary place and channels of food-related identity maintenance for recent immigrants to Finland are the home and domestic social networks. These social and geographical contrasts highlight socio-economic and culinary segregation between population groups—and the difficulty of defining 'ethnicity' and 'authenticity'. The selection available in Helsinki varies from superficially themed 'Mexican' diners to rigorously traditional reproduction of regional cuisines while the ownership profile is notably heterogeneous. A broad range of hybrids in both food and foodways have emerged in
the process (Figures 4A & 4B). Perspective matters, too, highlighting the relativity of the term ‘ethnic’ in North America (and in other places outside Finland’s boundaries) ‘Finnish’ restaurants qualify as ‘ethnic’ restaurants (see Korkiasaari and Roinila in this volume).

An example of homogenization in quotidian culinary landscape is the changing scale of Finnish grocery retail stores due to the concentration of people and demand in cities and to international competition. The number of grocery stores in Finland grew until the early 1970s and then collapsed from over ten thousand units to about four thousand in a couple of decades (Figures 5A & 5B).39 In the country’s most populated area in Uusimaa (Nyland) province, an estimated one hundred thousand people now live farther than within two kilometers from the nearest grocery store.40 The remaining independent stores rely on specialities and personalized service in their competition against the two–three major nationwide chains and, especially since 2002, against foreign corporations.41 The chain units have grown in size and suburban mega-malls with major grocery chains among their anchor stores have become characteristic of urban structure in Finland during the past 10–15 years. Finnish food producers, manufacturers, and retailers are linked to long, cost-efficient international chains. Finnish companies (such as meat refiners and grocery retailers) have expanded massively, especially in the Baltic sphere, and multinational corporations have purchased Finnish companies, sometimes in order to gain access to the expanding markets in Russia.42 These processes have added to the distance between individual consumers and producers of foodstuffs. Consumers’ control over what they eat has weakened and access to reliable information and alternatives has become more complicated. Simultaneous homogenization of food chains and diversification of culinary selections may have enhanced the general socio-economic and lifestyle-related polarization of consumer identities in Finland. Those who choose according to affordability and those whose choices are based on lifestyle, ideology, or comfort may rarely cross paths.

Indeed, food and drink are harsh symbols of socio-economic and regional polarization in contemporary Finnish society. Trend-sensitive food and wine snobism, acquisition of expensive specialties from foreign lands, and intercultural explorations stand in stark contrast to the options available for the poor, the hungry, and the addicted. Finland began to receive food aid from the EU in 1996. About two thousand tons of this aid (roughly 400 grams per person) was distributed in 2001 through various charity organizations to help in daily survival.43 Several
locations in central Helsinki and other cities witness frequent lines in front of soup kitchens. Alcohol was the direct cause of death of about 1,800 individuals nationwide in 2004 and problems concentrate regionally and locally. Unemployment concentrates in certain groups, neighborhoods, and regions, creating notable differences in wealth, health, sense of self-determination, and integration opportunities. The juxtaposition of these quotidian realities and the media frenzy about fashion foods points to the abyss between population groups and between image and practice.

REACTIONS TO CHANGE

Boundary-crossing pioneers are always small minorities, irrespective of the innovation or the experience in question. The majority prefers a sense of permanence and safety rather than constant change and experimentation with personal limits. From this perspective, the emphasis of food reporting on novelties, scandals, and change in the mainstream media (such as Helsingin Sanomat) seems somewhat one-sided. These emphases are nevertheless important, for they support a strong perception of a rapid, risky change and shape reactions to the described trends. Indeed, a heated debate about the ‘fate’ of ‘Finnish’ food culture in front of the ongoing ‘dramatic change’ have characterized the Finnish-language media over the past few years. I approach the 2002 reporting in Helsingin Sanomat from the perspectives of identity, boundaries, and scale.

IN DEFENSE OF ‘OUR’ IDENTITY

The sense of comfortable distance from the familiar or the alien (personal boundaries) are important determinants of one’s perceptions and reactions. These boundaries are drawn and redrawn at multiple scales, for individuals’ quotidian experiences connect to regional, national, and supranational contexts in complex ways. The reporting about food in Helsingin Sanomat in 2002 reflects this complexity and shows that influences flow in multiple directions—not only from the top-down (from supranational and national decision-makers towards consumers), but also from the bottom-up (from these individuals towards the government, the EU, and multinational corporations).

For example, the adjustment to Finland’s new (geo)political, economic, and ethno-cultural situation directed attention towards specialty foods as tools of place promotion and local food economies—towards supporting and celebrating what ‘we’ have ‘here’. The desire to support peripheral economies, local and regional identities, and direct exchanges between
producers and consumers culminated in the 1990s in a frenzy of traditional and regional cookbooks, academic and media interest in culinary traditions, and a nationwide denomination of specialties for each municipality and region. Formal EU recognition was sought—and in some cases achieved—for particular produce and recipes (Lapin puikula potato, sahti ale). The strategy was one part of a general interest in regional roots and traditionalism in Finland in the context of permeable national boundaries and ‘globalization’ (see Håkli’s discussion about localisms in this volume). However, the uneven success of the approach suggests that some traditions were more “invented” than others.

Individual and national scale came together in the fierce defense of the ‘Finnishness’ of certain products with long, almost mythical prominence in quotidian life and popular culture. Koskenkorva (a hard liquor) and Turun Sinappi (a mustard) became “national symbols” of “Finnish identity” and of the perceived loss of national self-determination. In 2001, a “Pro-Koskenkorva” movement managed to politicize the sales of Koskenkorva’s state-owned distiller to a foreign corporation in a manner that eventually kept the company in state ownership. The celebrity-led campaign rode on Koskenkorva’s “symbolic value in the context of globalization” and focused on jerking national(istic) sentiments, for relatively little attention was paid in the rhetoric to the country-promotional value of Finlandia Vodka, manufactured by the same company. The transfer of the production of a market-leading mustard from Finland to neighboring Sweden caused a similarly worded, but less successful uproar. In protest, the local manufacturer introduced a competing “Finnish” mustard (Auran Sinappi), the market entry of which the identity-political protest mentality supported. Ironically, no protest had been voiced against the Turun Sinappi brand’s earlier sale to the multinational Unilever Corporation—the perceived threat to Finnish national self-determination seemingly needed a historically and territorially definable opponent (in this case, Sweden, with whom the Finns’ love–hate relationship is well known).

That grassroots resistance against, or support for, national authorities and the EU varies per situation highlights the sentimental nature of these reactions. The reaction often depends on personal economic benefit and its impact on risk assessment. In 2002, ordinary Finns put considerable pressure on the national authorities to defend at the EU level the popular practice of shopping for cheap meat in neighboring Estonia. Estonia had not yet joined the EU and was therefore subject to tightened controls over the Union’s outer boundaries, motivated by the fear of
animal diseases. While Finns continued to carry meat and sausages across the Gulf of Finland after their successful protest, they nevertheless repeatedly criticized the EU for poor control of animal diseases. Ordinary Finns' faith in the superiority of their country's protective measures against food-related risks; social trust towards, and economic benefit from, the neighboring country; and distrust towards the supranational institution thus steered opinions and action in a self-contradicting manner. The processes, however, all served the same goal: they strengthened a 'Finnish' national identity—a sense of self-determination and politico-cultural belonging.  

REPORTING ABOUT CHANGE AND 'OTHERS'

That the majority population's intellectual and emotional adaptation to Finland's ethno-cultural and demographic change is far from complete is evident in the uncritical style of reporting about its quotidian aspects. Well-meaning articles about new immigrants often contain questionable power hierarchies that keep 'us' separate from 'them', as selected examples from 2002 demonstrate.

In a lead photo illustrating an article about the evolution of the number of asylum seekers, two women, from Somalia and Bolivia, cook in a refugee center's kitchen. The dryish and potentially controversial topic about statistics and national immigration policy is given a touch of 'human interest' by turning numbers into persons and by portraying them as no different from 'us' in their daily errands (they cook and eat). The approach is one well-known persuasive technique through which the Other can be humanized and domesticated (or demonized with stereotypical portrayals of 'vulgar' eating habits). That the portrayed individuals are women and of visibly different backgrounds with one another adds 'softness' by evoking a sense of harmony and reducing the distance between population groups (between the represented, and between the represented and the newspaper's readers). That this approach is used on the front page of the country's leading daily newspaper can be read as serving 'positive' citizenship education and as supporting the discussed policy (the publication is known for its sympathies towards the government). However, more cynically, an emphasis on stories about 'exotic-cooking immigrants' in refugee centers and activity clubs may also enhance negative perceptions, according to which 'these people' do little or depend on activities arranged to them by the authorities and native activists. Problematic from this perspective is the selective tendency to focus on the daily errands of the most visibly different ('the most ex-
otic with extra curiosity value') and often the most marginalized groups while ignoring the routines of, say, North-American businesspersons or Swedish computer specialists (the ones who look like 'us' and have no special news value'). Indeed, not only certain groups, but also men are relatively underrepresented in these reports.

That these encounters both intrigue and intimidate Finnish mainstream journalists is evident in the frequency of these stories and the selection of interviewees. In a typical feature article about a 'cooking club' founded for Somali women in a Helsinki neighborhood in the late 1990s, the facility's manager—a native White female—is portrayed as an expert of Somali ways and as a mediating informant who corrects "commonly held" perceptions of this group. In the text entitled "The secrets of everyday food are revealed in Ankkuri's kitchen" the interviewee emphasizes how "cleanliness is important" for the club members and how "religion naturally has an impact" on the choice of recipes—she decides what the participants cook but considers their "wishes important." She tells how the kitchen is "a safe place" for these women; how cooking can promote the learning of "Finnish ways" and language; and why the "education of immigrants" should thus be started through other means than "excursions and computer classes." However, no clarifying arguments support her views (for example, it remains unclear what places would be 'unsafe' and why, and why immigrants need "education"). Another interviewed member of the majority population describes how the facility's other users "have learned to respect" with silence the club members' praying breaks from the kitchen.

The article depicts a respectful, jocular, and harmonious togetherness, but uses a notably patronizing tone. At no point is any voice given to the Somali women whose role is limited to spicing up the story by cooking and giggling in the background—even if the article highlights the usage of Finnish language in this kitchen and mentions that "someone capable of translating is always present at the meetings." The male reporter mentions the gender segregation of the exclusively female club's cooking space, but it remains unclear whether this exclusivity for some reason caused the silence of the Somali women in the article (clearly there was no language barrier). Neither are these women seen in the accompanying image, which depicts the two 'experts' of 'Finnish-style' cooking and 'Somali ways'. Whether the club members declined to be in the photograph or whether they were overlooked remains unknown.

An article written by two teenagers during their brief internship in the city pages office of Helsingin Sanomat reveals the profound termino-
logical confusion and ethnocentrism common even among the cross-culturally active segments of Finnish mainstream society. The concentration of ‘Asian’ and ‘African’ grocery stores in Hakanami is featured under the headlines “Catfish and plantains directly from Hämementie [Street]. Not only pea soup is eaten in Finland these days.” In this article the store owners describe their customer base and selection of merchandise, but the authors’ exclusive understanding of ‘Finnishness’ steals the attention. The subtitle and sentences such as “Exotic spices and meals have come to stay also at the Finnish meal table” are stereotypically ahistorical and separate ‘us’ from ‘them’ by turning the relative ‘exoticism’ of others and the existence of a “Finnish meal table” into factual notions. The contrast created in the article between the “colorful” looks of these “ethno stores” and a neighboring “purely Finnish-looking” pub adds to the bias. By calling these establishments “ethnic stores,” “ethno stores,” and “exotic stores” the students further highlight the difference of these Others, who clearly are not part of the majority culture and, therefore, not ‘Finnish’—which in the minds of the authors seems to have a fixed and supposedly obvious definition and appearance. The interns themselves mention that the oldest store has operated for decades and much of the business is conducted in Finnish, but these observations in their mind do not qualify the store as ‘Finnish’. The foundations of the “multiculturalism” now promoted in the national school curricula, and the quality of editorial tutoring given to interns by the leading newspaper’s staff, attract additional questionable light, when the word “Oriental” is used uncritically and synonymously in reference to Asia.

These representative details from the 2002 data suggest that cultural awareness and respect in Finnish schools and the media are still at a fairly poor (although inconsistent) level. My claim that ‘other-colored’ and ‘odd-speaking’ immigrants to Finland find it very difficult to qualify as ‘Finnish’ in the eyes of the mainstream majority population even if their families have been in the country for generations, speak fluent Finnish, and may have a Finnish passport, receive support from other similar assessments of cultural representations in recent geography textbooks and of reporting about food-related risks in Helsingin Sanomat (see Hakli’s article in this volume). It seems that foreign food items become ‘Finnish’ in Finland much more easily than people from the same lands.

CONCLUSIONS

Food and foodways illustrate the importance of material culture, quotidian practices, and their spaces and landscapes in the building, main-
tenance, and (re)definition of identities. Contacts with different ways of doing something that is vital for everyone leads to curiosity, coexistence, and conflict. In Finland, a historical borderland of culinary influences, novel habits and hybrids have emerged from these contacts, which first may have been met with resistance and fear. The contemporary context of open borders, fast communication, and global exchange has speeded up these historical processes and added to their relevance to identity, be that of local, regional, national, or supranational scale. In this complex context in Finland, the latest phase of food-cultural change shakes the understanding of ‘Finnishness’, at a regionally and demographically varying pace. New centers and peripheries, opinion leaders, and experiential options add to old patterns and processes. Reactions to change vary and are at their most concrete at the grassroots level—in those quotidian environments where people from all walks of life eat, cook, and consume. Contradictory, yet simultaneous processes of homogenization, diversification, and polarization are at work in Finnish society, modifying the sense of ‘Finnishness’ and life experiences in Finland—and, abroad, perhaps creating a new sense of what ‘Finland’ is about.

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ENDNOTES


3 For example, Jack Goody, Cooking, Cuisine, and Class (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1982); Harvey A. Levenstein, Revolution at the Table (New York: Oxford University Press 1988).

*Michael Billig, Banal Nationalism (Thousand Oaks: Sage 1995).*

*Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (London: Verso 1983).*


*Merja Sillanpää, Happamasta makeaan (Jyväskylä: Hyvää Suomesta 1999).*


*Uusivirta, 8–10; Sillanpää, 25–26.*

*Uusivirta, 102.*

*Ulla Asplund, Sahlitikirja (Valkeakoski: Suomen Sahtiseura 1990).*

*Uusivirta, 145; Sillanpää, 85–86; see Marjatta Hietala, “Food and Natural Produce from Finland’s Forests during the Twentieth Century”, in Marjatta Hietala and Tanja Vahtikari (eds) The Landscape of Food, Studia Fennica Historica 4 (2003), 185–197.*

*Sillanpää, 47.*


*Sillanpää, 32–35.*


*See Hietala.*


*HS 17 March, 2002, D2: “Hapattamisesta hysteriaan”.*


*HS 17 March 2002, D1: “Mita tänään ruuaksit?”*  
*HS 4 April 2004, C14: “Ensimmäinen ruokatorstai ilmestyi 30 maaliskuuta 1972”.*  
*Raento and Raento.*  
*H. Fennia.*  
*29. Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2004 (Helsinki: Opetushallitus 2004).*  
*30. Sirpa Tani, Mika Tammilehto and John Westerholm (eds) “Helsinki etnisenä alueena”, Helsingin yliopiston maantiete teen laitoksen kulttuurimaantiete teen kurssimapiteja 1 (1998); Raento and Raento.*  
*32. Raento and Husso, Fig. 5.*
Kaisa Kepsu & John Westerholm:

FINLAND-SWEDISH IDENTITY
UNDER PRESSURE
CHALLENGES FOR AN ‘OLD MINORITY’

Immigration, multiculturalism, and new minorities draw much attention in an era of globalization, communication, and migration. However, in societies undergoing rapid economic and demographic changes it is also important to look at how old, established minorities maintain their demographic vitality and identity, because their cultures are constantly transforming as well. Knowledge about a country’s old minorities can also help understand the experiences and problems of new immigrant minorities.

The frequently changing state boundaries in Europe have left several ethnic groups on the ‘wrong side’ of redrawn boundaries. These new boundaries have rarely followed ethnic divides, but, instead, in the borderlands they have broken up formerly integrated people. Groups that were ‘left behind’ in these territorial rearrangements thus became a minority in the new state, with ethnic affiliations across the national border. The 290,000 Swedish-speakers in Finland (in 2004) is one such ethno-linguistic minority with long historical roots in its settlement area in southern, southwestern, and western Finland (Figure 1).

We review the contemporary situation of the Swedish-speaking minority Finland, focusing on how the country’s profound societal and demographic changes during the past decades have challenged the Finland-Swedes and their identity. We will especially look at the challenges the minority faces in Metropolitan Helsingfors (in Finnish, Helsinki)—in the capital city region—and how the group responds to these challenges. Metropolitan Helsingfors, with a population of nearly one million people, is the largest urban center in Finland, inhabiting about one-fifth of the country’s population. We define it as comprising four
cities: Helsingfors, Esbo (Espoo), Vanda (Vantaa) and Grankulla (Kauniainen). These cities are an interesting case study, because they have formerly been primarily Swedish-speaking and still form the Finland-Swedens' cultural and institutional capital city. The four cities continue to harbor the largest single concentration of Finland-Swedens: 64,000 persons (22 percent of all Swedish-speakers in Finland), but they represent only 6.5 percent of the total population in the region. Structural and demographic changes in this region have been fast and have greatly altered the minority group's living conditions. It is here where the minority faces the strongest pressures.

Figure 1. Swedish Finland – regions and cities
To set the context, we will open with a brief historical overview on how Finland's Swedish-speaking minority has emerged. We then discuss the constituents of, and challenges to, contemporary Finland-Swedish identity and examine the population development and demographic challenges of the minority. We then shift our focus to Metropolitan Helsingfors and, more specifically, to the challenges of the minority in this region. We conclude by summing up our findings and discuss the future of this minority.

FINLAND-SWEDES EMERGE AS AN ETHNIC GROUP

In 1809 Sweden lost a war against Russia in the context of Napoleonic conflicts in Europe. As a result Sweden ceded Finland to Russia and the territory became a Grand Duchy of the Tsar. This ended an over five-hundred-year-long period during which Finland had become an increasingly integrated part of the Kingdom of Sweden. Already in the twelfth century, perhaps even earlier, and well into the fourteenth century, colonists from Sweden had begun to settle the coasts and the archipelago of Finland. This happened while Sweden sought to consolidate its geopolitical influence in relation to its regional competitors, especially Novgorod, in the eastern Baltic. The following Swedish conquest of areas sparsely populated by western Finnish tribes opened up the area for colonization. The current settlement area of the Swedes in Finland was thus established already in the Middle Ages (Figure 1).

Until 1809 the Swedes in Finland were just that—Swedes. Finns were recognized as a separate people within the Kingdom, but from an international perspective they were Finnish-speaking Swedes. The Swedes on the eastern side of the Baltic (across the Gulf of Bothnia) were until 1809 a part of the demographic majority in the Kingdom of Sweden. The Finns enjoyed full civic rights from year 1362, when representatives from Finland for the first time participated in the election of the King of Sweden. The events of 1809 reversed this ethno-demographic situation. With the signing of the peace treaty between Sweden and Russia the Swedes in Finland became a minority in Russia's Grand Duchy of Finland and the Finnish-speakers turned into a majority. For several decades, however, both ethnic groups were mostly unaware of the new situation in their everyday practices. The Swedish-speakers were still an overwhelming majority in their settlement areas and handled their daily affairs in Swedish. Swedish continued to be Finland's only official language and higher education was given solely in this language. The Grand Duchy
was administered in Swedish and knowledge of Finnish was not considered necessary even for judges in exclusively Finnish-speaking areas.\(^7\)

Europe's ethno-nationalist awakening reached Finland in the mid-nineteenth century. Finland's majority population became aware of its ethnic affiliation and the weak position of the Finnish language. The leaders of emerging Finnish ethnic nationalism (the Fennomans) advocated the building of one nation with a single language (Finnish) as the best way to secure a future for Finland and the Finns. This ethnic emancipation movement slowly penetrated the consciousness of the Swedish-speaking population. An awareness of the necessity to mobilize the Swedish-speakers to defend their rights grew among the minority group's urban elite. The consolidation of this newly found idea of a distinct people was complicated by this group's cultural, regional, and socio-economic divisions. The Swedish-speakers in Finland lacked common goals and a shared feeling of ethnic togetherness. On the one hand, the group included a political and cultural elite in coastal cities and civil servants and estate owners across the country. On the other hand, the vast majority of the minority population consisted of coastal fishermen and farmers. The elite communicated in a rather outdated form of formal Swedish, whereas the rural population used numerous regionally exclusive and very old dialects.\(^8\) These two socio-economic groups had had little to do with each other over the course of history and knew very little about one another's living conditions.

The language decree of the progressively-minded Czar Alexander II in 1863 stipulated that Finnish would become an equal and official language in the Grand Duchy within twenty years. After several delays Finnish was finally declared an official language of Finland in 1902, making it equal to Swedish in every respect.\(^9\)

The gradual strengthening of Finnish was less disturbing for the Finland-Swedes than the Fennomanian dreams to build a monolingual country and nation. This gave rise to a Svecomanian countermovement with the ambition to preserve Swedish as an official language and guarantee cultural autonomy for the Swedish-speaking population. In the census of 1880 in Finland individuals were for the first time classified according to their mother tongue. The number of Swedish-speakers in Finland proved to be 294,000, or fourteen percent, of the total population of 2.1 million.\(^10\) The minority was now statistically identified and quantified, which meant that it now officially existed for the first time. According to the Svecomanian elite, the minority needed to be politically and ethnically mobilized in order to secure its culture and language un-
der Fennomanian pressure. Swedish political and civic organizations were founded, among those the Swedish People’s Party in 1906. One aim of this political mobilization, to do well in the first general and democratic elections to be held in Finland in 1907, was accomplished, with 13 percent of the votes cast. The result matched the proportion of Swedish-speakers in the country. The result secured a say of the minority in the Parliament as Finland headed toward independence.

A problem was, however, that the now self-aware minority still lacked a common ethnic denominator that would overcome the group’s internal differences. The term Swede referred too much to Sweden, whereas Finn in the Swedish-speakers’ minds began to stand only for the Finnish-speakers, neglecting the existence of a Swedish-speaking group in Finland. A discussion of a suitable name for the minority ensued already in the nineteenth century, but it was only in the 1910s that the term Finland-Swede (finlandssvensk in Swedish) was agreed upon in certain influential Swedish-speaking circles. About the same time the term Finlandian (finlandare in Swedish) was introduced to refer to citizens of Finland regardless of language. Finn was reserved for the Finnish-speaking majority. These concepts remain disputed even today; especially the distinction between Finlandian and Finn has been frequently debated in the Swedish-language press in Finland and among academics. Finland-Swede is, however, widely accepted today, also by Finnish-speakers who translate the word into suomenruotsalainen. Finnish still lacks a counterpart for Finlandian as a distinction to Finn. The concept Finland-Swedes was given a territorial dimension by the introduction of the term Swedish Finland (Svenskfinland in Swedish, Finnish has no direct translation). From the perspective of a shared Finland-Swedish identity, it is important that a term exists to bring together the separate settlement areas of Finland-Swedes under one denomination.

Due to the long history of Finland-Swedes in Finland and their political and economic strength, Swedish remained a co-official language after Finland’s independence in 1917. The status of the language was guaranteed in the Constitution of 1919 and the Language Act of 1922, which since then have gone through several modifications. From a legal point of view, the status of Swedish and the rights of the Finland-Swedes are today better than ever since independence.

WHO IS A FINLAND-SWEDEN? EVERYDAY CHALLENGES

To define a Finland-Swede is sometimes difficult, because the official definition does not always match the personal feelings of identity. The
formal registration of language group is relatively straightforward in Finland: Individuals choose their own language. Parents make the initial decision by registering their child in the national population registry as either Swedish- or Finnish-speaking. The sum of these choices determines the relative shares of the two language groups both nationally and locally, which, in turn, affects administrative and territorial definitions and practices. The municipalities in Finland are by law either monolingual (Finnish- or Swedish-speaking) or bilingual, whereas individuals can only register themselves as natives in one language. A municipality is monolingual if its linguistic minority constitutes less than eight percent of the total population. A higher-than-eight-percent share, or at least 3,000 speakers of the minority language, makes the municipality bilingual.

However, formal registration of language with authorities says little about individuals’ use of language in everyday situations or about their identities. Identity is something a person can choose to have and it depends on time, place and situation.¹⁶ Today many people have multiple and flexible identities that are constantly renegotiated. How people experience their identities evolves and is sustained in interaction with other people, both by contrasting against some groups and wanting to belong to others. For a specific Finland-Swedish identity to exist, the members of the group have to share some feeling of solidarity with other Finland-Swedes and have a desire to belong to this group. Language is crucial in Finland-Swedish identity construction and the most important identity marker for the group.¹⁷ In many respects Finland-Swedes are very similar to the Finnish-speaking majority: they look alike, they are demographically, socially and economically similar, and they share a common national identity (that is, they are all members of the Finnish nation). Therefore Swedish-speakers commonly have complex loyalties. Each member of the group chooses how much Finland-Swedish (s)he wants to be. Thus, the existence of Finland-Swedes as an ethno-linguistic minority largely depends on how people choose to identify and define themselves. This makes the minority vulnerable.¹⁸

Swedish Finland is very heterogeneous in terms of identity. This is largely determined by the varying relative number of Swedish-speakers in the municipalities. The local language environment is of critical importance in the process of identity structuring for individuals and their communities. The proportions of language groups indicate how widespread the use of Swedish is and how much interaction takes place between the language groups. Nineteen of Finland’s 444 municipalities are
monolingual in Swedish (in 2004). Sixteen of these are located in the autonomous province of Åland Islands, which is monolingual by law. The three others on the mainland are located in the province of Ostrobothnia (Österbotten/Pohjanmaa), where the proportion of Swedish-speakers is also generally higher than in the rest of mainland Finland.

In 2004, 14 percent of Finland-Swedes lived in monolingual Swedish-speaking municipalities, while 82 percent pursued their daily life in bilingual municipalities. More than 47 percent of Finland-Swedes lived in municipalities where the majority language was Finnish and only 5 percent in monolingual Finnish-speaking municipalities. Urbanization in the 1960s and 1970s significantly altered the linguistic balance in the largest Swedish-speaking cities. In 1960, 24 percent of the minority still lived in monolingual Swedish-speaking municipalities and only 72 percent in bilingual municipalities.

The regionally differentiated development of the numerical ethnic strength has had a marked effect on the identity and cultural affiliation of Finland-Swedes in different regions. Swedish dominates the countryside surrounding the cities in Ostrobothnia and the share of urban Swedish-speakers is still considerable. Even in the cities of Ostrobothnia Finland-Swedes can thus lead much of their everyday life in their mother tongue. Contacts especially in the countryside with the Finnish-speaking parts of Finland are weak and bilingualism is reserved mostly for urban dwellers. Contacts with Sweden through networks created by emigration and the media (television and radio broadcasts from Sweden are available in Finland and particularly popular in Ostrobothnia) enhance the Swedish element in the identity of Ostrobothnian Finland-Swedes. Elsewhere in Swedish Finland (except the Åland Islands) daily interaction with Finnish-speakers and much weaker mass-media contacts to Sweden have made bilingualism a natural part of everyday life for the majority of Finland-Swedes. However, even in Southern Finland, bilingualism is less common in relatively peripheral areas, as in Western and Eastern Nyland (Uusimaa) and the southwestern archipelago. Clearly, there are marked differences between Swedish-speakers from central and peripheral areas. The different production structure and linguistic environments create different patterns of identification across Swedish Finland. Geographical distance makes a difference. In those peripheral areas where language groups interact with one another less frequently, Swedish more protected, which makes it easier to maintain a 'pure', strong Finland-Swedish identity. In contrast, in cit-
ies the minority receives more outside influences and identities tend to become more complex.

Because of the growing interaction with Finnish-speakers and the declining use of Swedish, the minority has had to learn Finnish. More and more Finland-Swedes are bilingual in a sense that they are able to communicate in Finnish with their neighbors, friends, and authorities. This ability, however, varies markedly from one individual to another according to age and environment. Well-educated youngish urbanites from mixed-language families are often fluently bilingual, especially in Metropolitan Helsingfors, whereas monolingualism is still fairly common among the elderly in the countryside, especially in Ostrobothnia and the Åland Islands.

Bilingualism unquestionably is a resource for the individual, but its significance for the minority group is much debated among the Finland-Swedes themselves. Attitudes towards bilingualism differ in different regions. Some even argue that bilingualism is one of the major threats to the vitality of the minority. The urbanites are usually proud of their bilingualism and argue that strong motivation is enough to maintain bilingualism over generations. In turn, monolingual Swedish-speakers in rural areas strongly oppose this idea and see it as a step toward Finnicization. The fear is that the dominance of Finnish increases and, little by little, the domains of Swedish shrink, ultimately leading to the disappearance of the weaker language and assimilation of Finland-Swedes. Command of Swedish among bilingual Finland-Swedes has declined as well, which raises concerns across the minority. Today the debate among the minority group is less about aiming for monolingual Swedishness than about how to maintain a living bilingualism.

**DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE**

The vitality of a population group greatly depends on its size. The absolute and relative numbers of Swedish-speakers in Finland have fluctuated since the first census recognizing mother tongue in 1880 (when there were 294,900 Swedish-speakers in Finland) (Figure 2). The absolute number of Finland-Swedes peaked in 1940 at 354,000 persons, but their share of the total population had already dropped from 14 percent in 1880 to 10 percent in 1940 because of the faster growth of the majority population. This share had declined to 5.5 percent by 2004, when there were 289,751 Swedish-speakers in Finland.
The ability of the minority to maintain its political weight in policy-making and its cultural influence is weakening because of diminishing relative demographic strength. This declining influence is visible in small cultural and societal changes. For example: The Swedish People’s Party has lost ground in several elections. The vote for the party has closely followed the proportion of Swedish-speakers in Finland (since the 1950s the vote has been roughly one percentage unit lower than the share of Finland-Swedes), but in the parliamentary elections of 1999, the party received 5.1 percent of the vote and, four years later, 4.6 percent. Since 2005 Swedish is no longer a mandatory subject in the national high-school graduation exams that about 40,000 pupils take each year before proceeding to further education. The ability to speak and understand Swedish will probably weaken among the majority population. There is a risk that a growing number of Finns are alienated from
the other official language of the country, as the status of the language diminishes.

Several intertwining factors have contributed to the downward trend of the Finland-Swedish population development. Emigration has been the main cause of decline after World War II. The propensity to emigrate has continuously been higher among Finland-Swedes than among Finnish-speakers and less sensitive to economic fluctuation, suggesting that this emigration is "a cultural expression." The tradition of emigration has had a distorting effect on the age structure of Finland-Swedes, because especially persons of reproductive age have sought their fortune abroad, mainly in Sweden. In 2004, 20 percent of Finland-Swedes were over 65 years old, while the corresponding share among Finnish-speakers was only 16 percent (Figure 3).

![Age pyramid of Finnish- and Swedish-speakers in 2003](image)

Figure 3. Age of Finland's Finnish- and Swedish-speakers in 2003. The pyramids show that the share of 20–54-year-olds is smaller among Finland Swedes than among the majority. This reflects the minority population's higher propensity to emigrate in these age groups. In the youngest cohorts the proportion is the same, which suggests a rising nativity among Finland Swedes and that mixed-language couples increasingly often choose to register their children as Swedish-speakers. (Data source: Official Statistics of Finland, Population 2003, 37)

The average age of Finland-Swedes was slightly over 42 years and among the Finnish-speakers, only 40 years. The reproductive rate among Finland-Swedes has traditionally been lower than among the majority population. This is partly because of the unfavorable age structure and partly because large parts of the Swedish-speaking settlement areas were situated in areas with traditionally low fertility rates, such as in
cities. During the last decades of that century the difference leveled out and today the birthrates of the two language groups are about the same, in some areas even in favor of Finland-Swedes. Thus, the differences in fertility are mainly caused by differences in the geographical distribution of the groups, not because Swedish-speakers would have a distinct reproductive behavior.\textsuperscript{35}

The population development and relative demographic weight of Finland-Swedes differ markedly per region. This results from the general migratory trends in Finland and from continuing urbanization. Since 1960 urbanization in Finland has been among the fastest in the Western world.\textsuperscript{36} The migration has been directed towards the largest, economically powerful coastal centers as a result of their rising international importance. During the past forty years large new industrial plants in predominantly Swedish-speaking municipalities have also drawn Finnish-speakers from the inland. Examples include an oil refinery in Borgå (Porvoo), a steel factory in Hangö (Hanko), a nuclear plant in Lovisa (Lovisa), a cable factory in Kyrkslätt (Kirkkonummi), and a wood processing plant in Kasko (Kaskinen).\textsuperscript{37} The coastal cities of Vasa (Vaasa) and Jakobstad (Pietarsaari) industrialized early, well before the great rural-to-urban migration wave in the 1960s and 1970s, and received a significant number of Finnish-speaking migrants early on. This development has weakened the position of Swedish in most coastal areas especially in, and around, Metropolitan Helsingfors in the south, creating new challenges. Mixed-language marriages have in a few cases led to language shifts, when former Swedish-speakers or their descendants have gradually been assimilated into the majority group, starting to report Finnish as their official language. However, language shifts have not had a decisive impact on the population development and the net loss has remained small.\textsuperscript{38}

Is Swedish Finland shrinking as a result of these changes? Geographically, not really. The boundaries of this regionally fragmented and culturally defined area are more or less the same as five hundred years ago. Within these areas the Swedish cultural element has, however, lost at least some of its relative strength, mainly due to an influx of Finnish-speakers. State and municipal authorities and legislation support the vitality of Swedish Finland in many ways, but the demographic development and culturally changing living environments pose a threat to Finland-Swedishness in many parts of Swedish Finland.
FINLAND-SWEDES IN METROPOLITAN HELSINGFORS

Helsingfors may seem completely Finnish-speaking to an outside visitor, for the bilingual signage is the only immediately noticeable evidence of Swedish-speaking presence (Figure 4) Yet, it is the largest concentration of Finland-Sweges in Finland. As we have seen, Finland-Swedish identity varies within the Swedish-speaking regions, much depending on the local language environment. The development in Metropolitan Helsingfors has pushed the Swedish-speakers from majority into a clear minority position. Pressures against the minority group are most evident and also most acute in the capital city region. The dispersed residential pattern and widespread bilingualism have made the fear of assimilation and Finnicization highly relevant. In the future, other parts of Swedish Finland, especially urban areas, may be faced with the same challenges, which makes a closer look at the dimensions of Finland-Swedish identity in Metropolitan Helsingfors particularly worthwhile. We will examine the minority’s past and present situation, challenges to the group’s vitality, and reactions of the group.

Figure 4. In bilingual Helsingfors all street signs must be in two languages: first in the majority language (Finnish), then in the second official language (Swedish). (Photo: Kaisa Kepsu, 02/2006)
FROM MAJORITY TO MINORITY

Helsingfors became the capital of Finland in 1812 when Tsar Alexander I moved the capital city from Åbo (Turku) to Helsingfors, closer to Russia and away from Sweden. Helsingfors had been founded in 1550 by Gustavus Vasa, the King of Sweden, in a region that was almost completely monolingual in Swedish. Because the city grew very slowly after its founding and because new residents were recruited mostly from the surrounding Swedish-speaking areas, Helsingfors remained Swedish for centuries. The new politico-administrative status gradually accelerated the growth of the city and workers started to move in. In the early 1890s the Finnish-speaking population in Helsingfors for the first time outnumbered the Swedish-speakers. In 1890 the shares were even, but from then on change was rapid. By 1910 the share of Swedish-speakers had already declined to 35 percent of the capital city's population. In 1950 the proportion was 19 percent, from which it decreased to only 6 per cent in 2005. The absolute numbers of Swedish-speakers also decreased, from 70,000 in 1950 to 35,000 in 2005. The proportional decrease can be ascribed to the heavy in-migration of Finnish-speakers to the four cities of Metropolitan Helsingfors. In 1950 this region harbored about 10 percent of the total population of Finland. By 2005 this share had reached 19 percent. The shrinking of absolute numbers of Swedish-speakers in Metropolitan Helsingfors since 1950 can be attributed to language shift through marriage across linguistic boundaries, emigration to Sweden, and suburbanization.

Language shifts are a particular threat in a bilingual language environment such as the capital city region. In mixed-language marriages until the late 1970s parents usually chose to enroll their children in Finnish-language schools, because bilingualism was not as popular or people simply were unaware of language issues. This was especially common in working-class families, who gradually became more integrated into the Finnish-speaking group. As a result, language shifts significantly reduced the size of the Swedish-speaking working class in Metropolitan Helsingfors. For example, twelve percent of the Finland-Swedes in the City of Helsingfors belonged to the working class in 1955. In ten years this share had declined to eight percent, while the share among Finnish-speakers was still at fourteen percent. Since then Finland has opened up internationally and diversified culturally, witnessing a growing interest in language skills and issues of identity. From the late 1970s onwards most children born to mixed-language cou-
Svenska talari märkts och inskryvts till svenska-livande skolor. Mer och mer barn tillträdde utbildningsinriktning i svenska, och de är därmed både företeelsetalande eller på en och annan sätt olyckligt "half-lingual".

Emigration till Sverige har också påverkat den livlighet och antalet av Finland-Sveder i Metropolregion Helsingfors. I början av 1970-talet flydde närmare fyra hundra svenska talari årligen från Finland till Sverige, men bara ungefär en hundra per år leddes till Sverige under ekonomiska depressionar under de tidiga 1990-talet i Finland. Det finns kontinuerligt överrepresenterat i migrationströmmen — exempelvis, ungefär 20 procent av alla flyttningar från Metropolregion Helsingfors till Sverige har varit svenska talari. Antalet flyttningar stiger igen, i huvudsak på grund av att integrationssteg av de finlandssvenska och svenska ekonomierna. Företag i både dessa delar av världen anställer blandad och utbildad Finland-Sveder i Metropolregion Helsingfors för att maximera tillgängligt språkligt och kulturellt arbete."

**Figure 5.** The suburbanization favoring Esbo and draining Helsingfors are clear in the diagram depicting the absolute numbers and proportions of Swedish-speakers in the three largest cities of Metropolitan Helsingfors. The relative strength of Finland Swedes has diminished in all three cities, regardless of the development in absolute numbers. The Swedish-speakers in Grankulla are included in the figures of Esbo. The figures of
Vanda until 1960 are for the rural municipality of Helsinge, which preceded the current City of Vanda. (Data source: Statistics Finland)

Suburbanization is one main reason for the decreasing numbers of Swedish-speakers in the City of Helsingfors. As Figure 5 illustrates, much of the decline in absolute numbers can be attributed to suburbanization—out-migration to the neighboring cities of Esbo and Vanda, where the Swedish-speaking population has grown significantly. In Esbo the number of Finland-Swedes has doubled from 1950 to slightly over 20,000 in 2005, but their proportion during the same period dropped from 43 percent to only 9 percent. Vanda shows a similar development, but the small city enclave of Grankulla has managed to maintain a fairly high proportion of Swedish-speakers: about 39 percent of its population of 8,500 is still Swedish-speaking. To some extent suburbanization also affects more recent areas of suburban growth—municipalities one step farther from Downtown Helsingfors, but still within commuting distance. Swedish-speakers move to the traditionally Swedish-speaking municipalities of Kyrkslätt (Kirkkonummi) and Sibbo (Sipoo), but, increasingly, also to more predominantly Finnish-speaking destinations.

RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS OF AN URBAN MINORITY

When urban minorities are studied, their residential patterns are often of particular interest. Traditional views on residential differentiation see segregation as a measure of a minority group’s assimilation into the majority. According to this view, an evenly distributed ethnic group tends to be socially and economically assimilated into the mainstream society. However, students of minority residential patterns should remember that each society and minority is unique and the outcome and significance of spatial distributions therefore vary per context.

Historical developments and, more recently, migration have significantly shaped the dispersed residential pattern of the Finland-Swedish minority in Metropolitan Helsingfors (Figure 6). Swedish-speakers live everywhere in the metropolitan area. No segregation into separate ‘Swedishtowns’ can be discerned, but in some residential areas Swedish-speakers are clearly overrepresented and in others, almost absent.

One trend that stands out is the relative concentration of Finland-Swedes into affluent neighborhoods—in Downtown Helsingfors, in some high-status suburbs in the west (for example, Westend and Gåddvik/Haukilahki in Esbo), in the entire city of Grankulla, and in certain areas in the east (Brändö/Kulosaaari in Helsingfors).
It would be easy to attribute this fact to the common stereotype of the ‘Swedish-speaking better people’ who are presumably economically better off than their Finnish-speaking compatriots and can therefore freely choose where they live. It is true that particularly Finland-Swedish men are overrepresented in certain high socio-economic categories, but a plausible explanation for some Finland-Swedes’ relative prosperity is that they constitute the native population of Helsingfors. A century ago
Helsingfors was a small city, and most of its Swedish-speakers, especially the elite, lived in the center of the city. Many of their residences have been in the same families for generations, which means that the rising real-estate values have benefited the native population. Old social networks are also an economic advantage. Clustering in high-status areas is therefore unlikely to be determined by ethnicity in the case of this minority. That Finnish-speaking families who have lived in the area for generations show similar residential patterns and that affluent Finnish-speakers prefer to live in these same neighborhoods support this interpretation.

The share of Finland-Swedes is highest in the sparsely populated, old countryside at the fringes of the metropolitan area, particularly in northern Esbo. Until the urbanization in the 1960s these areas were predominantly Swedish-speaking (like most rural areas surrounding the capital city). In areas still free from heavy residential construction, immigration of Finnish-speakers has been negligent and the neighborhoods have remained predominantly Swedish-speaking.

Where there are relatively few Finland-Swedes also reveals something about the regional development of Metropolitan Helsingfors. Figure 6 shows that Swedish-speakers are underrepresented in certain neighborhoods in the north and in the west, most visibly along the railroad leading northward. These areas are mainly suburbs with massive apartment or condominium complexes that were built rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate the influx of Finnish-speakers from the inland. Very few Swedish-speakers have found their way into these suburbs. Thus, the timing of migration and construction explains this absence. Swedish-speaking migrants moved into the capital city from the surrounding countryside much earlier, when these suburbs did not yet exist. Therefore suburbs built in the 1950s or earlier (such as Munksnäs/Munkkinemi and Drumsö/Lauttasaari in Helsingfors) still host sizeable Swedish-speaking populations.

Residential preferences can help explain group differences in residential patterns. However, it is difficult to detect whether Finland-Swedes differ from the majority population in this regard. Both groups react similarly to those societal mechanisms that steer residential choices. For instance, young families from both language groups tend to move out of Downtown Helsingfors for more spacious living closer to Nature. Therefore the migration flows within the metropolitan region go from the center (apartments and condominiums) towards suburban neighborhoods of detached owner-occupied houses. It is possible, however, that some eth-
nic considerations are taken into account in the decisions about moving. The location of Swedish-language elementary schools, for example, can be important for families with small children. Likewise, a certain ‘Swedish image’ or tradition in some residential areas could attract those for whom Finland-Swedishness is particularly important. The concentration of wealthy Finland-Swedens into certain upper-class residential areas could be interpreted as a way to protect this well-being and cultural practices and as a desire to distance themselves from the mainstream society, in a sort of ‘citadel’ of the Swedish-speaking rich. However, there are no signs of excluding affluent Finnish-speakers, which means that the choice to live in these neighborhoods has more to do with money than ethnicity. For the Swedish-speaking residents the sense of an existing Finland-Swedish culture can be seen as a bonus in these living environments, but it is not the ‘main attraction’ of the neighborhood.

Segregation is generally seen as something negative, because it is often the outcome of discrimination and tends to isolate ethnic groups from the surrounding society. However, living near members of the same ethnic group may help some minorities maintain their ethnic identity and conserve their culture. From this perspective of “good segregation” it would be advantageous for the Finland-Swedens as a group to cluster in certain areas. It would also ensure the maintenance and development of services in Swedish. Yet in practice, most Finland-Swedens have no need to live close to other Finland-Swedens. Our exchanges with Swedish-speakers reveal that the neighborhood is not as important as a place of social interaction as it was in the past and that ethnic contacts can today be maintained over long distances with the help of diverse communication and transportation options (see Korkiasaari and Roinila in this volume).

URBAN BILINGUALISM AND COMPLEX LOYALTIES

Helsingfors has a long history of bilingualism. Finnish and Swedish were long spoken side by side by both language groups. In today’s predominantly Finnish-speaking environment, bilingualism is almost exclusively reserved for the minority. Finnish-speakers’ knowledge of Swedish has weakened and English has largely replaced Swedish as the second language. In order to function successfully in their everyday life, Swedish-speakers need a command of Finnish, which most of them have. In recent surveys, over 90 percent of the Finland-Swedish respondents in Metropolitan Helsingfors stated that they spoke at least “satisfactory” Finnish. Between 35 and 40 percent consider that they
have a “complete” command of Finnish. Switching between Finnish and Swedish according to each situation is thus routine for these individuals. Mixed-language marriages are more a rule than an exception these days and are growing in number. This is one indicator that Finland’s Swedish-speakers are highly integrated into the majority society.

Swedish in Metropolitan Helsingfors has become an increasingly private language. In other words, home is the most important Finland-Swedish domain, but this, too, is changing. Only about one half of the Finland-Swedes in Metropolitan Helsingfors speak exclusively Swedish at home. At the workplace and in public, they primarily use Finnish. Swedish-language schools are today the ‘fortresses’ of the minority language in the capital region and, undeniably, an important factor in the shaping of identity.

Finland-Swedish identity in Metropolitan Helsingfors is very difficult to define, not least because identification in urban places is a much more complex issue than in culturally less diverse rural areas. For people living in bilingual environments with two cultures and languages, loyalties can be multiple and confusing. Furthermore, Finnish cities contain an increasingly heterogeneous mix of people and cultures (see the contributions by Håkli and Raento in this volume). Finland-Swedish identity in Metropolitan Helsingfors is situation-specific. By way of example, young Finland-Swedes can choose to speak Finnish when they are out on the town late at night, in order to avoid the bullying that they sometimes encounter for their native language. Especially bilingual Finland-Swedes can choose with whom they identify and which dimension of Finland-Swedishness, if any, they want to display. The self-definition is risky and makes the future of the minority more uncertain, because Finnicization could occur much faster than the group’s extinction for purely demographic reasons. It has even been argued that Finland-Swedes in Metropolitan Helsingfors have such a weak self-identity and are socially and culturally so close to the Finnish-speaking majority that they no longer constitute an ethnic group. They share with the majority group the same national identity and local neighborhood-based identities. The minority consists of a wide range of individuals, who, to a varying degree and in distinct ways, consider themselves Finland-Swedes. There is no typical Finland-Swede in Metropolitan Helsingfors.

MAINTAINING ETHNICITY

Do the dispersed residential pattern, bilingualism, and an arguably weak self-identity mean that the Finland-Swedes in Metropolitan
Helsingfors will vanish assimilated in Finland’s Finnish-speaking majority culture? Will it be possible to maintain Finland-Swedish identity in an environment such as the culturally diversifying capital city region?

The situation of Finland’s largest minority in the culturally diverse, internationalizing urban center of the country is, in our view, not particularly gloomy. Recent research on residential distribution of ethnic groups shows that ethnic communities can exist without any significant spatial concentration of its members. Modern transportation and communication have made it possible to maintain ethnic communities, no matter how dispersed their settlement pattern is. As the workplace and social activities have been spatially separated from home, the role of the neighborhood for social ties has declined. Ethnic bonds have to be found somewhere else.

Despite having a fairly dispersed residential pattern with only loose clustering, Finland-Swedes are not assimilated into the majority culture. Their most important resource is strong ethnic networks which keep the group together. Finland-Swedish networks are formed and maintained through common institutions, most importantly through Swedish-speaking schools and universities, many of which are located in Helsingfors. The importance of these educational institutions in Finland-Swedish identity formation is unquestionable: For the pupils who come from mixed-language homes, it is the only arena where they can act solely in Swedish and where they are socialized into Finland-Swedish society. Service in Finland’s general-conscription armed forces is another significant constituent of ethnic network formation. In the Swedish-speakers’ separate, language-based unit the urban bilingual Finland-Swede and the monolingual Swedish-speaker from the countryside may meet for the first time. In addition to institutions maintained by the government and legislation, the network has numerous voluntary and more informal constituents. The minority has its own theaters, associations, churches, and clubs, where personal networks are upheld and renewed. This voluntary organization of Finland-Swedes adds to the vitality of the minority. In this way, the group shows that it does not only depend on legal protection, but has built its own institutions as well. Through these networks information relevant to the minority is distributed, making sure members of the group know where Finland-Swedes meet and where service in Swedish is available. These Swedish spaces are found all over Metropolitan Helsingfors and, in addition to cultural institutions, they can be certain shops, banks, cafés and restaurants. So despite the capital region’s predominantly Finnish-speaking environment, it is possible for
socially active and resourceful Finland-Swedes to operate almost solely in Swedish if they know where to go. In practice, however, most fluently utilize the Finnish-language supply of services as well. For most Finland-Swedes, practicality comes before ethnic considerations. Bilingual Swedish-speakers use Finnish because it is simpler—rarely do they consider what implications the continuing use of Finnish in public domains means for the future of the language group.

Young Swedish-speakers are an illustrative example of an innovative way to uphold Finland-Swedish identity in Metropolitan Helsingfors. They use both Swedish and Finnish in their everyday life. However, many are strongly aware of their ethno-linguistic identity and are keen to maintain it. In an urban environment this identity maintenance is not restricted by distance. Young Finland-Swedes move across the metropolitan area to attend school, pursue their hobbies, and visit friends. Swedish-language secondary schools enroll pupils from very large areas, which means that these pupils can live all around the metropolitan area and their circle of friends is spread out all over the region. Young Finland-Swedes have their own sites where they meet friends from their language group, such as in particular cafés, bars, or nightclubs, or a recurrent meeting place at the traditional May Day carnival. Many Swedish-speakers like to utilize and maintain these spaces, which means they voluntarily choose to display a Finland-Swedish identity, because they feel it is important or advantageous for them. Sometimes these ethnic spaces may remain invisible to the majority, because its members lack the information to spot them.

Even though a certain clustering would be advantageous for the preservation of Finland-Swedish identity, there is no tradition for this among the group. Nevertheless, the group has in Metropolitan Helsingfors found a way of coping with their relatively weakening minority position and their dispersed settlement pattern amidst the Finnish-speaking majority. Finland-Swedish culture and identity are maintained through strong institutions, networks, and ethnic spaces.

CONCLUSION

Finland’s Swedish-speakers have throughout history been confronted with several challenges and have repeatedly adjusted to new circumstances. The societal changes that have taken place in past fifty years have again drastically changed the living environments of Finland’s Swedish-speakers. As the example of Metropolitan Helsingfors has shown, increasing cultural diversification in the era of globalization,
advanced communication technologies and migration have made identification an increasingly complex issue. Mixed-language marriages, an increasingly dispersed settlement pattern, and bilingualism (or multilingualism) can lead to a weakening self-identity and result in a gradual decline in the number of Finland-Swedish individuals. If the current development continues, the proportion of Finland-Swedes will continue to fall and the status of Swedish will weaken further. These are actual threats in urban Swedish Finland. However, as Metropolitan Helsingfors exemplifies, ethnicity can be maintained despite these circumstances. The Finland-Swedes, also outside the capital city region, keep up their Finland-Swedish identity by emphasizing the group’s strong institutions and express their Finland-Swedishness through ethnic networks and in ethnic spaces. In order to keep the minority culture thriving, Finland-Swedes cannot depend on legal minority protection alone. It is up to the Finland-Swedes themselves to safeguard the position of the Swedish language, by making it heard in public and by demanding service in Swedish. However, many Swedish-speaking Finns choose the language according to practicality in each situation.

In peripheral areas identity maintenance is easier and more straightforward. In the Swedish-speaking countryside Finland-Swedes are still concentrated in certain areas and lead their everyday life almost completely in Swedish. In these parts of Swedish Finland emigration to Sweden is the major reason for the declining numbers of Swedish-speakers.

The heterogeneity of Swedish Finland and the lack of cohesion between its regions seem to be a constant dilemma for the minority. Distance is still a major concern—Finland-Swedish identity and attitudes toward minority strategies differ considerably in urban and peripheral areas, and also from socio-economic group to another. However, urban Finland-Swedish identity still relies very strongly on the ‘pure’ Finland-Swedishness preserved in the provinces. Perhaps the pressures against the minority would be even stronger without these culturally conservative, monolingual Finland-Swedish environments. It would be very important in the future to strengthen the ties between the regions in order to work together for the preservation of language and cultural rights. However, although Swedish Finland is somewhat fragmented, contacts and mutual interdependence have always occurred and ethnic networks have been maintained between the regions. Further, new communication technologies have offered new opportunities for group contacts and maintenance of ethnic identity. Already a wide range of Finland-
Swedish media reaches out to the minority population, from digital radio and TV broadcasts to internet discussion forums on Finland-Swedishness.

ENDNOTES

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12 Jan Sundberg, Svenskhettens dilemma i Finland (Helsingfors: Finska Vetenskaps-Societeten 1985), 79.
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15 Suomenruotsalatset alueet (Finland-Swedish regions), ruotsinkieliset alueet (Swedish-speaking regions), and ruotsinkielinen Suomi (Swedish Finland) are in use in Finnish for Svenskfinland (Swedish Finland).
Kaisa Kepsu & John Westerholm: “Finland-Swedish Identity under Pressure”


24 Ibid., 73.


27 Språkfördelningen i Svenskfinland.

28 Sundberg, 79.


30 These final high-school exams lead to studentexamen (in Swedish) or ylioppilastutkinto (in Finnish). See <www.ylioppilastutkinto.fi>.

31 Tom Sandlund, Finlandssvensk social och geografisk rörlighet efter andra världskriget (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland 1984).

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38 McRae, 339–340.

39 Statistik årsbok för Finland 1902 (Helsingfors: Statistiska centralbyran 1902), 4–5.

40 Statistik årsbok för Finland 1912 (Helsingfors: Statistiska Centralbyran 1912), 24.


42 Helsinki Region Statistics.

Unpublished data from Finland's population census file (Helsinki: Statistics Finland 2001); for more about the data and Finland-Swedish emigration to Sweden, see Hedberg and Kepsu (both articles).

See Hedberg and Kepsu, "Identity in Motion".


This Swedish-language phrase svenskatalande bättre folk is a fairly common negative expression that Finnish-speakers use about Finland-Swedes. It is based on the stereotype that all Swedish-speakers are wealthy and has roots in the pre-independence era when the upper class in Helsingfors mostly consisted of Swedish-speakers. The stereotype has been proven to be erroneous and Swedish-speakers are represented in all socio-economic classes.

Liebkind and Broo, 95–98.


Westerholm, "Suomenruotsalaisten Pääkaupunki".


Peach.


Lojander-Visapää, 25; Finnäs, "Helsingfors svenska befolkning", 31.

Barometer.

Lojander-Visapää.


66 Kenneth Sillander, Finlandssvensk kulturkonsumtion i sex tvåspråkiga städer (Helsingfors: MOB 1993).

67 Lojander-Visapää, 26.


69 Lojander-Visapää.

70 Laura Kestila, “Helsingin ruotsinkieliset nuoret”. Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus, Tutkimuskatsaus 2003 (1).

71 Hockerstedt.

Little is known about contemporary Finnish North Americans. This is no different from other ethnic groups on the continent, for much of the research literature on ethnicity has been written from historical perspectives. As part of a large project about the Finns in today’s North America we examine the present profile and identities of the population of Finnish origin in the USA and Canada. Findings presented in this article are based on a quantitative survey of over 2,600 Finnish Americans and Finnish Canadians and on 74 qualitative interviews conducted in Canada and the USA over the past few years. A discussion about the difficulties of defining ethnicity, ancestry, and self-identification, and an overview of our data and methods, support our empirical assessment. In our examination of the survey findings we pay special attention to the respondents’ views about the future of Finnishness in North America.

ETHNICITY, ANCESTRY, AND STATISTICS

Ethnicity and ancestry are broad concepts that mean different things to different people in contemporary North America. Their general reference is to a person’s affiliation with a particular group of people that shares a past, an origin, certain characteristics, or customs, but each affiliation and identity is personal and has many facets. These draw from a complex web of family history, (sub)culture, religion, language, and race. In North America, language, migration, and settlement history play a particularly prominent role in defining ethnic or ancestral collectives.

No simple definition thus exists for ethnic or ancestral self-identification in North America. Individuals may be inconsistent in how they identify their ethnicity or ancestry, because they may identify with more than one group at the same time and because personal and social circumstances change over the life course. Others lack ethnic identity or
ancestral affiliation altogether, but feel a strong connection to a state, a region, or a locality. Integration and assimilation over time have reduced the differences that distinguish one group from another or, within one group, the contemporary people from the original settlers. Ethnicity and ancestry in North America have thus become symbolic matters of choice or even a strategy, which may vary from one situation to another. All this applies to contemporary North American Finns as well.

The variety of subjective definitions of ethnicity and ancestry, and the degree of mixing of population groups in today’s North America have challenged the Census authorities who keep statistics about the population and their origins in the USA and Canada. Before the 1980s, the Censuses of both countries distinguished people of foreign origin by their own or their parent’s place of birth. This allowed the tracking of ethnic groups for two generations. The question on parental birthplace provided data only about people with one or both parents born abroad. Others were classified as “natives of native parentage” and were indistinguishable by ethnicity.

In the 1980 US Census, the question about place of birth was replaced with a question about “ancestry,” making it possible to connect people to ethnic groups in the third generation and beyond. In Canada a similar change was made in the 1986 Census. In the latest Censuses (2000 in the USA, 2001 in Canada) a maximum of two attributes of ancestry or ethnic origin was taken into account, even if the respondent claimed more than two ancestries in the Census survey. The US Census Bureau now defines ancestry as a person’s ethnic origin, heritage, descent, or “roots,” which may reflect his or her place of birth, place of birth of parents or ancestors, and ethnic identities that have evolved within the USA. In the Census of Canada the question about ethnic ancestry matches that used in the USA.

THE NUMBER OF FINNISH NORTH AMERICANS TODAY

In the 2000 Census in the USA, 624,000 people claimed Finnish ancestry. Of those, 23,000 were foreign-born (including about 8,500 individuals who had arrived since 1990, many for a temporary stay). It is estimated that about 80,000 people with Finnish ancestry are second-generation immigrants (that is, the first generation born in America). This means that over half a million third-, fourth-, fifth- and even sixth-generation Finnish Americans acknowledge their Finnish roots at the census polls (as either the first or second ethnicity). In comparison, about ten
million people claimed "Scandinavian" ancestry in the Census of 2000. Of these about 800,000 still belong to the first and to the second generation.\textsuperscript{7}

Forty percent of the 624,000 respondents claimed a single ancestry ("Finnish only"). Of those claiming multiple (or dual) ancestry, one half chose Finnish first. The other half opted for Finnish ancestry as the second choice. For 100,000 individuals the 'other' ethnicity was "Scandinavian".

The Census also asked, "What language other than English is spoken at home?" In the year 2000, Finnish was the language of 40,000 respondents (over 6 percent of those claiming Finnish ancestry). Danish, Swedish or Norwegian was the domestic language of 150,000 Census respondents (only 1.5 percent of those claiming Scandinavian ancestry).\textsuperscript{8}

Currently about 500 persons a year from Finland are given permanent residence status (Green Card) in the USA, mostly due to marriage with a US citizen. Almost 10,000 Finnish non-immigrant visitors (students, trainees, exchange visitors, temporary workers, and intracompany transferees) are admitted each year. In addition, about 25,000 temporary visitors and 65,000 visitors enter the USA each year for pleasure.\textsuperscript{9} In the 2001 Census in Canada, about 115,000 people claimed Finnish ancestry. Of these, 32,000 (28 percent) reported single ancestry and 83,000 reported multiple ancestries.\textsuperscript{10} More detailed information about Canada is very difficult to obtain.
Contemporary Finnish North Americans concentrate in the Great Lakes area and on coastal areas characterized by forestry, major cities, and/or warm climate (Figure 1). The ‘most Finnish’ states in the USA are Michigan (101,400 people), Minnesota (99,400) and California (56,000). The highest relative presence is in Minnesota (2% of the state’s total population) and in Michigan (1%). In Canada the provinces with the highest number of ‘Finns’ were Ontario (44,000), British Columbia (20,000), and Alberta (10,500). British Columbia has the highest relative presence, 0.5 percent of the total population. Despite the small relative numbers at the state or provincial level, the local and regional influence of Finnish culture is significant in many areas (see Figure 1 in Alanen’s contribution). Over the course of the 20th century the Finnish North Americans have concentrated in urban centers, reflecting the general demographic, economic, and migratory trends in the USA and Canada.

The discussed concepts and statistics support our on-going study about Finnish North Americans today. The goal of the survey and the complementing interviews is to respond to six main questions:

- What are the main characteristics of the Finnish North American population today (by generation)?
- How do they identify themselves?
- What do they think about their Finnish heritage?
- What role does their Finnish heritage play in their life?
- What kind of contacts do they have with their relatives in Finland and with Finland in general?
- How do they perceive the future of ‘Finnishness’ in North America?

We found the initial incentive for the project in historian Odd Lovoll’s study of Norwegian Americans. Lovoll surveyed this group with a short questionnaire, which we used to build a test questionnaire for our own pilot survey of Finnish Americans. We tested this form at the FinnFest festivals in Minot, North Dakota (1997), and 1998 in Portland, Maine, with a few hundred hard copies. We then used this feedback to construct a new form that included many new questions, most of which were ‘open-ended’ (that is, instead of choosing from given options the respondents wrote freely about their views). We made the form available on the Internet at the website of Finland’s Institute of Migration. In addition, it was distributed as a hardcopy at the 1999 FinnFest in Se-
attle, Washington, and, per request, by e-mail. Over 600 usable responses to this questionnaire arrived in 1999–2000.

To complement this mainly qualitative information we created a new questionnaire form in 2001 for more quantitative analysis. The respondents now chose from set options, which were based on the responses obtained with the previous form. About 3,000 responses were gathered with this form. The 400 forms excluded from the data for this article are waiting to be processed and will later complement our present findings.

We wish to point out that because of the shaky definitions of *ethnic identity* and *ancestry*, and the voluntary nature of the participation in surveys, the samples are always more or less skewed. In a survey based on ancestral identification the participants must be aware of, and at least somewhat interested in, their ancestry. It is well known that the affluent middle class with comfortable living conditions is usually overrepresented in surveys. Small and socially, economically, or otherwise marginalized groups are underrepresented. In a study about ethnic and ancestral interest the average age of the survey respondents tends to be higher than that of the base population, because the interest in one's heritage usually increases with age. How skewed our sample is almost impossible to estimate, because no comparative information about the base population is available.

However, a comparison of the geographic distribution of our respondents with the data derived from the Censuses shows that deviations are close to nonexistent. The average age of our respondents is about 48 years. The gender ratio, 54.6 percent female and 45.4 percent male, is quite representative taking into account the general age structure (females live longer). Generations are also quite well represented in the sample (Table 1). It was expected that respondents belonging to the later generations would be relatively few. Behind this expectation was the mixing of ethnic groups over generations, the subsequent disconnection from the culture(s) of one’s ancestors, and a parallel process of integration in the mainstream ‘national’ culture.

Our study is more representative than Lovoll’s survey of Norwegian Americans. His respondents were significantly older: 79 percent of the 6,406 respondents were over 50 years old and almost 59 percent were female. Generational distribution, however, was quite similar to our study. In psychologist Chris Susag’s survey of Nordic Americans, including Finnish Americans, the sample was considerably smaller (N = 156) and the average age varied by ancestry (Finnish, Norwegian, Swedish) from 64–70 years. Similar selectiveness by age, sex, and other background variables has also been noted in other studies.
Table 1. Generational distribution of the survey respondents examined in this article. Please note that the first generation in our study refers to the first generation born in North America. In other studies this often refers to the immigrant generation.

These differences between this and other studies are probably due to different methods of data gathering. Other studies used 'traditional' channels for distributing the questionnaires, mainly through ethnic organizations. For us, the primary channel of data collection was the Internet, which probably attracted young people and those with relatively distant connections to their Finnish heritage. We chose the Internet as a conscious strategy to attract young respondents, but also because it was inexpensive and technically easy.

**Measuring and Describing Affiliation to Finnishness**

We used two variables to group the 2,641 respondents by their affiliation to 'Finnishness'. One variable was genetic distance (G), which we measured with the question “What percentage of your ethnic background is Finnish (roughly)?” The respondents were given five choices: 100, 75, 50, 25 and 12.5 percent. The other variable was emotional distance (E), which we determined by summarizing answers to questions such as “What contact do you have with your relatives in Finland?” “Do you observe Finnish customs?” “How important is your Finnish heritage in your daily life?” “Do you participate in any Finnish-American organizations and/or social events?” In all, we used fourteen questions with over fifty sub-variables to calculate the index of emotional affiliation. Both variables ranged in our cross-tabulations from weak/distant (−) to strong/close (+). This assessment resulted in five groups that are representative of the forms of contemporary Finnish identities in North America, four of which are described in Figure 2.
### Emotional affiliation to Finnishness (E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Two (G+E+)</th>
<th>STRONG (+)</th>
<th>Group Five (G-E+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetic Finnishness</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Genetic Finnishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Average age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Married 70%</td>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse FA/FC</td>
<td>Yes 96%</td>
<td>Spouse FA/FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ratio</td>
<td>54.4% female - 45.6% male</td>
<td>Gender ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wellfluently 39% some 51%</td>
<td>Speaks Finnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in FA/FC organizations</td>
<td>Yes 62%</td>
<td>Participates in FA/FC organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts to Finland</td>
<td>Yes 73%</td>
<td>Contacts to Finland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group One (G+E)</th>
<th>WEAK (-)</th>
<th>Group Four (G-E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genetic Finnishness</td>
<td>75-100%</td>
<td>Genetic Finnishness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generations</td>
<td>First-third (second 59%)</td>
<td>Generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Average age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Married 65%</td>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse FA/FC</td>
<td>Yes 6%</td>
<td>Spouse FA/FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ratio</td>
<td>46.6% female - 53.4% male</td>
<td>Gender ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some 26%; none 67%</td>
<td>Speaks Finnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participates in FA/FC organizations</td>
<td>Yes 8%</td>
<td>Participates in FA/FC organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts to Finland</td>
<td>Yes 12%</td>
<td>Contacts to Finland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. The principal characteristics of our survey respondents by genetic (G) and emotional (E) affiliation to Finnishness. The ‘average’ Group Three (G0E0) was excluded from this cross-tabulation (consult text for details).

Respondents in Group One have a close genetic, but distant emotional affiliation to Finnishness (G+E−). A total of 542 respondents, representing 20 percent of the data, are in this category. In her response to our quantitative survey, a 95-year-old immigrant female in North Carolina, who had arrived in the USA in 1911, summarizes the experience of this group:

My parents did not talk about their families in Finland. It was a big secret. They always claimed to be Swedish, but both of them were born in Finland.

Respondents in Group Two share a close genetic and strong emotional affiliation to Finnishness (G+E+). A total of 761 individuals, representing 29 percent of the data, fall in this category.

A 65-year-old second-generation male in Minnesota, with full Finnish ancestry, states in his answer to our quantitative Internet survey:

The values and ethics learned as a child growing up in a Finnish-American neighborhood have stayed with me playing an important part in my life... My ‘Finnishness’ is a source of pride in my life.

Group Three shows an average genetic and moderate emotional affiliation to Finnishness (G0E0) and thus remains outside of the cross-tabulation presented in Figure 2. This category consists of 758 respondents, or 29 percent of those surveyed. In our quantitative Internet sur-
vey, a 41-year-old third-generation male in Maine, who is half Finnish, exemplifies membership in this group:

I cannot explain my strong connection to my heritage. I cannot place where it came from, no one person or event. I have just always felt Finnish. As a young child I took great pride in the Finnish repaying of the war debt. I am living a life of sisu.

The 380 respondents (14%) in Group Four show distant genetic and emotional affiliation to Finnishness (G−E−). The words of a 64-year-old third-generation female in California, with one quarter of Finnish ancestry, profile this group in the same survey:

I’m sorry that my grandmother thought that being from the “Old Country” was something to be ashamed of. She was born here but her sister was born in Finland. She looked down on my Swede-Finn grandfather who was born in Finland.

Another representative account, obtained through the same quantitative survey, comes from a 41-year-old third-generation man in Florida, with one quarter of Finnish ancestry:

My education of my Finnish background has been neglected, badly. One half of the family was Hispanic and one Finnish. I know about the Hispanic and English sides. I’m trying to learn about the Finnish side and also get my daughter interested; it’s her heritage, too.

Representatives of this group may come closest to those individuals with a degree of Finnish ancestry who have no interest in their ethnic background or identity and thus remain outside of this kind of surveys. Indeed, many choose not to maintain their ethnic identity or Finnishness (cf. Häkli, and Kepps and Westerholm, in this volume). We hope that the fourteen-percent response rate in Group Four could in further assessments provide some direction and understanding regarding the lack of affiliation to the Finnish ethnicity in North America.

Distant genetic, but close emotional affiliation to Finnishness (G−E+) characterizes Group Five. The 219 respondents represent eight percent of the data included in this study. According to a 55-year-old third-generation male, with one quarter of Finnish ancestry, who responded to our Internet survey in Minnesota,

Despite the fact that I am only a little more than one-fourth Finnish, I was raised to think of myself as being Finnish in a community with many Finns and Finnish-Americans. Because my name is Finnish everyone thought of me as being Finnish. I also grew up with traditions...
and Finnish music and my father would read to us from Kalevala. I think of myself as an American Finn. I like to visit Suomi as often as I can and have many friends there. Suomi feels to me like my second home and I feel a bit of sadness every time I have to leave the country. I feel great love and pride for Suomi and the character and talents of the Finnish people.

POSSIBLE DETERMINANTS OF THE VARYING AFFILIATION TO FINNISHNESS

We found that generation was one of the strongest factors distinguishing the described groups. The connection to Finnishness in contemporary North America fades generation by generation, which we expected for the already explained reasons. Our findings suggest that often the connection to Finnishness is lost because of the early death of parents or grandparents. Mixed ancestry, especially if the Finnish part is minor and less ‘dominating’, weakens the Finnish connection, as one of the above quotes describes.

The five groups differ quite clearly by age. This is obviously connected to the generational difference: Later generations are, on the average, younger. Age thus ‘explains’ a lot about the educational and occupational differences between the groups. In the oldest Groups One and Two the educational level is, on average, lowest and the proportion of blue-collar occupations relatively high, and vice versa. Typical blue-collar jobs among the Finns were in forestry, agriculture, and fishing — many worked as lumberjacks, farmers, miners, and fishermen. Many Finns were also employed in the secondary sector of the economy, in such production and manufacturing jobs as construction or factory workers and steel mill employees. This selection is explained by the lack of education of the earliest immigrants, who found employment in fields which they were accustomed to in the Old Country (e.g., lumberjacks). The need for physical labor in North America also led many to mines, even if they had no prior experience of this work. Finns thus worked in the forests of Northwestern Ontario; the mines of the Mesaba Range in Minnesota or Sudbury, Ontario; the tin mills of Monessen, Pennsylvania, and the veneer factories of Vancouver, British Columbia, while Finnish farming communities developed in the Dakotas and the Prairie Provinces in Canada. Many of these regions became focal points of early Finnish settlement in North America (Figure 1; see Figure 1 in Alalen’s article). As the descendents of these workers gained education and a higher socio-economic status, they moved to more urban environments and found white-collar employment in increasingly post-
industrial societies. Many of these jobs were now in service industries, such as retail trade, health, education, and government. Not surprisingly, our survey results confirm that blue-collar jobs have changed to white-collar jobs among Finnish North Americans.

According to our findings these generational, socio-economic, and regional differences are also reflected in political views: The elderly North American Finns are usually more 'conservative', whereas their offspring have more 'liberal' values, although it appears that these dependencies are considerably weaker than before. The immigrants of the early 1900s were generally divided into several ideological ‘camps’. The so-called Church Finns supported temperance halls, were loyal to Civil-War-winning ‘White Finland’ (following the terminology related to the 1918 conflict in Finland\(^{20}\)), and resisted any changes proposed by the predominantly Socialist workers. Within the Church Finns ideological divisions separated Lutherans into further factions, such as Old Apostolic Lutherans, Laestadians, National Evangelical Lutherans, and others that maintained their separation within the Finnish communities. On the other extreme, the Socialist Finns, known as ‘Red Finns’, represented the ideological division characteristic of Finnish society in Finland in the first decades of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Both the Church Finns and the Socialist Finns were very ‘conservative’ in a sense that they were dedicated to their ideological views and change for neither group was therefore acceptable. Among post-World War II immigrants from Finland to North America similar ideological divisions are rare or weaker, reflecting the change towards one nation in Finnish society. The same ‘apoliticization’ applies to the descendants of the early immigrants. A change in convictions has thus occurred, giving space to more liberal and tolerant attitudes among Finnish North Americans. ‘Conservatism’ now materializes in the elderly generations’ desire to maintain Finnish identity and age-old traditions, whereas ‘liberalism’ stands for the present generation’s willingness to accommodate difference and to give up ‘the Finnish way of doing things’.\(^{21}\)

It is thought-provoking that females clearly dominate in Groups Four and Five with distant genetic affiliation to Finnishness (60–61%) (Figure 2). Group One with close genetic, but distant emotional relationship to Finnishness, on the other hand, is the only one with male majority (53%). We believe that these gender differences may correlate with some characteristics related to education, occupation, and political point of
view, but further analysis is needed to verify this hypothesis. This would require an additional quantitative study using such statistical methods as multiple regression or factor analysis. However, a promising starting point is that a comprehensive study by acknowledged Finnish American studies scholar Eleanor Palo Stoller about 685 second- and third-generation Finnish-Americans points towards similar characteristics. She notes that

In some cases, education diminishes ethnic identification. Better educated respondents were less strongly tied to their ancestral homeland and were less likely to spend their leisure time with other Finnish Americans. [...] Men were more likely than women to try to keep up-to-date on news from Finland and to develop strong opinions on contemporary issues in Finland, whereas women were more likely to emphasize Finland's cultural contributions and to decorate their homes in a manner than [sic] reflects their ethnic origin.²²

Finally, in groups with a close emotional affiliation to Finnishness it is also more usual to find spouses who share the Finnish ancestry (Groups Two and Five).

Many factors can significantly slow down the process of increasing emotional distance from Finnishness. Our findings confirm that childhood experiences and living environment have an important role in learning and maintaining identity and emotional ties (Figure 3). Our results suggest that growing up in a Finnish-American or Finnish-Canadian neighborhood where Finnishness is an essential part of daily life usually creates a very warm and keen relationship to this heritage. Moving to, and living in, a non-Finnish community has an opposite effect.²³

As one of the above quotes suggests, for many, a Finnish name is a very important determinant of identification, which may help in identity maintenance outside of Finnish communities. One reason to this is that outsiders not familiar with the Finnish ethnicity and/or language are often curious about Finnish names (first names or surnames), which allows the Finnish identity to be promoted and retained. As the words of another respondent described, some cannot put into words the feeling of being 'Finnish', but find it a very unique experience. Both the use of personal names and 'feeling' Finnish are highly subjective and exemplify the vast variety of ways in which the immigrant population deals with, and connects to, its ancestral roots. Both examples are characteristic of the broad concept of ethnicity and approaches to establishing or maintaining identity.
Figure 3. Childhood experiences, ethnic socializing, Finnish national symbols, and names are found important in the maintenance and celebration of Finnish identity in North America. Raising the Finnish flag are Ashley Donahue and Owen Kauppila of Rutland, Massachusetts, for the start of the annual Sovittaja Park Chicken Bar-B-Que in Rutland. (Photo: Mika Roinila, 2004)

The interest and willingness of parents and grandparents to tell children about their roots and teach them Finnish traditions seem to be very decisive, too. Language is of primary importance in offering insights into Finnish culture and in building contacts with relatives in Finland (cf. Kepsu and Westerholm in this volume). Indeed, many respondents regretted that their parents and grandparents never talked about their Finnish background and were even ashamed of it. Parents commonly avoided talking Finnish with their children or stopped it when these reached school age. The reasoning behind this was the desire to make the children first and foremost Americans or Canadians and to make sure that they learned English as soon and as effectively as possible. For
many, this represented a required step in becoming a member of the new host society and a climb up the socio-economic ladder. For some, it was a way of diminishing negative attitudes towards newly arrived immigrants, who were often discriminated in the workplace, schools, and among peers. The adoption of a new national identity and citizenship also helps immigrant groups to disassociate themselves from roots that they find shameful. This encourages many to adopt a single, one-layered American or a Canadian identity, which is then carried into future generations.  

**FUTURE OF FINNISHNESS IN NORTH AMERICA**

Our qualitative data significantly supports the selected quantitative findings discussed above. One important result providing new information about contemporary North American Finnishness concerns the respondents' views about what will happen to the Finnish ethnicity in the future. The 74 interviews made since the summer of 2004 in Ontario, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, Utah, Colorado, and Florida offer a preliminary peek into what makes this a particularly interesting question in our study. Our eldest respondents foresaw an apparent, if slow disappearance of the Finnishness that was commonplace in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, and even into the 1970s. In the words of a 97-year-old first-generation Finnish woman, with full Finnish ancestry, in Canterbury, Connecticut,

I think that it will slowly peter out. The younger people, they are not that interested. And I think it will, but it will take years.

Views vary, however. Especially those who are involved in Finnish-American and Finnish-Canadian activities and feel very strongly about the upkeep of Finnish heritage believe that Finnishness will remain intact into the future. Other leading activists point to the declining membership counts of their organizations and lack of interest among the young generations in participating in any activity related to the Finnish people or culture. Many interviewed activists lament the fact that few youngsters attend and participate in the traditional activities. Many of these lamenters are part of the cultural milieu that prevailed in the times gone by. In contrast, for the present-day youth, “organizations like the Finlandia Foundation” and the Finnish-language Suomi Koulu are “useful” and serve “practical” purposes, such as help with relocating “to Finland for a couple of years” or with “shipping a car to Finland and save some money on tax,” as a 31-year-old fourth-generation male, with three-quarters of Finnish origin, in Gardner, Massachusetts, described
his interests in major Finnish North American organizations. He summarized the generational difference in the following fashion:

The ones that are of my parent's generation and older, it's just a lot different and look at Finland in a completely different way. They don't have to deal with immigration and even if they did, everything's changed since then...

However, the words of a 71-year-old second-generation woman, with full Finnish ancestry, in Preston, Connecticut, reveal that the generational difference can be bridged, for a more flexible definition of 'Finnishness' may be emerging and is perhaps necessary in the maintenance of this ethnic identity (see the concluding discussion in Hākli's article):

I see a future, because I see a lot of people who are working hard, and I see younger people getting involved... [The] Finnish language may not be as strong, but if we... accept people who aren't Finnish and will introduce them to the Finnish culture, I think it will be there.

In the USA as well as in Canada we notice that generational differences seem to correlate with geographical clusters, where Finnishness is maintained in different ways. In the words of one interviewee, "Ethnic identity survives in places where it remains isolated." For example, Finns in Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Lake Worth in Canada are very keen on maintaining Finnish-language activities and organizations. Similar traditional Finnish rural clusters in the Upper Midwest and other regions across the country fostered the establishment of many of those organizations which initially helped the arriving immigrants. This included the use of the Finnish language, which kept the group intact in terms of the 'Finnishness' of daily life (cf. Kepsu and Westerholm in this volume). Those Finns who lived in large urban centers (such as Brooklyn's Finto in the early 1920s) clustered closely together and remained in touch by founding clubs and civic organizations. In both rural and urban settings, the clustering of the Finns was driven by the safety found in numbers – for example, the group offered support from kinfolk who encountered similar obstacles in the new home country and helped those who wished to maintain connections to the land of their origin. However, a desire to maintain Finnish ties competed with the desire to become American or Canadian. The resulting tension affected many descendents who grew apart of the Finnish activities as they grew older. The ethno-cultural and social diversity in large cities attracts contemporary Finnish North Americans, and whether these Finns are new
immigrants or descendants of earlier settlers, the predominance of the English language and integration in the mainstream society has distanced many from those close-knit Finnish communities which existed in the past. Today, the worlds stand apart: In the rural areas, Finns of the elderly generation (those who are now over 65 years old) prevail, while their better-educated, wealthier descendents and younger North American Finns (generally, under 65-year-olds) are found elsewhere – in major urban concentrations such as New York City and Toronto. In several organizations in New York, for example, one would only find the educated, wealthy businesspersons and professionals. Over 65-year-old Finnish North Americans are therefore concerned that the younger generations and recent Finnish immigrants to the continent do not appreciate the work and maintenance of Finnishness that was established in the early 1900s. The interaction between generations and between the elderly and the modern, high-tech activities of the young urbanites does not happen very easily, if at all.26

Our interviewees also commented about the impact of the changing stages of life on interest in different types of ethno-cultural activities. Families with children find little in common with those elders who want to play bingo and dance. Working-age families have less time than retirees who are free to go and support many of these activities. Once children have grown up and left home, their middle-aged parents then have the time to devote to their interests and associations with their region’s Finnish communities. Our findings suggest that the age groups and immigrant generations do not mix easily in contemporary Finnish North America. The reasons for this are varied, but can be summed up by noting the differences in a changing socio-economic status, changing political views, and the impact of the rural–urban divide.

However, our interviews point out that the increased ease of global communication due to new technologies may support Finnish identity in North America and overcome both the ‘survivalist ethnic isolation’ referred to above and non-participation. Some of our respondents confirmed that they maintain active connections to Finland with the Internet and e-mail and see this as an opportunity for identity maintenance. In the words of a 52-year-old first-generation female, with full Finnish ancestry, in New York, New York,

I think it [Finnish North American culture] will survive, of course, and, of course, in different ways. Now online and Internet and websites. For me it’s very important to know that people... to socialize... Because that’s many times the problem with the Finns, that they just like to be in contact on the Internet. They are very much by themselves.
Another contemporary element related to global communication and affecting the maintenance of Finnishness in North America may come through the increased mobility of well-educated professionals from Finland (see the articles by Härki, Raento, and Kepsu and Westerholm in this volume). An open question is, however, how well the interests of these newcomers match the sometimes high expectations of some Finnish North Americans, summarized by a 49-year-old second-generation male, with full Finnish ancestry, in Westbury, New York:

So you'll have a different kind of presence in America. Not numerically that significant, but the business guy immigrant. The good news about them is that they have money and they can sponsor the cultural kind of things. High-end cultural things, so that will actually keep the Finnish cultural things in front of the nose of the larger society, because the white-collar immigrants have money and pay for it, cultural things. The clubs and societies that used to run things for the blue-collar people are no longer in existence, but in their defense, there is less of a market for low-end things because of the assimilation. See the middle-class guy or gal who has Finnish roots is highly unlikely to go to Finnish things, because his children have no interest in things Finnish and his spouse is probably not Finnish. So there's no more market for the low-end things because there are no more Finntowns.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our study confirms that identity for many contemporary Finnish North Americans is a changing concept with several names and definitions. Many respondents identify themselves simply as Finnish, others specify a hyphenated identity, such as the Finnish-Canadian or Finnish-American identity. Some are American or Canadian Finns. Those who define themselves as Canadian or American are difficult to reach with a survey like ours. However, the reasons for the lack of interest by many individuals with some Finnish background towards their ethnicity or ancestry would be worth examining, because in this way we could learn more about the complex mechanisms of identification and affiliation on a culturally diverse continent. This is important, for the majority of Finnish Canadians and Finnish Americans do not associate with any Finnish group, event, activity, church, or club. They do not subscribe to any of the ethnic newspapers nor are they familiar with their ancestors'
language, cultural customs, or land of origin. This side of Finnishness in contemporary North America remains an unexplored topic.

More research is needed also about contemporary divisions within North American Finns today. Our study shows that among the Finnish North Americans there are several clearly distinct groups with very different personal and uniquely experienced affiliations to Finnishness. In the past, the Finns were well known for their political, ideological, and religious divisions into Reds and Whites and into Laestadians, Old Apostolic Luthers, and other Lutheran churches. Based on our findings it seems that these divisions have given space to divisions between and within generations in North America. Generational differences correlate with differences in educational attainment and socio-economic status, suggesting new social, professional, and regional segregation (for example, the young well-educated, middle-class professionals in major cities vs. the working-class elderly in rural areas and small towns). The relationship of each group with the Finnish language is waiting to be studied as well.

Condensing all this diversity and, from the perspective of academic research, uncertainty into just five groups is, of course, quite a generalization. Limiting the number of groups, however, highlights the whole and teases out the most prominent trends in a way that may contribute to our understanding of the changing factors behind Finnish identification, ethnicity, and ancestry in North America.

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ENDNOTES


5 Ibid., 6–7.


8 Ibid., Table 11.


14 See <www.immigrationinstitute.fi>.


18 See Palo Stoller, 59–60.

Several studies suggest ideological changes among the Finnish communities. For more, see Kari, Koivukangas and Laine.

Palo Stoller, 63.

Susag, "Finnish American Ethnicity", 110; Palo Stoller and Haapanen, 146.


An 80-year-old third-generation male, with full Finnish ancestry, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Good examples of studies dealing with the changing nature of Finnish communities in North America include Saarinen, Between a Rock and a Hard Place; Oliva Saarinen, "Finnish Adaptation and Cultural Maintenance: The Sudbury Experience", in Koivukangas, 199–213; Peter Kivisto, Immigrant Socialists in the United States (Granbury: Associated University Presses 1984); see Koivukangas and Kari.
ARNOLD R. ALANEN

LITTLE HOUSES ON THE PRAIRIE:
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE FINNISH
VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPES
OF CANADA

In late 1919, Finnish-Canadian immigrant Matti Oikarainen submitted a lengthy letter for publication in Vapaus [Freedom], a Finnish-language newspaper based in Toronto. Oikarainen gave an overview of the nine years he had spent in the Rock Point area of the Coteau, a generally treeless region of southwestern Saskatchewan that extends southeastward through North Dakota and into South Dakota in the USA. The intrepid Finn described the farming practices and buildings that defined the Saskatchewan section of the Coteau, but gave special attention to the troubles that he and his compatriots had encountered in the district. Oikarainen cited the exploitation by unscrupulous speculators, as well as many arid years that had resulted in total crop failures. And Oikarainen certainly was no stranger to the vagaries of the Coteau. Unable to pay his debts in 1913 because of a severe drought, he spent six months in the USA, where a factory job provided him with sufficient funds to meet the obligation. "How great would our accomplishments be if we hadn't had to contend with these hardships?" asked Oikarainen. "But we Finns are a tough group," he exclaimed. "We were born in a barren and desolate country. We, more than any other people, have become hardened to life's struggle."¹

Oikarainen nevertheless assessed favorably the improvements that had occurred on the Coteau between 1910 and 1919. The district had become a place of attractive farms that supported "a happy and productive life," he wrote. Furthermore, Oikarainen asserted that the immigrants had "created from one of Canada's big deserts, an imposing Finnish farming area, which has become dear to us."² It is evident in his
commentary that Oikarainen still brought a sense of 'Finnishness' with him that was transplanted to Canada, to the Coteau region, and to the Rock Point locality.

Subsequent success on the Coteau proved to be a reluctant mistress, however, especially during the economic depression and Dust Bowl era of the 1930s. Twenty years after Oikarainen's account, another correspondent for Vapaus described the basic hopes of farmers who resided on the Coteau in 1939:

That the drifting soil would not take the seeds from the fields. That the grasshoppers would not eat the seedlings. That the cut worms would not eat the seeds. That there would be no drought. That the sleeping sickness would not take the rest of the horses that were spared from it last year. That hail would not destroy the crops. That rust would not spoil them. That there would be no early frosts. That heavy rain storms would not destroy the crops, and that the price of wheat in Fort William [Ontario] would be at least 80 cents a bushel. These ten hopes may sound like a joke to the reader, but they are all facts, and one could find even more.³

The vivid comments of both writers indicate that a wealth of Finnish-language information is available to document the early decades of immigrant life and activity on the Canadian prairies. Nevertheless, rather little scholarly attention has been devoted to these immigrants and their descendants. "The Finnish experience on the Canadian prairies has not yet been fully explored," explains historian Maureen Pedersen in her recent study of one Saskatchewan community. Furthermore, even less attention has been devoted to the study of the Finns' material culture—"that segment of [the human] physical environment which is purposely shaped according to culturally dictated plans."⁴

Many historians who study the human past consider social, economic, political, religious, and other phenomena. Material culture scholars also search for an understanding of the past, but they utilize material evidence and artifacts as their primary sources of information. Buildings and landscapes are among the most visible examples of material culture that scholars document and study. As Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Cromley state in their recent book, these investigators focus on "the analysis of particular sets of forms and the patterns," all of which can "tell us about human behavior both past and present." Numerous studies look at ordinary or typical buildings, often identified as vernacular architecture. Individual buildings often are of interest, but scholars also address what Carter and Cromley term architectural landscapes. Others give consideration to the broader cultural landscape—the natural environment as modified by humans to meet their needs and require-
ments—a concept defined in 1925 by the German-American geographer, Carl Sauer, and developed further by subsequent generations of scholars. Today, the field of cultural landscape studies in North America, which builds on Sauer’s legacy, is a multidisciplinary endeavor that draws from geography, architecture, landscape architecture, folklore, art history, American studies, and literature.5

This article will look at selected examples of vernacular architecture and cultural landscapes associated with Finns in two of Canada’s Prairie Provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. My primary purpose is to determine the extent to which Finns maintained their traditional practices and activities when encountering a natural environment quite unlike anything they had experienced in the Old World. American geographer Eugene Van Cleef once claimed that much of the Prairie Provinces was “a kind of Finnish no man’s land,” but a more plausible argument might be that it was on the wind-swept plains and prairies where these immigrants truly coped with ‘wilderness’ in North America.6

I will feature examples of three important vernacular building types—the house, the sauna, and the granary—that emerged in Finnish rural settlements of Saskatchewan and Manitoba from the late 1880s through the 1920s; for reasons of brevity the cultural landscape discussion will be limited to the farmstead complexes developed by Finns. To set the background, my presentation begins with a brief overview of the region’s physical environment and of Finnish settlements that are scattered throughout the Prairie Provinces.

THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES: PHYSICAL PROPERTIES AND FINNISH SETTLEMENTS

To casual observers the Prairie Provinces of Canada—Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan—may appear as a sparsely populated agricultural region with very little physical variation. The three provinces, however, include several districts that display both subtle and obvious topographic and ecological differences. Extending into eastern Manitoba is the Laurentian Shield, a highly glaciated landscape of spruce, balsam, and fir forests that has many similarities with adjacent Ontario. The Rocky Mountains dominate Western Alberta, and the vast northern region of all three provinces is a boreal forest. Between the Shield and the Rockies is the Canadian section of the North American Great Plains, another huge region that continues southward through the heart of the USA to the Mexican border.7

The Great Plains extend into Canada roughly as far as the North Saskatchewan River valley, where tallgrass and mixed prairie and woodland
plant communities transition to the boreal forest. The upper section of the Great Plains, termed the Parkland Belt, is punctuated by groves of aspen or poplar (*Populus tremuloides*) trees. The Parkland Belt also defines the northernmost boundary of large-scale productive agriculture in North America. Between the Parkland Belt and the border with the USA is the Canadian Prairie district—the most agriculturally significant area of the country’s Great Plains region. The Parkland Belt and Canadian Prairie district include several distinctive landforms such as the [Missouri] Coteau escarpment and the Cypress Hills, both associated with Finnish settlements.

Figure 1. Distribution of Finland-born population in Canada’s Prairie Provinces, with names of representative settlements, in 1931. (Data source: Seventh Census of Canada, 1931)

The first Finnish settlement on the Canadian prairies occurred in 1888–1890 when a few immigrants made their way to an area of southeastern Saskatchewan located along the lower edge of the Parkland Belt. This enclave soon received the name of *Uusi Suomi* [New Finland] (Figure 1). Shortly thereafter agents for the Canadian Pacific Railway, who were
working to attract Finns from Minnesota and the Dakotas to the province, selected New Finland as their major colonization site. Although no official community called New Finland exists today, the term is still employed locally to identify a relatively large land area roughly bounded by the towns of Wapella, Whitewood, Tantallon, and Esterhazy.⁸

By the early twentieth century Finns were engaged in homesteading a few areas of western Saskatchewan. Arriving from the mining districts of Minnesota and Michigan, many of these immigrants settled in and around several places on the Coteau, such as Dinsmore, Dunblane, Lucky Lake, and Rock Point. Other settlements emerged in Saskatchewan at such places as Invermay-Margo, Turtle Lake, and Nummola, the latter located just east of the Cypress Hills.⁹ The majority of place names in the Prairie Provinces are of First Nation or British origin, along with some terms that reflect the imprint of Swedish, Norwegian, and other European nationality groups. The very few Finnish names that still appear on detailed maps usually indicate the presence of a community building that formerly catered to Finns, such as the hall at Nummola (a misspelling of Nummola).

In Alberta, a group of Finnish delegates who visited the Red Deer area at the western end of the Parkland Belt chose it as a potential settlement site for their compatriots in 1899. Three years later the first Finns were moving to the area, establishing farming communities at Sylvan Lake, Eckville, Kuusamo, and several nearby sites. Other groups of Alberta’s Finns also settled in areas of the Parkland Belt and the Canadian Prairie district, primarily at Thorhild, Radway, Three Hills, Trochu, Wetaskiwin, Barons, and Manyberries. One small group of Finnish émigrés (35 in 1931) was even found at Grand Prairie in the Peace River Valley, Canada’s northernmost agricultural district.¹⁰

The larger Finnish communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta were initiated by governmental and railway agencies as “group settlement schemes,” but no Manitoba site was selected as for such a project. Therefore, only a few diminutive rural settlements emerged in the easternmost Prairie Province, although Winnipeg attracted the largest contingent of urban Finns, many of them young women who worked as maids and domestics. Small numbers of rural Finns established themselves a considerable distance northwest of Winnipeg at Eriksdale, Rorketon, and Meadow Portage. Elma, located east of Manitoba’s capital city, developed into a relatively successful farming community, as did the smaller settlement of Riverland by Lac du Bonnett. During the 1920s, however, it was at Pointe du Bois, a Winnipeg Hydro station outpost that had
emerged some twenty years earlier along the rugged shoreline of the Winnipeg River, where a group of some fifteen Finnish families planted the seeds for what became Manitoba’s most viable rural Finnish settlement. By focusing on the vernacular architecture and cultural landscapes that Finns developed in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, this article offers examples of places that differ in terms of their origins, longevity, and size.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite this local and regional prominence, the Prairie Provinces never embraced a very large segment of Canada’s Finland-born population, which totaled 12,155 people in 1921 and 30,355 in 1931 (Figure 1). (The same was true of the Great Plains states in the USA, where the entire Finnish population reached almost 150,000 and 142,500 people in 1920 and 1930, respectively.) Even though the Finnish population was roughly equivalent in both regions—2,400 in the Prairie Provinces and close to 2,000 in the Great Plains states in 1930–1931—their presence has always been relatively more significant on the northern side of the border. America’s Great Plains never accommodated more than two percent of the nation’s entire Finnish population, but sixteen and eight percent of all foreign-born Canadian Finns lived in the Prairie Provinces in 1921 and 1931, respectively.\textsuperscript{12}

**FINNISH FARM BUILDINGS IN SASKATCHEWAN AND MANITOBA**

The sometimes subtle, but always important physical differences that characterized different areas of the Prairie Provinces determined which materials the Finns could use for building purposes. Other than the Laurentian Shield region of far-eastern Manitoba and the front range of Alberta’s Rocky Mountains, Finns found none of the coniferous forests they had had in their homeland. The Canadian Plains district had few if any trees that could be used for logs, and the Parkland Belt only provided aspen. While the form and function of these buildings displayed characteristics that were Finnish, the lack of familiar construction materials often meant that they were ‘non-Finnish’ in appearance.

Because the earliest prairie Finns needed a regular and reliable source of food and income, their farms typically had a few milk cows. This meant that a small cattle barn and possibly one or two other dairy-related structures were included as part of the farmstead unit. Very quickly, however, the farmers engaged in the growing of grain, which called for the construction of one or more granaries for crop storage. Therefore, it was the house, granary, and sauna that served as three of the most commonplace features of the Finnish settlement landscape that emerged in several sections of the Prairie Provinces.
Houses

Eastern Manitoba’s heavily glaciated landscape offered pine, spruce, and fir, all conifers that the Finns knew very well and which could readily be employed in log construction. An example of such a structure is the one and one-half story dwelling built by Erik Antti Ylitalo at Riverland during the 1920s. Although abandoned for decades, the house stands today because of the quality of the building materials and the high level of skill and craftsmanship employed in its construction. Of note are the tooth, hook, or tongue dovetail notches that secure the horizontal logs at each corner of the building—a ‘difficult-to-fashion’ feature that was relatively commonplace in Finland, but rarely employed by any ethnic group in the New World (Figure 2).  

Figure 2. The tooth, hook, or tongue corner notches still evident at the Ylitalo log house in Riverland, Manitoba, required significant skill to construct. They are rarely found in Finnish settlements throughout North America. (Author’s photo, 10/2005)
By way of contrast, Finnish pioneers in Saskatchewan’s Coteau district had to adopt building forms—dugouts and sod houses or ‘soddies’—which were commonly used throughout treeless sections of the Great Plains. A dugout never served as more than a short-term shelter, but a sod house could accommodate an individual or a family for several years. Although no original Finnish sod houses remain on the Coteau today, the remnants of the Simion Rapakko soddie depict its dimensions: 20 x 26 feet (6.1 x 7.9 meters), with a 5 x 6 feet (1.5 x 1.8 meters) entry porch built of frame and boards and attached to the southern wall.

Once again, the animated words of Matti Oikarainen offer some of the best descriptions of early twentieth-century Finnish life on the Canadian prairies, including his portrayal of sod houses and their construction. When Oikarainen began establishing a homestead during the spring of 1911, the Coteau offered two choices for his family’s residence: a sod house or a canvas tent. He chose the soddie, but admitted that construction of such a dwelling was very difficult, especially because “rain fell most of the time.” Oikarainen nevertheless succeeded in erecting the sod walls during the summer. But there still was the question of how to provide a roof, a floor, windows, and furniture, given that Oikarainen “lacked money and had no hope of getting a loan.” While his family remained in the uncovered structure, Oikarainen made a 60-mile (97-kilometer) roundtrip to the South Saskatchewan River valley, where he cut down small trees that could be used as a framework for the roof. This structure was then covered with layers of branches, hay, and a combination of hay and sod. The furniture was built of wooden boxes, with a stove being the only purchased item. The interior walls were plastered over with clay and covered by old newspapers, while a few printed pictures and wall calendars “gave the modest shelter a sense of homeliness.” A photograph of the Possu sod house, from the same period and location, offers a rare view of the Spartan-like interior features and limited amenities that characterized these structures (Figure 3).

In the Parkland Belt aspens could be converted into logs for the purpose of constructing buildings. Finns who settled elsewhere in North America, however, seldom employed aspen as a building material because of its numerous shortcomings. The useable portion of an aspen tree is usually short (typically no more than 16 feet, or 4.9 meters, long), is of limited circumference, is often crooked, is difficult to form, and is not very durable. Nonetheless, the arid climate of the Parkland Belt appreciably reduces the rapid deterioration of aspen logs that occurs in places with higher rainfall and humidity. Even today, numerous
buildings, many more than one hundred years old, may be found throughout New Finland and Invermay-Margo.

Figure 3. Interior view of the Possu sod house on the Saskatchewan Coteau, taken by an unidentified photographer, New Year’s Eve, 1918. Left to right: Bill Possu, John Possu, and Charles Paavo. (Photo courtesy of Larry Warwaruk)

The remaining buildings show that Saskatchewan’s Finnish builders employed traditional tools and techniques to shape the aspen logs despite the material’s shortcomings. For a builder ‘the most basic question’ was how to shape the logs used for the walls. When constructing a Finnish structure of horizontally stacked logs, a scriber (vara) was commonly used to mark the outline for fashioning a concave groove in the upper log that would fit over the natural rounded form of the log below. While a skilled craftsman was able to build an airtight structure of conifer logs, aspen had such obvious limitations that only the most diminutive buildings could be constructed in this manner. Therefore, the vast majority of structures in the Parkland Belt were constructed of logs that met only at the building corners. The openings or ‘chinks’ that occurred between the logs required rather copious amounts of daub or nogging, made locally of clay and straw, to fill the spaces. (In New Finland some settlers used the Finnish term, rappaus, a word for stucco or plaster, to identify the clay and straw mixture.) Wooden pegs pinned
the log members together, and notching systems that displayed varying degrees of craftsmanship locked the logs together at their corners.\textsuperscript{15}

Two log houses in rural Margo, one that accommodated the William and Lydia Efraimson family, the other built by and for Heikki Saari, illustrate the pioneer phase of settlement in the Parkland Belt. In Finland, a common goal was the construction of a more substantial dwelling that would replace the original wilderness log cabin. Finnish immigrants on the prairies (and throughout North America) pursued a similar dream—even though the timing of the cabin-to-house transition could vary considerably. The Efraimson’s original dwelling, a small hipped-roofed building with simple saddle notches and large chinks between the logs, emerged around 1914, but it was not replaced by a larger frame and board house until 1959 (Figure 4). Saari’s one and one-half story, single-room cabin, 15 x 19 feet (4.6 x 5.8 meters) in size, had nothing more than an entry door and south-facing windows at both the first-floor and the loft levels; nonetheless, it served as this Finnish bachelor’s only home from the time it was constructed in 1904 until his death in 1945.\textsuperscript{16}

![Figure 4. Efraimson rural log cabin in Margo, Saskatchewan, in 1919. Local farmer and photographer Toivo Almusa, who composed the image, is at the far left. William and Lydia Efraimson are third and fourth from the left, and Heikki Saari is at the far right. (Photo courtesy of George and Einar Almusa)](image)

When the original cabin was replaced on a Finnish farm, the second house was invariably larger and more substantial than the initial unit. The new residence on a Canadian prairie farm could be built either of logs or of frame and boards, although many houses combined both
forms of construction, as illustrated by the relatively large one and one-half story dwelling that accommodated the Jacob and Sanna Soini family in the New Finland area (Figure 5). The Soini’s dwelling was distinguished by a sizeable dormer that capped one of the roof planes and provided the family (two adults and six children) with additional light and loft space. The first floor was also expanded when a single entry porch and room were attached to the house.¹⁷

Figure 5. Jacob and Sara Soini’s house in New Finland, Saskatchewan, was constructed of both aspen logs and frame and boards. (Author’s photo, 10/2005)

At the Soini house, and often elsewhere, clapboard siding was applied to the exterior walls of the residence, undoubtedly to ‘upscale’ its appearance, to provide some insulation, and to eliminate the task of replacing the daub or nogging. Since not everyone could afford clapboard, other less expensive materials were occasionally employed—a subtle indicator of the socioeconomic differences that existed within Finnish immigrant communities. The one-room log cabin formerly inhabited by John and Olga Nordlund in New Finland still reveals the thin willow branches that were applied to the exterior walls as a form of lathing for stucco or plaster, which was whitewashed. Some of the fifty Russian-Jewish families that settled in the Wapella area from 1886 to 1907 used willow branches and chicken wire as lath for the stucco they applied to
their buildings (in the case of one farmer, including the privy). Other than the Nordlands, apparently very few Finns adopted this technique.\textsuperscript{18}

THE SAUNA

The one building that clearly distinguished a Finnish farmstead, whether in Finland or North America, was the sauna. "To every [Finnish] farm, no matter how poor it may be, has belonged since time immemorial also a bathhouse, [a] sauna," noted O. M. Reuter, a nineteenth-century Swedish writer. In immigrant communities the surest "sign of the Finn," according to Van Cleef, was the sauna. A sauna certainly was not found on all Finnish farms or rural places on the Canadian prairies, but numerous examples were evident.\textsuperscript{19}

The earliest immigrants brought the ancient Finnish tradition of the savusauna or smoke sauna—a small building heated by a chimneyless fieldstone stove (kiuas)—to their North American communities. During the 1920s savusaunas in Finland began to be modernized with the addition of a brick or stovepipe chimney that was connected to a kiusas built of brick or metal and covered with rocks; the new sauna usually had a dressing room attached to the steam room. Versions of these modern saunas quickly spread throughout the Finnish settlements of North America.\textsuperscript{20}

Most savusauna remnants are found in New Finland because it is the oldest rural Finnish settlement in Canada. The remaining evidence indicates that these units were often square in plan, such as the one on the Soini farm, built of 13-foot (4-meter) logs. The roof extended 7 feet (2.1 meters) over the front gable, thereby providing sauna-goers with some protection from the elements while undressing and dressing or cooling off after taking steam (löyly). Four steps provided access to the platform (java), situated 3 feet (0.9 meters) above the floor; unlike most savusaunas that had a permanent bench on top of the platform, the Soini bench was moveable. Participants sat on the bench and absorbed the hot steam that was produced by throwing water on the fieldstone kiusas, located in one corner of the building. Before the savusauna could be entered and used, the accumulated smoke and toxic carbon monoxide were dispersed to the outside through the entry door and a small upper vent on the rear wall.

A few log savusaunas were also constructed in rural Margo, but all have disappeared. One example of a modern sauna, completed in 1945 and still functional today, is found on the George Almusa farm. Since it was built of vertical logs, the outer dimensions, 13 x 20 feet (4.0 x 6.1 meters), were
larger than other saunas built of horizontal logs. The walls were covered with siding, which eliminated the need for nogging (Figure 6).21

![Figure 6. Einar Almusa (rear) and Eino Niemi nailing clapboard siding onto the vertical logs of the Almusa sauna in rural Margo in 1945. (Photo by George Almusa; courtesy of George and Einar Almusa)](image)

A different situation obviously occurred on the Coteau with no usable timber sources. Therefore, the first savusaunas were windowless sod structures, but eventually any material that was available at the time—be it earth, stone, concrete blocks, or abandoned lumber and railroad ties—was used. Indeed, the sauna was considered so necessary that dried cow manure ('cow chips' or 'prairie coal') was deemed suitable as an early heat source. Occasionally the landform features of a particular Coteau site could be utilized to accommodate a 'dugout' sauna. During the early 1950s, for example, Hjalmer Ylioja transported a savusauna, previously constructed at another site in 1943, to a new location (Figure 7). By making a small excavation into the slope of a hill, the relocated sauna was provided with three partial earth walls, and converted into a modern unit that included a chimney and a metal kiuas. Thereafter the sauna was used regularly until 1977, when the farmstead was abandoned and the land consolidated with a neighboring farm.22

Despite the lack of traditional construction materials or fuel sources, it is obvious that Finnish immigrants who settled on the Coteau and throughout the Canadian prairies regarded the sauna as a necessity, whether for sanitary or cultural reasons. Many second-generation Finnish Canadians continued to maintain their traditional sauna practices,
but subsequent generations have been less likely to do so; any exceptions are provided by third- and fourth-generation Coteau Finns who follow the tenets of Laestadian or Apostolic Lutheranism, the most conservative Finnish religious belief system transplanted to North America.

Figure 7. Hjalmer Ylloja’s long-abandoned sauna on the Coteau was built into the side of a hill during the 1950s. (Author’s photo, 06/2004)

A small but nonetheless active sauna culture also continues at Pointe du Bois, Manitoba, settled by Finns during the 1920s. Here, fifteen or so Finnish families that remained at the settlement after working on a railroad for the nearby Winnipeg Hydro station constructed several saunas. Three decades later members of Winnipeg’s Finnish community started purchasing the original houses and saunas, which they converted into seasonal cottages and retirement homes. Because of the area’s rugged natural features—water, rock outcroppings, and fir, spruce, pine, and birch trees—Pointe du Bois was quite similar to the rural and recreational landscapes that the immigrants had experienced in Finland, and which their children may have visited. By 1977, some 25 to 30 Finns were still included among the 150 full-time residents of Pointe du Bois, although an additional 50 to 80 Finnish Canadians journeyed to the settlement during summer weekends and vacations. Following his documentation of extant saunas in the province, anthropologist Charles Sutyla reported that Pointe du Bois had evolved into “the most homogeneous and vibrant Finn centre in Manitoba”23
Today, about half of the fifteen saunas that Sutyla documented at Pointe du Bois remain in use along the Winnipeg River. A few have remained with the same families since the 1920s, while others have been sold several times. Because of the environmental conditions that characterize Pointe du Bois, it is quite clear why the Finns of Winnipeg, as Sutyla observed, considered a sauna and a cottage "an ideal that many of them can and do achieve." Today, "Pointe" supports a population of 105 residents and serves as an "ideal" for two year-round and about ten part-time Finnish-Canadian inhabitants.24

GRANARIES

Few buildings were more necessary or ubiquitous than the granary in farming areas of the Prairie Provinces. The generic Finnish term aitta refers to a rural outdoor storage building, but different prefixes specify the functions of these traditional structures. A ruoka-aitta identifies a building or larder that accommodates food or provisions, whereas a jyvä-aitta specifically defines a granary or grain storage building; a related term, varastohuone, can also be used to label a general storage building.

Figure 8. This small New Finland granary, constructed in 1893 by Gabriel Knuttila, is very likely the oldest Finnish aspen log building remaining in Canada’s Prairie Provinces (Author’s photo, 10/2005)
Horizontal aspen logs were used to construct the first generation of granaries in New Finland. In fact, the oldest Finnish building still standing anywhere in the three Prairie Provinces is the granary constructed by Gabriel Knuttila in 1893 (Figure 8). The small building, 15 x 15 feet (4.6 x 4.6 meters) in plan, was divided into two spaces: a single grain bin; and a room where ‘chop’ or ground grain was stored before being fed to the cattle and horses. (Most farms had separate granaries and ‘chop houses’.) Some farmsteads, such as Elias Maki’s small place in New Finland, clearly demonstrated the crucial importance of the granary since its construction was superior to that of the house.  

As Finnish farms grew in size and productivity, larger granaries were required. The first buildings were constructed of frame and boards, but after World War II the large metal storage units that are now commonplace features of the prairie landscape began to appear. These granaries also reflect the increasing scale and ‘industrialization’ of farming operations throughout the agricultural districts of the Prairie Provinces. The transition has been especially evident in Saskatchewan, where the number of farms declined from 112,000 in 1936 to 50,600 in 2001, and the size of an average agricultural unit—now the largest in Canada—expanded from 550 acres (136 hectares) to 1,285 acres (317 hectares).  

**Farmsteads**

When considering the entire farmstead complex, both similarities and differences existed between the practices pursued in Finland and those that were transposed to North America. One obvious difference involved the number of farm buildings. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a well-established farm in southwestern Finland and along the country’s western coast could have as many as twenty-two structures. Quite obviously, the incipient agricultural units established by the landless crofters who made their way from Finland to the Lake Superior district of the USA—the region where the largest concentration of North American Finns settled from 1864 to 1914—were very modest. The first farmsteads in this region seldom had more than five buildings: a dwelling, a sauna, a cattle barn, a root cellar, and a privy. A somewhat more successful dairy operation might subsequently display three to five additional buildings: a hay barn (*heinälato*), a stable for horses, a woodshed, a granary, and equipment shed. Later, a few of the following buildings could be added to the farmstead complex: a well house, a milk house, a summer kitchen, a chicken coop, a smoke house, an icehouse, a blacksmith shop, and a pigsty.
Because a new farm had to be sustainable immediately, early Finnish agrarians on the Canadian prairies, as well as in the Lake Superior region, initially engaged in dairying. Hence, farmsteads in both regions included a house and sauna and one or two barns that accommodated the horses and a few cattle. But, as I already noted, it was the granary that quickly differentiated prairie farms from those in the American Midwest. And, as farm size grew, a commensurate increase occurred in the number and scale of buildings used to store crops and shelter equipment, all of which went well beyond what occurred both in Finland and the Lake Superior region.

The spatial organization of a typical farmstead in both Finland and North America was also marked by important differences and similarities. From the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, individual farmsteads in western Finland—the region from which the majority of migrants departed for North America—often displayed a contiguous rectilinear grouping of buildings, all organized around an enclosed open area or courtyard (piha). The farmstead buildings constructed in Finland during the nineteenth century were not contiguous, although the quadrangular layout was still maintained. Thus, open courtyard arrangements were most familiar to Finnish immigrants who made their way to North America during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Some Saskatchewan farmsteads display elements of an open courtyard plan that are similar to those in western Finland. One modest example is provided by Elias Maki’s New Finland farmstead, where each of four modest buildings—a house, a cattle barn, a combination horse and hay barn, and a granary—was placed on one side of the open area; the sauna was located just outside the perimeter, perhaps to reduce the possible fire threat it posed to the other structures.

A more exemplary version of a traditional Finnish farmstead layout, also in New Finland, is the former John and Liisa Katajamaki place, which reveals a well-defined rectilinear courtyard (Figure 9). By 2005 the entire complex still included eleven of its original twelve buildings, almost all constructed of logs: the original house (later converted into a storage building); the savusauna (later an animal shelter); a combination horse and hay barn; a calf barn; a cattle barn; a granary; a summer kitchen that originally housed one of the family’s uncles; a modern sauna; a privy; the primary dwelling unit, a one and one-half story structure built of both logs and frame and boards; and a more recently constructed garage. The only building missing from the original farmstead ensemble is the blacksmith shop, which burned some years ago.
Figure 9. The layout of John and Liisa Katajamaki's late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New Finland farmstead reflects the open courtyard plans found in western Finland at the time. All of the buildings, other than the garage and one section of the house, were constructed of aspen logs. The trees are Manitoba maples. (Author’s measurements, with assistance from Karen Maki Tverkutes and Perry Erhardt).

The Manitoba Maple (Acer negundo) trees and lilacs that Liisa Katajamaki planted decades ago also remain, although multitudes of small aspens have subsequently spread throughout much of the site. After the Katajamaki’s son, Eino Maki, inherited the 320-acre (79-hectare) farm, he and his family raised wheat and sold cream separated from the milk produced by their seven dairy cows. The farmstead was vacated in 1986 following Maki’s death, but his son continues to cultivate the land. While most of the structures are now in a rapidly deteriorating state, the
rectilinear geometry that was created by having buildings around an open courtyard is still very apparent.30

The layout and organization of a Finnish farmstead on the Canadian prairies may have revealed Old World precedents, but the overall landscape context was quite unlike any place the immigrants had experienced in Finland. When Finnish immigrants wrote about their new environments of North America, the terminology they employed was usually very straightforward. Only a few immigrant writers were able, or chose, to use poetic descriptions, similes, and metaphors. An example of the latter is J. W. Lähde, a newspaper editor from New York Mills, Minnesota, who often relied on Finnish imagery when writing about settlements and environments in the American Midwest. To Lähde, inspirational songs of a Finnish springtime emerged from the edges of dark spruce forests, while breezes that spread through groves of trees were likened to music produced by the Finns' 'national' instrument, the kantele. On the Saskatchewan Coteau, however, it was not a journalist but the farmer Oikarainen who most evocatively described the region. Having crossed the Atlantic at least three times, Oikarainen described the prairie landscape as giving "the impression of a rolling ocean wherein the middle the smaller and larger homesteads look like islands, or sailing vessels, on a stormy sea as far as the eye can see."31

CONCLUSION

I have looked at both the continuity and change that occurs when certain material-culture attributes—namely, vernacular architecture and cultural landscapes—were transferred from Finland to Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Given the evidence it is quite apparent that when suitable building resources were available, Finnish Canadians often followed familiar Old World practices. When such materials were not available, however, these same Finns quickly adopted and adapted procedures that often were situated well outside their experiential realm. In other words, prairie Finns replicated common cultural practices, sometimes for considerable periods of time, but they also utilized the patterns of other ethnic groups that can be broadly identified as 'Canadian.'32

While I have emphasized material-cultural considerations in this article, it is important to recall that beneath these patterns is evidence of communal settlement, economic interdependence, religious and political affiliation, and family association. Many more studies will be needed to better document and understand the full range and scope of both mate-
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ENDNOTES

1 Vapaus (Toronto), Dec. 24, 1919. Portions of Oikarainen’s account, translated by Ebba Lahti, were used by Larry Warwaruk in writing his book, The Red Finns of the Coteau (Muenster: St. Peter’s Press, 2004; first published in 1984). Currently a resident of Outlook, Saskatchewan, Mr. Warwaruk kindly provided me with several letters and accounts, written by correspondents from throughout the Coteau, which appeared in Vapaus and other Finnish-language newspapers. Further information came from Matti Oikarainen, “Saavutuksia ja kokemuksia maanviljelijänä Saskatchewan, Canadassa”, Siirtokansan Kalenteri (Duluth: Yhdysvaltain ja Canadian Suomalainen Sanomallehti- liitto, 1921), 164–165.

2 Vapaus, Dec. 24, 1919.

3 Vapaus, May 8, 1939.


Pedersen, 2.


Alan B. Anderson, “Ethnic Bloc Settlements, 1850s–1990s”. In Ka-ju Fung (ed.) *Atlas of Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1999), 56; Alinen, “Finns”, 230–231. The population totals are based on Canadian census documents for 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, and 1940, and on similar American sources for 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, and 1940. All of the figures refer to foreign-born Finns only.


Oikarainen, 162–163.

Jordan et al., 63–64. Wesley Sippola of Whitewood and George and Einar Almusa of Margo explained the use of the clay and straw nogging (Sept.–Oct. 2005).

George Almusa provided background information about the Efraimson and Saari dwellings in a written communication (Dec. 2005).


Alan Polvi of Rocanville brought me to the Jacobson farm where remnants of both willow and chicken wire lathing were still evident in October 2005. Additional information about the Nordlund house was provided by their grandson, Carl Denet, of Whitewood (June 2004).


The history of this sauna was derived from descriptions and photographs provided by the Almusa brothers.

and Edward Ylioja of Lucky Lake (Aug. 2005); and several communications from Larry Warwaruk and Mavis Ylioja Warwaruk (Jan. 2006).

23 Sutyla, 13.

24 Ibid., 91. Leona Livo Knox, Mel Niemi, and Brian Waisanen provided additional information about Pointe du Bois while they were at their residences (Sept. 2005).

25 The date for the granary was derived from the original homestead form, now held by Walter Knuttila of Wapella. Carl Denet and Gordon and Audrey Knuttila Dixon of Rocanville offered information about the Elias Maki farm (June 2004).


28 “What Is Happening to Rural Saskatchewan?”


30 Karen Maki Tverkutes, now of Taber, Alberta, and Perry Erhardt of Esterhazy, provided information about the original functions of the Katajamaki farmstead and its subsequent evolution. They also assisted me with the building measurements (Oct. 2006).


32 Alanen and Torma, 79.
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