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**WAYS OF LIFE IN FINLAND: A
PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION**

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Geneva, January 1980

Johan Galtung

It is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

FINLAND, THE ALTERNATIVE COUNTRY?

Finland, the country of fifty thousand lakes and still untouched nature, is the envy of many other Europeans. Only 2 per cent of its total area is traffic roads or built area and a mere 10 per cent is cultivated land. Most of the rest is still forest (56 per cent) and water (9 per cent). Here people seem to be rather well adapted to their natural surroundings: it is nature which dominates and not man. This seems also to be true for the climate: summer is short but extremely beautiful with its white nights, sudden lush greenness of nature, blue lakes and vast woods; winter again is long and cold and dark, except for the dazzlingly white snow during the short days. Most of the year the climate is extremely demanding, from both the physical and spiritual point of view. This, together with the fact that the country is extremely sparsely inhabited, is said to contribute greatly to the national character of the Finns, who are thought to be quiet, shy, individualistic, sentimental, and generally moody. The famous "sisu" [grit] is also a characteristic which sums up a lot of the way Finns relate to their work and hardships in everyday life.

Yet, this is largely a myth, though it still has strong roots in Finland. For example: about 25 per cent of the population live at the shores of very polluted waters. Altogether half of the population lives close to somewhat or very polluted water. Of 835 public beaches the water of 345 was suspect. In 1972, industry used 253,000 kg of mercury (mercury being included in the Baltic agreement on protection), of which 195 kg ended in the water (according to official norms a fish containing 1 mg mercury is useless as food for human beings), 27 kg in the soil and 200 kg in the air.

In fact, because people think that in Finland nature is largely unspoilt they are much more easy with it: there is no ecology movement to speak of and for instance the nuclear energy development has taken place rather quietly, with only a semblance of protest. Also, another example is the fate of a recent report of the commission for the development of natural parks and protected areas: in many areas proposed for protection, hectic work to fell trees, make ditches and the like was immediately started by the owners, including national companies and the Forest Administration. It is estimated that more than ten areas, designated by the commission as most valuable, were thus irrevocably destroyed. The protest which ensued was minimal and in the less developed areas the report has become anathema. In all, it is probably true that the Finns are as willing as anyone to exchange the natural beauty and purity of their country for the goods resulting from industrialization and urbanization: the main thing that has made the process slower is that the country is so big and the people are so few.

The Population

Some two hundred years ago the population of Finland was half a million; today there are almost five million people spread over 337,000 square kilometres. As mentioned before, the average density is very low, only 15 persons per squarekilometre. But there are notable regional differences: the southern province of Uusimaa is growing all the time. Twenty years ago its populational density was 67 persons per square kilometre; today it is 102 persons per square kilometre, whereas Lapland has only 2 persons per square kilometre. The people are divided in two main language groups and have one main religion. 93 per cent of the population have Finnish as their mother tongue and a little less are Lutherans. The Swedish-speaking Finns are today only 6.5 per cent of the population, but even if their number has declined by more than half in less than a hundred years, they still have a relatively strong social position, reflected by their overrepresentation in the upper class.

The population is still relatively youthful, but is rapidly becoming older as shown in the table below:

Crude birth rate		Crude death rate	
Year	%	Year	%
1800	39	1800	24
1900	32	1900	19
1976	14	1976	9

Source: Statistical Yearbook, 1974.

Thus in 1800, 15 per cent of the population were between 0 and 4 years and 4 per cent were 65 years or older. In 1975 the corresponding figures are 6 per cent and more than 9 per cent. As in all highly developed countries, the mortality rates and mean expectation of life have undergone deep changes during this century: At the beginning of the century 183 per thousand did not survive the first year of life whereas in 1974 only 13 per thousand died before one year of age. As for life expectancy, change took place between the world wars and after World War II. Since then, however, improvement has been only slight: a 40 year-old man had 26 years to live at the beginning of the century and in 1974, 30 years, a change of only four years.

Finland is today a highly developed and industrialized country. The pace of development has been rapid: the industrialization started in the 1860s with phases of rapid development before and after the First and Second World Wars. In 1974, the GNP per capita amounted to \$4,130 and the average disposable income per family 16,418 Fmk in 1971. With 4.6 toe per capita Finland ranks fifth in energy consumption in the world. The total consumption of energy doubled in the years of economical upswing from 1964 to 1974, more than 52 per cent of it being based on oil. The main domestic energy source is water, contributing 14 per cent to the total energy consumption. Even this small contribution, however, implied many hardships for the population in the sparsely populated northern provinces of Finland, where the building of large water reservoirs has seriously impaired the traditional means of subsistence, like for instance fishing. To quote but one example, proceedings against a northern power company for damages

caused by the building of the Kemijoki river in the 1940s are still going on. The plans to build new reservoirs still create insecurity among the population in this area. The Siura reservoir plan, first conceived in the early fifties, has many times been shelved and renewed and presently there are again strong pressures for its realization. During all this time the life of the local people has been very difficult. For example, they have not been able to get loans for building new houses, extending their farming or even repairing their old houses.

Finally we want to mention two more indicators of development. One is often used as a fundamental sign of welfare: the number of cars. The other is a much less discussed indicator: the amount of garbage produced by our country.

In somewhat more than 50 years the number of cars has risen to over a million. In 1922 there were 1,131 registered cars and in 1976 1,032,884, which amounts to 218 cars per 1,000 persons today. Almost as impressive is the amount of garbage. Every year Finland produces a million tons of garbage, which means 210 kg per inhabitant. Of this 180 kg comes from the households. Even though most of it is paper, metal, glass and textiles, the proportion of paper and plastic is rising all the time. There is relatively little knowledge of the garbage produced by the industry, but it is estimated to be at least 3.5 million tons, i.e. 800 kg more garbage per inhabitant.

The change in the social structure and process of urbanization has been even more drastic than economic development from the point of view of people's life situation. Before 1930 the vast majority of the people lived and worked in the countryside. Today only about 40 per cent live in the rural areas and only one seventh of the labour force is employed in agriculture. As the large industrial centres have concentrated in the south of Finland the vast rural areas, especially in the north and east, have become reservoirs of cheap labour and raw materials. Due to this, both secondary and tertiary occupations have grown proportionally, the proportion of industrial workers somewhat

more than that of the tertiary occupations. The migration from the countryside is partly a result of the post-war policy of settlement when the refugees were given small farms in the northern and eastern regions. In 1974, 66.4 per cent of the farms were under ten hectares, meaning that on such farms living has never been easy and had almost always to be complemented by forestry work in the winter. The need for a labour force in industry, together with diminishing possibilities of maintaining a livelihood as a small farmer, has resulted in massive migration from rural to urban areas, catalyzed by state economical and social policies.

Thus a total of 786,714 people have left their homes in the countryside over the last 25 years, implying that 6,500 farms were given up each year. Since the Second World War more than 350,000 persons have migrated to Sweden. Only today, in the years of economic depression, has migration decreased or even stopped. In any case, the figures tell us about the number of Finns who, in a relatively short time, have experienced radical shifts in their ways of life. In the countryside this can be seen in the aging of households, biased distribution of sexes (expressed in an increasing amount of bachelor households!), the breakdown of social and collective forms of activities, and feelings of frustration and uncertainty regarding the future. In the towns, especially in the slum suburbs, it is reflected by increasing problems of alcoholism, vandalism, mental breakdown and different kinds of small crime.

CLASS-BASED WAYS OF LIFE IN FINLAND

The basic quality of the way of life concept is that it expresses a comprehensive totality of life rather than some fragments. But this does not yet say anything about the actual substance. In this study, we understand the way of life as a specific combination of the spheres of everyday life activity. Thus the basic "unit" of way of life is activity. These activities are well known: work, family life, child-rearing, recreation, self-development and so on. The specific combination of these activities is joined by subjective factors: motives, desires, the personality of the actor. The frame of these activities is the social pattern or social structure which essentially determines the available alternatives.

The way of life of a person or family is thus the main mediating link between his separate activities (or even personality) and the society. In the way of life he/she gives a meaning to both. Granted that it is his subjective private meaning, it still has some regularity which we shall discuss below.

There are various distinctions to be made in the way of life. One might distinguish, for instance, class-based ways of life, but also urban and rural ways of life. At the most general level it is certainly possible to speak of a way of life in highly developed countries. But when discussing way of life in terms of a specific country, class and urban/rural distinctions are necessary.

The present relationships between the different social classes are approximately as follows:

Economically Active Population in Finland
According to Class Status in 1970

Upper class	2%
Middle class	31
— small-scale entrepreneurs	5
— white-collar workers	10
— farmers	16
Working class	67
— public service employees	15
— workers	52

Source: TTT, Katsauksia 1/1976.

In the following we shall base our description of the class-based ways of life mainly on data concerning farmers, workers, white-collar workers and members of the upper class.*

The upper class is, as noted, a very thin segment; for example, in 1977 only 500 persons had more than 300,000 Fmk (about \$100,000) in yearly income. 352 persons lived in a single province, Uusimaa, and of these 248 in Helsinki, the main city of Uusimaa. 19 persons had an income of over a million Fmk a year. (Note: among these are not necessarily all the really rich. As is well known there are different ways of evading taxes and there is evidence of increasing tax evasion in Finland.) Also, the income and property distribution shows the narrowness of the big bourgeoisie: the highest quintile has 48.8 per cent of the total incomes whereas the lowest quintile has 5.2 per cent (in 1971). Only 12 per cent of the taxpayers in 1973 had taxable property (the average property of the richest 10,000 people being taxed at a value of 426,000 Fmk).

There is not much research done about the way of life of the upper class. Indeed, it is one of the basic characteristics of the upper-class way of life that it is well protected from intrusions of any kind, be they private or public, scientific or journalistic. It is only on its own terms that the upper class may reveal glimpses of its

* We are quite aware of the fact that many significant groups are left out, as for instance what could be called the peripheral or marginal social underclass. We shall refer to some of these later in discussing crises or problems in way of life.

way of life, for instance via biographies or articles in magazines about their homes. Only rarely does a 'muck-raking journalist' or tax investigator get through the protective wall raised by these people.*

Yet it would be a mistake to say that the "dominant way of life" in a capitalist society is the upper-class way of life. Even if the image of this way of life created by the popular magazines and books has a strong influence on people and their life goals, it is a more modest form of the way of life which we would call the dominant way of life in a capitalist society, namely that of the middle class, or the bourgeois way of life.

Perhaps it could also be called the culturally dominant way of life as it is reflected in the mass media, in advertizing, in political programmes, but also in the physical surroundings, like window displays and so on. Its basic ideals have their origins in the garden suburb movements of the early industrial period which have been carried over relatively intact up to this day.

The famous Finnish garden suburb of Tapiola is a typical example. There is nothing specifically Finnish in it, except perhaps as far as certain details are concerned, such as a private sauna in upper middle-class houses or apartments.

In its barest outlines, the bourgeois way of life consists of a home in a garden suburb, an intact nuclear family where only the man is working, a summer house, and a generally high consumption level. Presently the "new necessities" are a dish washer, a colour television, a Finnish Saab 99 Combi Coupé, or similar car, a trailer or a summer cottage near the lake, yearly trips abroad, participation in such civic activities as the Lions, and various cultural activities. The bourgeois

* One example of these exceptions is the tax scandal of two wealthy families who own a TV set factory in Finland and who had evaded some 10 mill Fmk (\$2.5 m) by selling colour TV sets directly outside the normal bookkeeping, and had bribed high tax officials and so on. The court proceedings make very interesting reading from the point of view of the upper-class way of life, especially of the newly rich.

way of life is further characterized by relatively lax routines of everyday life, university education for the children, dislike of party politics and mass demonstrations, opposition to taxes and increasing social benefits . . . the list could be extended indefinitely. (See Eskola — Kortteinen — Roos, 1978 for more details.)*

Saying that the bourgeois lifestyle is the dominant way of life does not mean that there is no working-class way of life, with its specific ideals and consciousness. In fact there seem to exist various types of way of life. This is due to the complex and even contradictory objective and subjective life-conditions of the working class, which — at least partly — result from recent developments in the social structure of Finland.

As regards income and material consumption, the differences between the middle and working classes seem to have declined during the late 1960s and the 1970s. From this point of view it is perhaps justified to speak of an embourgeoisement of the working-class lifestyle and of the proletarianisation of the way of life of the middle class. This does not mean that there are no differences: the make of the car (usually cheap Japanese), the style of furniture (less status-oriented) and a working wife are perhaps the clearest differences between the bourgeois and the working-class lifestyle patterns. There does however seem to remain at least one basic difference: the chronic menace of economic and social insecurity to which working-class families are exposed, especially in conditions of economic depression. There is no confident expectation that things will become better, and the planning perspective is definitely more limited.

* It has been remarked that there is nothing that distinguishes this bourgeois ideal from the ideal which exists in the developed socialist countries. To us, the list contains elements clearly not present in the socialist countries, but it is clear that especially the high material level of consumption in the developed capitalist countries exerts an extremely strong influence in the socialist countries as well. For instance, the private automobile and all the problems it brings are already part of the life of the socialist countries.

The specific ideals and consciousness of the working class are, for example, reflected in the support of the Finnish Communist Party, support for which has traditionally been strong and stable. On the other hand, working-class traditions are relatively weak. There are only a few industrial cities with long traditions, such as Tampere.

Industrialization took place rather late and most workers are first-generation city dwellers living in far-off suburbs. Many of them have their roots in the countryside and have difficulties in adapting their way of life to suburban conditions. The main changes are the disintegration of the family and the neighbourhood and the profound social isolation.

Even if one does not accept that the bourgeois way of life is the dominant way of life, it certainly exerts a great influence on the workers' way of life. Rapid social change and the feeling of rootlessness have pushed the workers to adapt to the lifestyle propagated by the mass media. In many cases they have even "overadapted" to the bourgeois way of life.

The rapid urbanization and massive flight from the countryside over the last decades have produced a profound crisis in farmers' way of life. Most of the farms we saw are small and economically inefficient and the small farmers have been living through a period of painful rationalization: they have had to adapt their farms to economic necessities set by the capitalist market. Capitalist logic is pushing its way to the countryside and destroying the old peasant milieu and way of life.

In a preliminary investigation on the subject (see Eskola — Kortteinen — Roos, 1978), most of the small farmers were divided into two groups on the basis of their way of life:

- (1) The traditional farmers whose way of life is still based on the peaceful and peculiar rhythm of the cowshed, the fields and the weather. The problem of these farmers is that their way of life is breaking down: the farm does not produce enough for the young

to continue farming. Thus, they leave for the town and the old who remain behind feel more and more lonely and useless.

- (2) The farmers whose way of life becomes increasingly adapted to the strict economy of time dictated by the capitalist market. The main problem of these farmers is that they often find it impossible to make their small farms profitable. This often produces tragic results for their health and their family life.

The crisis in the farmers' way of life is reflected by the massive farmer demonstrations which riddled Finnish political life during the last few years. Such demonstrations were exceeded only in the 1930s.

Let us now turn to differences between urban and rural ways of life. Although a certain homogenization of ways of life between the two could be postulated due to technical and scientific development (mechanization, specialization, mass communication and so on), there still exist many basic differences pertaining to life rhythm, the nature of the work, leisure-time and self-educational activities, friendship relations and consumption. Clearly, because of the class structure which is reflected in both the rural and urban population, there also exist heterogeneous and even conflicting ways of life in both categories, and we shall also point to some of these differences.

Life Rhythm

The general frame of people's way of life is formed by their life rhythm. Both in the countryside and in the cities the life rhythm of people is almost surprisingly rigid. The general conception of farmers' free working time seems to be a cliché. Of course there are periods of more intensive work, but on the whole the daily routines reflected in the life rhythm persist very similarly from one day to another. The same seems to be true for the majority of blue- and white-collar workers (of all employees in 1972, 69 per cent had regular day hours, about 10 per cent shift work and about 10 per cent irregular working hours). For the upper class there is once more no information —

except for some interviews in women's magazines, which may not be too representative. The following are, however, clear differences on the rural/urban dimension: The farmers get up earlier in the morning (half of the farmers are already up at 5.30 am and the rest about 6.30 am) than the workers (about 6 am) and the office workers (about 6.40 am). Similarly they work longer (about 55 hours per week vs. 40 hours per week for most of the urban population), go to bed earlier (half of the farmers about 9.30 pm) and sleep longer (about 8 hours). The workers' and the office workers' workday ends about the same time, at about 4-5 pm, except for summer when the office workers' day ends at 3 pm. Latest to go to bed are the office workers who stay up till about 11 pm. The weekend pattern differs somewhat: both in the countryside and in the cities the people get up and go to bed somewhat later (except for farmers with cattle: see also Wahlström, 1974 and Ajankäyttötutkimus, 1970). It is natural to believe that this time schedule or life rhythm has its impact on people's activities in different spheres of their lives, like leisure, consumption patterns, social relations and so on.

WORK AND LEISURE

Nature of Work

The large majority of the people in Finland are wage earners or salaried employees (about 79 per cent of the economically active population). The proportion of employers or self-employed has been rapidly decreasing: in 1960 still about 35 per cent, in 1970 about 21 per cent and today only 15 per cent.

The farmers, on the other hand, are in a sense masters of their own life. From the point of view of way of life this is important. The economic basis and to some extent the time schedule are clearly different for farmers, whereas they are pretty similar for the various segments of the urban population. Thus we can on the one hand assume differences in ways of life on the rural/urban dimension, but on the other, a trend towards uniformity of way of life among the urban people. This, combined with the differing nature of work, is certainly most important in shaping ways of life.

Work in the countryside is, despite the mechanization and specialization process, still rather concrete, its different phases and results clearly seen and understood (in research done with preschool children it was noted that the children from the countryside had a much more detailed and correct picture of how different goods are produced). The work is greatly determined by the natural calendar and climate.

On the other hand, the farms have since 1950-1960 developed from a subsistence to an exchange economy. The production process has been mechanized and many have specialized in certain products. But as noted

above, most of the farms in Finland are smaller than ten hectares. On these, mechanization of production cannot always be afforded due to the big capital investment needed and the unfavourable loan policy for small farmers. The work has remained relatively traditional, especially for the wives, whose workday normally extends to 11 hours. At the same time the work is very restrictive; for example, in research done in the eastern part of Finland, North Carelia, over 55 per cent of the housewives had not had any vacation the year before (Janhunen, 1974). Also the accident rates at work are very high, second after the building industry with 173.1 accidents per year worker.

Thus we can say that developments in agricultural work have in some instances brought it closer to that of industrial workers. Still, we think that it differs in many fundamental ways from the often alienating, isolated and monotonous jobs of most workers, whose interest in their work is, in the first place, instrumental. The choice of a job — that is, when it is possible to choose! — is most often made on the basis of the magnitude of wage or salary. In research done in the northern part of Finland only one third of the members of the labour force mentioned the interesting nature of the work to be an important criterion in job choice (Janhunen, 1977). Also poor work conditions restrict the worker's motivation.

In contrast to administrative and clerical employees who emphasize mental stress in their work, blue collar workers often consider their work both mentally and physically stressing. Thus, very few workers would agree with the common expression "työ on ilomme" [work is our pleasure]. Maybe the 10 per cent of economically active people who are in leading positions would subscribe to it. At least for this group some kind of self-realization and creativity should be possible (Järvelä et al., 1978), even if, as was rightly noted, this might be changing due to automatized work processes and general mechanization.

Leisure

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In studying the leisure time of people in the rural and urban areas there are some interesting differences in time use during a workday and a Sunday. The total amount of leisure time during the workday is the same, but the distribution of it varies interestingly: the rural population spends during the working day about half an hour more at home than the urban population. Most of the leisure time is spent on different activities, such as reading, eating, or hobbies, but there is also time that cannot be classified in any activity category. This time is notably greater for rural people (2.01 hours vs. 1.37 hours). The same pattern of time use is seen on Sunday, even though the total amount of leisure time is about 20 minutes longer for rural people. From the above we can draw the conclusion that the leisure time of rural people is much more home-centred and perhaps passive than that of the urban population.

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If we make a specific analysis of the leisure time use of workers, farmers, and the upper middle class, these tendencies are reinforced. The farmers spend the vast majority of their leisure time at home during the workday (over one hour more than the workers and more than one and a half hours more than the upper middle class). The farmers have more unclassifiable leisure activities than both the workers and the upper middle class (2.43 hours against 1.47 hours for the workers and 0.57 hours for the upper middle class). Leisure time outside the home is for the farmers 0.38 hours, whereas for the workers it is 1.35 hours and for the upper middle class 2.10 hours. On Sunday the workers spend more leisure time at home than the farmers and upper middle class. On the other hand, the farmers spend one hour less outside home than the workers and more than two hours less than the upper middle class. The reason workers spend more hours at home on Sunday than farmers is that, on the whole, the farmers have almost four hours' less leisure time on Sunday.

These repeated differences between the social segments can of course be explained by many factors: educational, regional and so on. For instance, the higher the level of education, the more actively leisure time is spent. (About 4 per cent of those passing the college

matriculation examination are from working or farmer families, while almost half [44 per cent] were from the upper middle class: official statistics of Finland, population census 1970, vol. VII A.) On the other hand, the possibilities for the farmers to actively engage in leisure pastimes outside the home are much smaller because of long distances, few services and the like.

The upper middle class uses its leisure time more for culture and hobbies than the workers and farmers. The former read more books, visit theatres, cinemas, concerts, operas, museums, art exhibitions, bars and restaurants and take greater part in physical exercise than the two latter groups. As compared to the average, the rural population takes less part in all the activities and in most cases least of all. On the other hand, they go more to dances and to church. Watching television, listening to radio and playing bingo is clearly more common in the working-class families. The following table shows some significant differences in the orientation of leisure between the discussed socio-economical groups:

% of Whom	Farmers	Industrial Workers	Upper Middle Class
read five or less books per year	71.9	63.9	29.1
never go to theatre	84.4	74.6	29.7
never go to opera or concert	94.4	93.6	62.5
never go to museum or art exhibition	82.3	77.4	32.0
never to church	17.7	43.1	28.5
never practise sports	53.3	38.9	15.6

Source: Living Conditions 1950-1975.

Considering the often poor educational level, restrictions of work, difficulties caused by their isolated living and the scarcity of services it is no wonder that self study is not very common among farmers, in any case less than among the urban population. In an inquiry carried out in 1976 (HS-Gallup, 1976), more than 70 per cent of the farmers had not read a study book for a period longer than a year, while the same was true for about 60 per cent of the workers and 35 per cent of the office workers. Nor was studying in different institutes a very common activity: 7 per cent of the farmers, 5 per cent of the

workers and 12 per cent of the white collar employees studied. Taking all social groups together, about half were enrolled at various workers' institutes whereas about 15 per cent studied art and music.

Only 4 per cent of the farmers practised home study, as against 8 per cent of the workers and 23 per cent of the civil servants. 36 per cent were engaged in complementary professional studies, 26 per cent studied languages, 6 per cent art and music and 6 per cent social subjects. The rest, 26 per cent, was not classified. The study programmes of the radio and television were followed by 7 per cent of the farmers and workers, and 13 per cent of the white-collar workers.

Friendships

The time used to meet friends during the week and on Sunday does not markedly differ between rural and urban populations. Some differences can be seen, however, in the quantity of friendship relations. The white collar workers have on the average the most friends and the workers least. Besides extensiveness of contacts, the nature of friendships also differs: the farmers meet most often with neighbours, complemented by visits from relatives. Despite the long distances, contacts between neighbours in the countryside are more common and closer than in the cities. The workers, on the other hand, stress friendships between relatives even though working colleagues are also mentioned. The large number of friends of the white-collar workers seem to be reflected in the variety making up the circle of friends. Relatives are most often mentioned and friends with hobbies in common are mentioned.

Interaction outside the family is, as noted above, not very common: 40 per cent of the workers, 31 per cent of the white-collar workers and 31 per cent of the farmers answered that they expect to spend leisure time with other than family members. The large majority (about 80 per cent) of members of both the urban and rural populations meet their friends at home.

Meeting friends mainly at home is a very characteristic feature of the Finns which differs from many other countries. Generally speaking, the behaviour of the Finns is not very socially oriented. In a comparative survey of the Nordic countries, the average number of friends was lowest in Finland and the complete absence of friends is also most common here (in relative terms three times higher in Finland than in Sweden; Jaakkola — Karisto, 1976). This, together with the fact that the number of friends is positively correlated with subjectively experienced happiness, is at remarkable discrepancy with research results indicating that a sizable amount of people consider themselves to be happy in our country. But this will be discussed later on.

Consumption

Consumption has always been regarded as an important feature of life-style; sometimes it is even seen as being identical with the lifestyle conception. But it is also a significant factor of way of life, a central activity closely connected with other activities in other spheres of life. Once again we will study differences in consumption along the urban/rural axis as well as along class lines.

Generally speaking there has been a relative decrease in spending on food in Finland: in 1948 about 50 per cent of all expenditure was on food, whereas in 1971 the percentage had decreased to 25 per cent (Haranne — Sicinski, 1978). This indicates that there is more to be spent on other needs, even if there are clear differences between the above mentioned socio-economic groups. The farmers spend much more on food than the upper middle class and the workers: 32.5 per cent for the farmers vs. 16.5 per cent for the upper middle class and 26.4 per cent for the workers. Within the group of farmers the percentage differs depending on the size of the farm. (Between the smallest farms [two to five hectares] and the largest [20 hectares] there is almost a 10 percentage point difference.) On the whole, farmers consume more potatoes, sugar, fat and milk products than the other two groups. The

workers, on the other hand, spend more on meat, tobacco, alcohol and biscuits and other commercially produced food. Typical for the upper middle class, in turn, is the high percentage of vegetables, fruits, alcohol and biscuits and low percentage of milk products, fats, potatoes, sugar and coffee. It could be noted that Finns are big consumers of coffee: 80 to 90 per cent drink coffee every day and in the rural areas even more. Tobacco, on the other hand, is more frequent in the cities, particularly among the workers. Alcohol consumption has increased very rapidly. The consumption of 100 per cent alcohol per person rose from 1.4 litres in 1938 to 6.5 litres in 1975. This figure does not even cover the total consumption, because not all imported and privately produced alcohol is included (Haranne — Sicinski, 1978). Beer drinking is also very common. It differs somewhat within the different socio-economic groups, farmers drinking the least and white collar officials the most, especially the men.

The small farmers (less than five hectares) differ clearly from the rest of the farmers. They are more eager to wager on the national lottery than the rest. On the other hand, they spend less on medical and health care, transport, recreation and education. The big farmers (over 20 hectares) use relatively more money on transport, fishing and hunting equipment and dancing. They also go more often to the theatre than the rest of the farmers. On the other hand, literature gets only a relatively small share of total expenditure.

The workers spend relatively more than other city groups on private transport. They spend more than the farmers on recreation, mostly for camping, records/cassettes, toys and pets. They also frequent cinemas more than other groups whereas their interest in theatre, opera and concerts is very small. The spending habits of the upper middle class differ markedly from both the farmers' and workers'. Significantly higher are, for example, expenditure on private accommodation, domestic expenses such as furniture, carpets, and art, and on medical care, recreation, education and culture (i.e. theatre, opera, concerts, cinema, books). Furthermore this group spends more on children's clothes, summer cottages (in one study [Rinne, 1975] only a fifth of

the workers over 50 years of age owned a summer cottage), housemaids, travelling, beauty salons and big recreational items such as motorboats or cars. They spend less than the other groups on competitive sport, dancing and the national lottery.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE FINNISH WAY OF LIFE

Above we have discussed some general aspects of the Finnish way of life. It appears that, as far as its natural resources and environment are concerned, Finland is in a very advantageous position for a developed country, even though not without problems. As far as the social basis of the ways of life in Finland is concerned, the situation is more problematic.

Due to rapid and uncontrolled urbanization, a great part of the population is living through a painful process of adaptation to completely new conditions of life. This is as true for the badly planned far-off slum suburbs as for the countryside. In the period of 1961-1973, 1,242,300 persons migrated between provinces in the country in search of a better social environment.

It can at least be hypothesized that this profound social change — which is incidentally reflected in all modern Finnish literature — is intimately linked to the various problems we shall discuss below.

The Problem of the Social Underclass

We shall start out with the vast differences between people's life situations and point to the problems of the social underclass, an ever-increasing group of people who have no possibility of work; that is, who are inactive against their wishes and yet would be perfectly able to work: the unemployed, healthy old-age pensioners, many handicapped people or mothers confined to stay at home with their children because of the lack of day-care facilities. Such a situation is all the more

difficult because it tends to be permanent and inflict many personality changes which are reflected as negative developments in the ways of life. Still "below" this group there is a large group of persons who are physically or mentally unable to work: certain categories of invalids, alcoholics, and of mentally or chronically ill people. Most of them constitute the permanent institutional population whose life is closely regimented and organized.

This social underclass (see table below) is a very grave problem in Finland as well as in other welfare states. Not because of the financial strain it causes (even if this is the reason why it is so much discussed) but because of the fact that these people are, for various reasons, unable to lead a "useful" life. In Finland, solutions proposed for alternative ways of life are designed for the active population and thus inadequate for a large minority of the people.

Groups in Distress

65 years and older	427,000	(1970) ²
Families in crowded dwellings (over two persons per room)	252,000	(1970) ²
Unemployed	196,711	(Feb. 1978) ¹
People who have experienced unemployment in 1977	(500,000)	(1977) ³
Recipients of social assistance	170,289	(1976) ¹
Handicapped	700,000	(1976) ¹
— limbs	400,000	(1976) ¹
— hearing	300,000	(1976) ¹
Persons receiving invalidity pensions	246,457	(Jan. 1978) ¹
— due to mental causes	65,823	(Jan. 1978) ¹
— circulatory diseases	62,672	(Jan. 1978) ¹
Persons confined to mental hospitals	55,921	(1976) ¹
To be compared with:		
Total population	4.7 million	(1975) ²
Labour force	2.1 million	(1972) ²

Sources: 1 Oral information

2 Living conditions 1970-1975

3 Estimated number of unemployed from total number of job-seekers — a conservative estimate

It is important to note that these people live extremely modestly, consume rather little and are not a problem from the point of view of ecology or overconsumption. The problem is that they do not take part

in life, that they pay dearly for a lifestyle favouring "zero growth" and moderate consumption. They are "expensive" only in the very specific and largely irrelevant sense of state expenditure.

Crises in the Dominant Way of Life

Now let us consider some clear indications of unhappiness and misery in our society (see table below). It is evident that some of the data presented here are overlapping with the just-discussed problems of the social underclass and many others but, still, the figures hereafter speak for themselves. Divorce, loneliness, maltreatment and abuse of children, violence, suicide attempts, migration are poignant expressions of a crisis in our way of life. Of course there are easy and difficult

Some Indicators of Crisis in the Way of Life

People who live alone	417,000	(1970) ⁵
People in need of psychiatric care	250,000	(1972) ²
People for whom psychiatric care could be useful	650,000	(1972) ²
Child maltreatment (battering)	100,000	(1972) ²
Violence against person	15,481	(1977) ³
Larceny	145,865	(1977) ³
Narcotics offences	16,513	(1977) ³
Prisoners	5,701	(Feb. 1978) ¹
Divorces	9,986	(1977) ¹
Abortions due to social causes	16,115	(1976) ¹
Alcohol misuse	332,080	(1976) ⁶
Persons migrated to Sweden	15,700	(1976) ⁴
Accidents at work	125,409	(1976) ¹
Traffic accidents (death and injury)	13,373	(1977) ¹
Deaths from circulatory diseases	24,000	(1972) ⁵
Attempted suicide	7,000 - 15,000 ²	
Suicides	1,176	(1974) ¹

Sources: 1 Oral information

2 Anni Hakkarainen: Väestön psyykkinen terveydentila. Litte Lääkintöhallituksen työryhmän mietintöön Psykiatrisen terveydenhuollon kehittäminen (Helsinki, 1977)

3 Tilastotiedotus 01 1978:2

4 Työvoimakatsaus vol. 20: 2-3

5 Living conditions 1950-1975

6 Jussi Simpura: Alkoholin nauttimisen tiheys sukupuolen mukaan vuosina 1969-1976

divorces, migration based on willingness to experience the new and people who are happiest when they are alone. Yet there can be no doubt that the indicators presented tell us something about the extent of unhappiness and misery in our society.

But what about the rest of the people? Those who do not have visible problems that can be listed, those who seem to lead a "normal" life? Let us remember in this connection that there are many problems that do not appear in statistics or then only indirectly. Thus the use of pain killers and sleeping pills is at least partially connected with problems people experience in their daily lives. Violence in the family, for instance, is much more widespread than any statistics can show.* As a matter of fact, it has been pointed out that many negative aspects or strains in peoples' lives are taken for granted or experienced as normal, such as tension in human and social relations, stress, economic problems or environmental pollution.

There is still one interesting question left: can we say that life as a whole has become worse for the Finns or not? It depends of course on the indicators we choose. In many senses life has become easier and more safe, but one might claim as well that it has become more brutal, hard and violent. The life of most people is influenced, directly or indirectly, by the deep economic depression that is now entering its fifth year. The insecurity and mental stress now felt by

* During the last ten years the use of psychopharmacological drugs against anxiety and stress, depression and psychosis has increased whereas, interestingly, the use of sedatives and psychostimulants (sleeping pills) has declined:

Defined Daily Doses Per 1,000 Inhabitants Per Day

	1967	1976
Anxiolytics (minor tranquillizers)	12.1	15.3
Sedatives	34.2	18.5
Neuroleptics	4.2	6.8
Antidepressives	2.5	5.8
Psychostimulants	2.2	0.9

Source: J. Idänpään-Heikkilä: Psykkeläkkeiden kulutus Suomessa v. 1966-1976. Suomen lääkarilehti 1976, vol. 31.

almost 200,000 unemployed is even expected to rise in the winter of 1979. The fact that half of them are young people does not make the prospects much brighter. This was dramatically expressed in the small village of Kittilä, in Lapland, where in spring, 1978, eight young men committed suicide within a short period of time. The gravity of the situation appears when we compare present unemployment with figures from the 1930s, until now considered the worst wave of unemployment, but which reached a maximum of just 20,289 persons in 1932.

Accidental death and suicide rates have, with small fluctuations, steadily increased during this century:

Year	Annually per 100,000 population	
	Accidental deaths	Suicides
1901-1910	48.4	6.8
1910-1920	46.7	9.9
1921-1930	50.8	16.1
1931-1940	45.9	20.5
1941-1950	55.9	16.6
1951-1960	49.0	19.7
1961-1970	58.1	20.9
1974	56.9	25.1

Source: Statistical Yearbook 1976

Incidentally violent crime and suicide have been consistently high in Finland, as compared to many other countries.*

The stability of the family, to mention another indicator, has been considerably shaken, as shown by the rapidly growing divorce rates: from 0.42 divorces per 1000 couples in the period 1936-1940, the divorce rate rose to 2.14 in 1974.

The situation does not look much brighter when examining some other

* The fact that in both Estonia and Hungary, the closest kindred peoples, suicide rates are also very high would indicate that suicide is a national trait. The Finns are also famous for their melancholy nature seen in the popular music which is essentially of two types: the international pop music of the young people and the sad, melancholy tangos or rural folklore music of the older. But also in Finnish youth pop music, sadness and daydreaming of a better life are a dominant theme.

social statistics. The number of invalidity pensions, for instance, have more than doubled in 17 years: 1966: 122,000 persons, 1970: 172,000 persons, 1977: 255,683 persons (source: oral information). The largest group is formed by those suffering from mental disturbances, the proportion of which has been rising all the time. At the beginning of 1970, the number of mentally disturbed amounted to 50,884. Only five years later, in 1975, already they were 66,551 (source: oral information). Similarly, in 1901 there were seventeen mental hospitals, in 1975 seventy. Also, within twenty years the amount of beds in mental hospitals doubled from 8,946 in 1950 to 19,808 in 1970.

The table below shows the most common diseases among patients admitted for the first time to mental hospitals. Looking at it, one might infer that strains and hardships, especially among the young, are today considerable.

Most Common Mental Diseases in 1970

		Most common in age group
Neuroses	2,675	15-25 years
Schizophrenia	1,759	15-24 years
Alcoholism	1,699	35-44 years

Source: Public Health and Medical Care 1969-1970

Finally, we shall give some figures on the development of violent crimes. Violence against both property and the person has considerably increased over the last ten years:

Year	Violence against property	Against person
1965	61,340	6,453
1970	89,300	11,825
1975	133,800	13,744
1977	-	15,841

Source: Oral information obtained from the police

Even if the economic depression plays an important role, it certainly cannot be blamed for all these social problems. It seems evident that the negative aspects of our dominant way of life outweigh its positive sides. In other words, the cost for our "comfortable" everyday life with its high material standard is too high: namely, in some of the

essential qualities of human life like health, peace of mind, depth of interests, or meaningful human relations.

The question that crops up in view of the above presentation is: why despite everything do the Finns cling to their way of life? This allegiance to the capitalist way of life against all odds is a truly fascinating problem that brings us to the next section.

THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE FINNISH WAY OF LIFE

Judging from a subjective point of view that takes into account the meaning people give to their way of life, it would clearly be wrong to say that life has become worse for the Finns, or for the people in the highly developed countries in general, over the past decades. More precisely, this means that even if we are able to point out many indicators showing that things are getting worse, the actual activities and subjective choices of the people do not bear this out. This is not only true for the Finns but for people in highly developed countries in general. Given the chance to go back twenty years, there are very few people who would take it, except perhaps on the condition that they also get twenty years younger in the process (noted in a world-wide poll by Gallup)! There has not been any dramatic decrease in the satisfaction and happiness of the people either, except perhaps among the upper and middle classes who tend to have a more negative view of things (see Campbell et al., 1976). Although there are no long-term data for Finland, it is improbable that the trend here would be different. However, it is a fact that the Finns are clearly less satisfied with life and more pessimistic about the future than people in the other Scandinavian countries (see table on following page).

The explanation for this may be found in the particular political context and the deep political cleavages in Finland; perhaps also in the national character of the Finns.

There are at least two levels at which the industrial way of life can be said to be gratifying: first at the level of material and non-material comfort and security. Everyday life is relatively comfortable and easy: there are few of the actual hardships and necessities which

Facts Concerning Happiness in Different Countries

	Finland ¹	Sweden ¹	Norway	Denmark	France ²	Italy ²	West Germany ²	Netherlands ²	USA ³
	1972	1972	1972	1972 ¹	1976 ²	1976	1976	1976	1972
very happy	19	41	35	40	14	4	13	38	22
rather happy	72	54	60	53	61	54	63	52	68
not fully happy ⁴	8	3	3	4	22	38	18	8	10
cannot tell	2	2	2	2	3	4	6	2	-
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

1 Allardt-Uusitalo: Questionnaire and Code Book (1977), p. xxxix

2 Poverty in Europe 1977, table 12

3 Campbell et al.: The Quality of American Life (1976), p. 26

4 Rather unhappy and very unhappy are combined in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1972)

Source: J.P. Roos, 1978

were common only a few years ago. Life is easier, nicer, more spacious and more hygienic (even if this has entailed increasing environmental and other problems, this is not the point at issue here). High personal comfort is the essential achievement of the developed industrial societies, even though one might object that these comforts make life too easy and people too soft, so that they lose essential skills, including the ability to withstand — or even understand — difficulties. (For the classic criticism, see the Gorgias, where Plato develops these points to perfection.) People, it is well known, are loath to give up their comforts, and the existence of them gives them a basic satisfaction.

At the second level, we come across two essential features of way of life, namely consciousness and meaning. Analysis of this level is crucial for understanding the resilience of the capitalist way of life. Comfort is nice, but it can be given up, if need be. The ideal is what is necessary for the existence of the social arrangement, which of course in its turn fortifies the ideal, or rather reproduces the way of life. The consciousness of how men would like to live is certainly a part of their way of life, influencing their activities and giving significance to these activities. Security, reality and the ideal must be rather close to each other to produce a "normal" life. This can be well seen in the dependence of, say, optimal income on actual income. But the role of the ideal in this triangle is perhaps given too little consideration: it is not that people do not have ideals and important life goals. Thus in Finland the sum used for legal betting, bingo and the like amounts to more than \$100 per family per year, with class differences clearly showing: betting is a favourite activity among the working class and the farmers; for the well to do, there are other avenues open to realize their goals.

But, of course, even ideals are social constructions. This is partly because of their dependence on what people already have, how they already live and what they deem as realistic, but also because there is a pattern, a social process which creates simultaneously the ideal and the means to get it. This socialization of people which starts

from early childhood and never stops, shapes the essential life patterns both within the family and at the work place. It is true that before entering working life, the individual still has innumerable alternatives open to him, however spurious they may be. After a few years at work, however, most of the alternatives disappear. The door of the iron cage closes. The ideals take on a final form. And, as Wolf Wagner (1977) has pointed out, it is important that the ideal is not too far from the reality: there must be a semblance of the ideal in the real, and this is exactly what happens in the consumption sphere of the capitalist society. Here we find another important subjective aspect of the Finnish way of life: the feeling of almost having "made it."

Essentially, then, everything that an alternative way of life has to offer, or a change of social structure can promise, is extremely unreal and does not at all fit into the actual way of life of the people. Both its positive and negative sides — the comfort-giving and ideal-constructing on one hand, and the difficulty of giving content or reality to any alternative on the other — prevent the emergence of any lifestyle other than the wasteful, overconsumptionist, "bourgeois" way of life.

What the future Finnish way of life will be is difficult to say. The saturation of consumption levels is not yet in sight and the environmental or social limits are not yet reached. Due to emigration and the low birth rate, the population is growing very slowly. (In 1973, less babies were born than any year in the last hundred.) The economic growth rate has slowed down compared to the relatively rapid levels of the 1950s and 1960s and it is improbable that those levels will be reached again after the present depression. The political situation is not completely stable, although no one expects a replay of the voter revolts of the 1960s. The few non-political alternative-way-of-life movements in Finland are extremely weak and have no popular basis. They are essentially imports with very little growth potential at least for the present. Even the political situation is such that the risks among the traditional parties of losing voters to

environmentalists or other alternative movements are relatively small.

The permanent division of the Communist Party which has disillusioned many of its supporters who still vote for it, in the absence of any alternative, might perhaps lead to some new constellation of the left-wing opposition, together with the "western-Europeanization" of the Social Democratic Party which is still relatively radical by European standards. All the parties have to some extent absorbed new "ecological" and "grass-roots" concerns, but these seem to have little chance of being adopted in practice. The Centre Party, for instance, has put decentralization and the green movement on its platform, with no appreciable effect on its practical policies.

Thus, in addition to the general structural limits, there are specific economic and political constraints that stand in the way of any appreciable changes in the way of life in Finland: collective solutions are consequently scarce.

Yet, as we have tried to show above, there is much potential cause for radical changes in the patterns which form the dominant way of life. The undercurrents of the development of Finnish society point strongly to this conclusion. When and in which form these undercurrents will come to the surface, however, is impossible to say.

THE POSSIBILITIES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF LIFE

The necessity for an alternative is obvious. In fact it results from the fundamental criticism of the existing capitalist system. Only a drastic change in the way of life of the people in the capitalistic countries can lead us out of the present impasse. But this does not depend so much on the people themselves as on the conditions under which they live and work.

For the average man, it appears, the only real, private "alternative" is the ideal: if somebody succeeds in attaining it, it is in fact his recompense for the drudgery of normal life. The "least poor" alternative is isolation, protection, day-dreaming, the so-called pseudo-activities. In order to protect oneself from social uncertainty, commercial pressures, political irrationality, one has either to isolate or to assimilate one's life. Things which cannot be avoided will be assimilated or accepted as necessities, such as monotonous, harmful work, traffic, pollution, ugly houses. Political problems are shut out of one's life and the private life is made as isolated as possible. The way of life is insulated, barricaded from outside influences.

As for the collective solutions the situation is very different. Here, in addition to pertinent criticism of the present way of life, we have the problem of proposing alternatives and suggesting arrangements that make them possible. We claim that any real alternative must be weighed against the ideal of the capitalist, bourgeois way of life. The question that needs to be asked is whether the alternative is such that it can withstand the pressures of the ideal or whether it will be corrupted by it. Evidence from the socialist countries shows that even

a revolutionary upheaval may not necessarily solve the problem in that change in the socio-economic base does not automatically lead to alternatives in all aspects of life. In the absence of such structural change, how then can any alternative withstand the pressures and adverse effects of the capitalist way of life?

It is difficult to list other than rather elementary requirements for alternative ways of life, assuming that the basic social relations do not radically change, as is realistic in the case of Finland. Nevertheless, even if we cannot envisage radical social upheavals, one might still expect that even smallish changes in the way of life will result in considerable social change.

One can distinguish at least two fundamentally different strategies to change the existing way of life in Finland. One is the founding of alternative communities in which the members work, consume and spend most of their leisure time together. In Finland, this movement has never been very widespread. (One of the most significant efforts was the Sointula community founded by Finnish workers at the beginning of the century in North America, which ended in failure.) The basic problems of these attempts are that they represent counter-cultures of small and often privileged groups, "freaks" of the existing society with a negligible audience. Consequently, they cannot function as models for the society as a whole.

The other strategy consists in the use of restrictions and prohibitions. It can be argued that people will and can easily revert to simpler and healthier ways of life if needed. If driving a car is prohibited, a bus or a bike will do. It seems to us, however, that regulations of this kind are not very efficient and affect only marginal aspects of people's total life situation (as illustrated by the famous Finnish prohibition law against alcoholic beverages in the 1930s). The fundamental criticism of this kind of strategy is that it completely neglects the fact that people's way of life is imposed by basic conditions of their social existence. Besides, such a strategy has paternalistic and moralistic overtones and is moreover politically

doubtful. In any case, since different aspects of people's way of life are interrelated, interference in one aspect may have unexpected consequences for the others — causing even more suffering!

To us the only realistic way to achieve changes within the existing social structure is to look for general positive trends in the existing ways of life. This presupposes a clear visualization of the existing arrangements and — even more important — of their internal structures. In fact this is the key aspect of the way-of-life research.

There are at least two interesting movements outside this otherwise politically overorganized field. One is the "movement for better housing conditions," which has grown extremely rapidly in the last few years. The other is the newly started community work in some suburbs of the eastern and southern parts of Finland. These movements will have to overcome many problems before one can speak of any change in the ways of life of the people concerned. But it seems to us that the only possible point of departure in the search for alternative ways of life is one firmly based on grass-roots strategies where the methods and content are formed collectively from the real-life situation of the people.

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