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**The Restructuring Process of Rural  
Russian Karelia: A Case Study of  
Two Karelian Villages**

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**THE RESTRUCTURING PROCESS OF RURAL RUSSIAN KARELIA:  
A CASE STUDY OF TWO KARELIAN VILLAGES**

**by Eira Varis**

**December 1993**

All findings, interpretations and conclusions herein are solely the author's. The study belongs to the project "The Potential for Local Economic Development in Rural Resource Communities", which is conducted by Dr Markku Tykkyläinen and Dr Cecily Neil. The project is funded by UNU/WIDER under the Finnish Special Programme Fund. University of Joensuu, Academy of Finland, and CSIRO supported the project in its planning and preliminary phases.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Russia is currently under extensive social and economic change. Thus, the formation of new modes of production in Russia has become apparent. This process is reflected in social change at the local level. The development process, which has led to the current situation, consists also of the sequence of changes in the history of the Soviet Union and Russia.

The recent rural restructuring processes in the Karelian Republic will be analyzed in this study. The process is illustrated by two rural villages, Virma and Gridino, both in socio-economic transition in the Karelian countryside. The case villages have undergone many economic and social changes in recent decades. The influence of reorganization of production and the services at the local level is made manifest by their development. They illustrate the general changes of the whole Russian Karelia, which can be traced to the general development processes in the Russian countryside itself.

The case villages represent fishing as their base of production. Each individual branch of production has its own characteristics of development, but many general-level decisions have had the same kind of consequences at the local level. For that reason, the analysis of the restructuring of the production system in local fishing villages depicts one part of the restructuring process which also has implications in regards to general restructuring.

The results of field work in the case villages will be presented in this paper. The field work in the villages has been conducted during two periods. The first visit and preliminary study were done two years ago in the summer of 1991. The second phase of the study, including interviews and questionnaires, was done in the summer of 1993.

The purpose of the field work was to find out at the local level:

- development periods of the case villages,
- the socio-economic characteristics and structure,
- individual experiences, attitudes and opinions of restructuring in the case villages,
- the prospects for the future of the case villages

This report highlights the restructuring process, based on the experiences of the villagers and by following the phases of the case village's socio-economic transition. This report is an empirical part of the author's study of the restructuring of the Karelian countryside.

## 1.1 The Implementation of the Research

### *Intensive and Extensive Research Methods Supporting Each Other*

Thorough analyses of the consequences of the restructuring process have been made at the local level. Two case villages have been studied as "laboratories" of social restructuring. When social restructuring is examined, it is essential to define the processes which have an effect on regional structures. These have been studied using the intensive methods of research. The methods used have been both interviews and inquiries.

The extensive methods have been used for studying the general aspects of the restructuring. This part of the study has included many visits to Karelia, observing the environment and social systems and conducting interviews with the local people. The most important quantitative data source has been the statistics and archives of the Karelian Republic itself.

Two years ago, preliminary research was made in the villages. The villages were chosen for research, and some interviews were also conducted in the case villages. More statistical data from the case villages (and generally from the development of rural Russian Karelia) were analyzed after the pre-study. (Varis 1992, 1993b and 1993c)

### *The progress of the research*

In the summer 1993, field work took place in the case villages. The study included two parts: structured questionnaires and interviews, by theme. The structured questionnaire was given to every household in each of the villages. From the questionnaire, obtained was the exact socio-economic structure of the case villages, and the points of view at the local and individual level on the restructuring process in the village.

The material of the questionnaire was complemented by the interviews, which analyzed more precisely the development periods of the case villages. The interviews were made with a tape recorder. They were made for the twelve keymen of the villages. The keymen were mostly older people, who had experienced the development of the village. They included teachers, the chairman of the kolkhoz, saleswomen, previous deputies and the staff of the village soviet, but



also older active people, who knew the history of village. The interviews were made as a form of discussion about the different kind of themes, which support the explanation of the restructuring process of the village.

The interviews carried different themes, clearly showing the social development of the villages and the local points of view. With theme interviews, the history of the villages, and their development processes were analyzed more effectively. These interviews also estimated the most important factors which have affected the lives of the villages.

The group conducting the field work in the case villages included six people: one Russian and two Finnish researchers and three Russian students of geography. They were advised to administer questionnaires in the households. The head of the family was chosen to complete questionnaire, if possible. Usually the head of the family was the husband. Only if the wife was a widow was she considered the head of the family. Often, the husband was not at home, and so the wife was interviewed. The sample interviewees were controlled during the time the interviews were being conducted, and so the interview was carried out in order that both sexes could maintain equality. However, only the adults were interviewed by questionnaire; the childrens' opinions were obtained during open discussions held on the village road.

The structured inquiry was made in virtually every household in the case villages. Only those 3-4 houses in which their summer inhabitants were not at home, were not interviewed. The total number of structured interviews was 112, consisting of 34 inquiries in Virma and 78 inquiries in Gridino. More than half of the total inhabitants were interviewed by structured inquiry in both villages.

The theme interviews were compiled, in all, for twelve people, the interviews lasting from 45 minutes to two hours. Five people were interviewed in Virma and seven in Gridino. In addition, some of the most interesting people that were interviewed twice during the field working days. The second interviews were informal and yet considered more precisely the theme of the interview.

### *Themes of the Study*

The material in both the interviews and questionnaires has been analyzed according to theme listed below in this paper. Both the relative and absolute numbers have been presented mainly in the results.

#### Themes:

- Social status, which included the following variants: sex, age, education, profession, marital status and family conditions; from those living in the village obtained was information concerning their specific living conditions and manner of residence.
- Private gardening, in which the function of private gardens found in most households was ascertained.
- Public services, in which the need of the public services and the satisfaction they brought to the people in the way of operation was analyzed.
- Decision-making processes; these questions examined where the matters of the villages are decided. Also the individual level of participation in decision-making was clarified.
- Livelihood is important, particularly when explored from the position of rural habitants; economic potential was examined in questions concerning salary and pension, living conditions and economizing.
- "Free time" includes not only taking interest in some hobby, but also participating in weekday activities, which incorporate social relationships.
- The futures of the villages are reflected by answers to questions on willingness to remain in the home village and on attitudes on privatization; hence, the future of the village has been evaluated through various contentions.

## 1.2 Karelia as a Research Object

Russian Karelia has been removed from western social and economic life for a long time. Although the total area of Russian Karelia is 172,000 km<sup>2</sup>, that is, half the size of Finland (e.g. larger than the area of Greece or England and Wales combined), the area is sparsely inhabited with a mere population of 800,000 people.

The Karelian Republic has undergone extensive urban development during recent decades. People have migrated from the rural areas to cities, and thus the population living in rural areas has been greatly depleted. Presently, as much as 82% of the Karelian population lives in an urban environment (Fig. 1) (Varis 1993a). Less common in the settlement structures of Karelia are also some very few scattered settlements, about 2.5% of the population in 1989. One-third of the population lives in the capital of the Republic, Petrozavodsk, and the rest of the inhabitants live in small towns and rural areas.

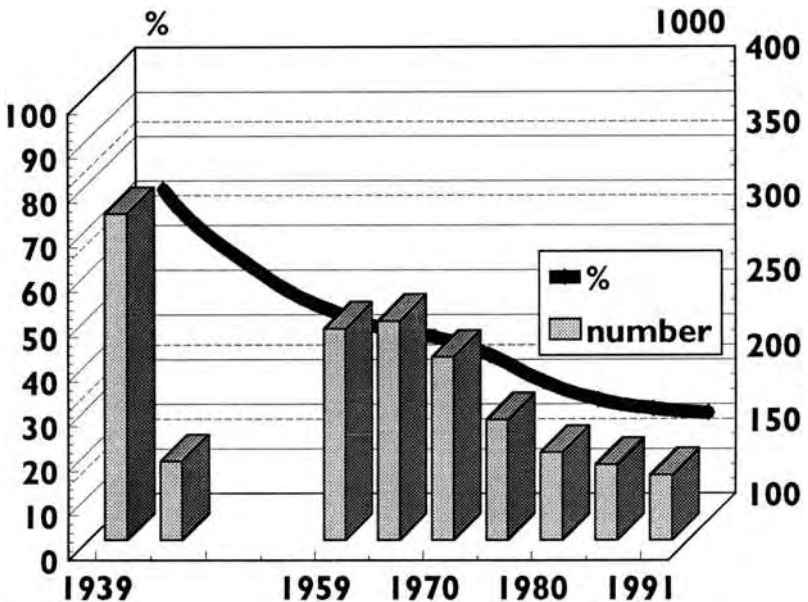


Fig. 1. Rural Population in Russian Karelia 1939-1991.

An important factor in the de-population of the rural areas was the socialist modernization strategy, which favored large economic units (into which the population was centralized into towns). In the rural areas, there was a strong inclination towards migration and resettlement in the cities. A large incentive for this migration was that public services such as schools, libraries, medical centers and shops were closed in many rural areas (Klementjev 1991, 47).

Effective politics and the diminishing need for forestry labor were the main reasons for this process of urbanization. Relatively poor living conditions in rural areas also made people willing to migrate (Problemy ekonomičeskogo..., 1989). The process of centralizing the population accelerated after the Second World War. As a result of this depopulation of the countryside, rural villages have died away, and therefore the number of villages has decreased (Table 1.).

Table 1. depicts the administrative rural units and their development in Russian Karelia. The rural village had traditionally been the statistical unit in the Soviet Union. They were the basic settlement units with some social and economic functions (for instance state-owned farms or cooperatives). The village soviet is an administrative unit, which is formed from several rural villages. The village soviet is the local authority ruled by the village council.

The number of village soviets as well as rural villages have diminished to a fractions of what they were a couple of decades ago. This means that most of the settlement units in the rural areas have been abandoned and subsequently perished.

Table 1. Amount of Various Villages in Karelia from 1927 to 1990.

	1927	1940	1959	1970	1980	1990
VILLAGE SOVIETS	191	296	130	112	105	101
RURAL VILLAGES	2838*	e**	1553	1069	794	668

\* data form year 1926

\*\* e = no data availabe

Sources: Administrativno-territorial'noje delenie Karel'skoi ASSR...(1991), Narodnoe hozjajstvo Karel'skoi ASSR...(1972).

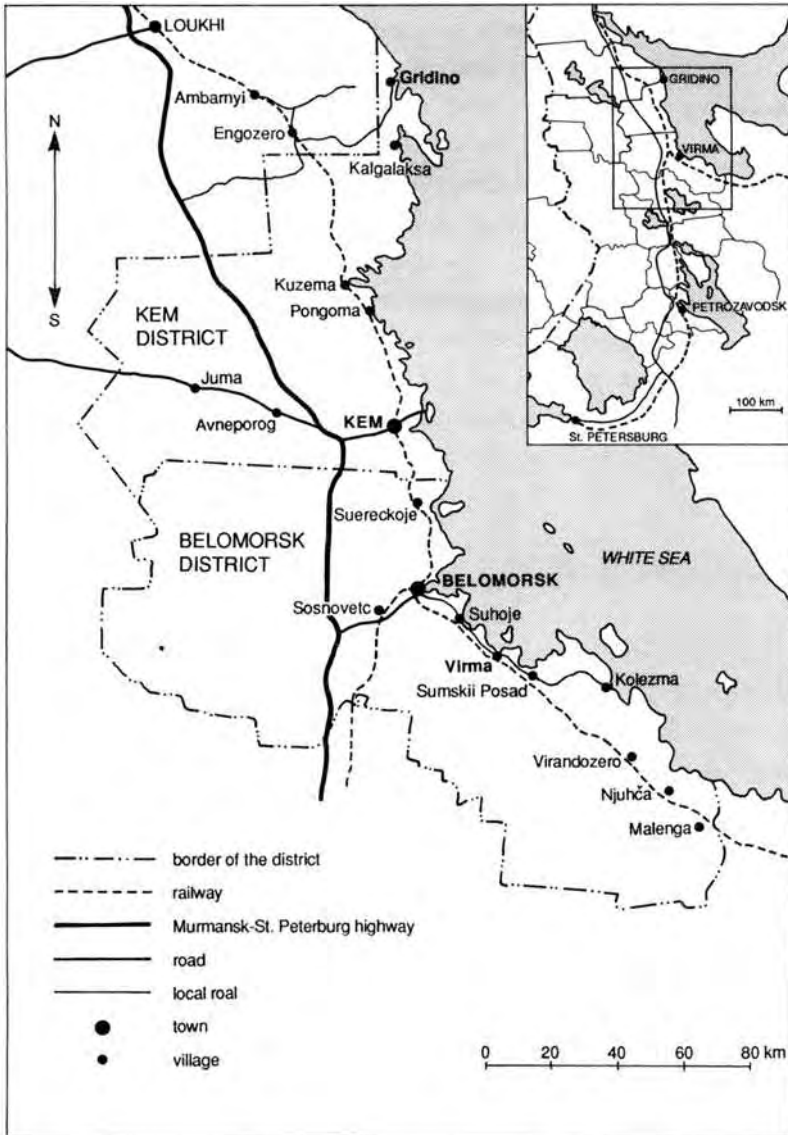


Fig. 2. Location of the Case villages.

## **2. TWO FISHING VILLAGES BESIDE THE WHITE SEA**

In this chapter, general characteristics of the case villages will be presented. Some general conclusions have been made about their position in the division of labor in Karelia. In explanation, the basic economic units are the kolkhoz and the sovkhoz. The kolkhoz is a collective-owned economic unit, which is responsible for the production of its branch of economy in a particular place. The members of a kolkhoz manage the production and get salaries and benefits from the kolkhoz. The other unit is the sovkhoz, which is a state-owned economic unit, in which the means of production are owned and organized by the state and the workers receive a monthly salary, but no other benefits. All production in the rural areas which is non-industrial has been organized within kolkhozes or sovkhozes. The sovkhoz is usually the economic unit for agriculture, and in the fishing industry the equivalent unit is called goslov. Both modes of production have been significant in the restructuring of the villages. In this study, the development periods and processes of restructuring will be analyzed according to political decisions affecting the case villages and their economy.

### **2.1 Two Coastal Case Villages**

The case studies are the coastal villages of Virma and Gridino, which are located beside the White Sea (Fig. 2). Virma is located in the plain forest landscape near the sea and beside a river, and Gridino is located on the cliffs of a bay. The architectural style is vintage; the houses having been built according to antiquated Karelian and Russian techniques. The villages are representative of the old wooden construction style, and, thus, the houses and roads are in a dilapidated condition.

The settlements of the villages of Virma and Gridino arose from the same geographical basis: the location beside the White Sea has provided the possibility to have fishing as a source of livelihood and has guaranteed good connections to other areas via water routes. In both villages, the settlements arose at about the same time (in the 1500's), which has been proven by both historical and ethnological evidence (e.g. Berger & Naumov 1992).

In both villages the predominant nationality is Russian. Only a few inhabitants represent other nationalities: Finns and Byelorussians. Beside the White Sea, the population has traditionally

consisted of Russian pomorians (those residing on the west coast of the White Sea) as the Karelian settlements are situated more inland.

The economy of both villages has been based on fishing and the institutional organization of the kolkhoz. In both villages, a fishing kolkhoz from the early 1930's has been founded. The fish caught are mostly herring, salmon, cod, flatfish and navaga, and the gathering of sea algae also has importance. Kolkhoz life had dominated village life until the year 1960. Both kokhozes were considered "millionaire kolkhozes<sup>1</sup>" in the 1950's. Then, at the local level, political decisions began to harbor the economic rationale of socialism.

The villages are typical examples of the spatial division of labor in the old Soviet system. They were integrated into the system of territorial production complexes in the 1930's, when the production was reorganized and planned according to the Five-Year-Plan (cf. Souza 1989).

Economic rationalization, based on economic planning and political negotiations, saved the fishing kolkhoz in Gridino in the 1960's, but not the one in Virma (cf. Fig. 8). The inhabitants of Virma were shifted from working in the kolkhoz to working in the sovkhov, and women were relocated to the farming sovkhov. The sovkhov administration was in Belomorsk (nearly 40 km away) and workers of Virma became wage workers for it. Thus, due to the distance of the administrative center, the influence the workers previously had over their employment diminished remarkably.

Table 2. Population in the Research Villages.

	1926	1933	1959	1979	1989
VIRMA	584	615	367	127	61
GRIDINO	379	383	385	200	150

Source: Itogi vcecojuznii perepisi naselenija...(1990).

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<sup>1</sup> The merit of "millionaire" means that kolkhoz has surpassed its plan.

The reorganization of fishing production has further deteriorated their livelihood possibilities; as a result, the population of the villages has declined during recent decades (cf. Table 2). Virma has experienced a relatively more devastating and vast depletion of its population than Gridino has, although both of the villages have experienced the effects of the urbanization process in Karelia. Virma has lost 90% of its population from the 1930's to today, and Gridino has lost more than 50% of its population during the last 30 years (when depopulation had prevailed in Gridino).

### *Virma: The Dissipated Fishing Village*

The village of the Virma is located on the banks of the river Virma (Fig. 3 and 4), and the distance to the nearest town, Belomorsk, is 38 kilometers. The railway line Murmansk-Archangelsk passes through Virma, along with the roadway from Belomorsk to Sumskii Posad. The village represents a typical riverside settlement, each residence having an attached cattle house or outbuilding.

In earlier times, Virma was one of the village soviets of the Belomorsk district. With a declining population, it fell into the administrative category of a "rural village" in 1960. Nowadays, it is one of ten rural villages included in the village soviet of Sumskii Posad (Varis 1993b and 1993c).

In Virma, the fishing kolkhoz Truzennik was founded in 1930. The kolkhoz was discontinued in 1960, when the number of kolkhozes in Karelia was reduced and Virma was characterized as a village with "no prospects for the future" (see more about the reorganization in chapter 2.2 and 2.3). Two forms of sovkhoses took the place of the kolkhoz from 1960 on, a farming sovkhos and a fishing sovkhos. Since then, the inhabitants have continued to emigrate, and gradually the village has regressed. The population is now only a tenth of what it had been when the village was flourishing (cf. Table 2).



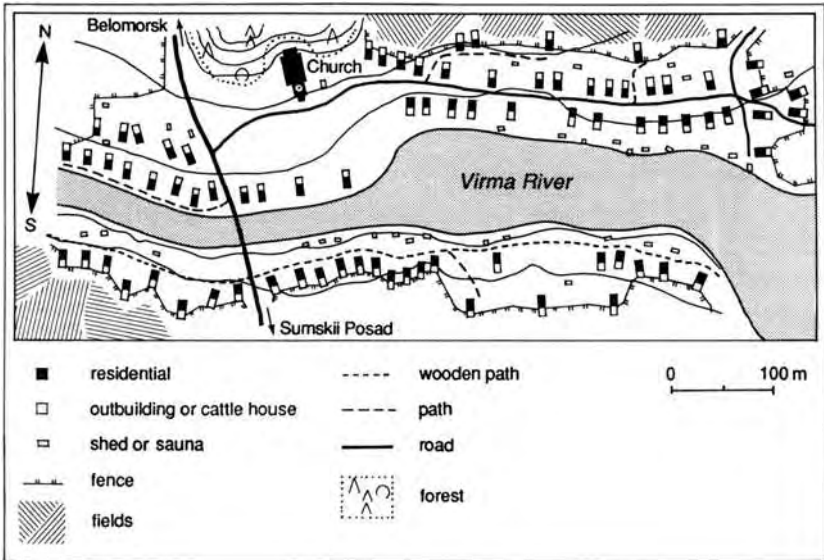


Fig. 3. The Village of Virma.



Fig. 4. The village of Virma is located a few kilometers from the sea in a sheltered cove of a river.

During 1993, the sovkhos has also been discontinued, which means that there is no longer any industrial activity in the village of Virma. Currently, in 1993, there are only a few work-age inhabitants, these being engaged in miscellaneous work in the village. Most of the inhabitants are pensioners. Public services are scarce and inadequate. The village school has not been active for years. The village store operates only a couple of hours during the day, and nowadays it is increasingly difficult to find foodstuffs and basic products there. Most of the public services come from the nearest town, Belomorsk. The village has lost its significance as an economic production unit, and is thereby devoid of any future development schemes or interests.

### *Gridino - The Active Fishing Village*

The village of Gridino is one of the five village soviets in the district of Kem (Fig. 2). In Gridino, the fishing kolkhoz "Popeda" has been industrious and has kept its position as the center of village life and the source of livelihood for working-age residents. Improvements have been made in the work equipment and modern working methods have been adopted. For example, in 1989, a new road going to the village was built, and a year later the village was supplied with electricity. In addition, the kolkhoz has acquired two new well-equipped fishing boats (Danilov 1992).

The village of Gridino is quite isolated from other villages, the distance to the nearest village, Kalgaksa, being about 25 km. It has a magnificent and attractive location on the rocky cliffs, which makes the village very special; for instance, the central "road" of the village is only a wooden path (Fig. 5 and 6). As a matter of fact, the village did not even acquire the road before the year 1989, since it came about only after 50 years of planning. It has created a link to the village of Engozero, which has a railway station with connections to the large cities of Murmansk, Archangelsk and Petrozavodsk.

The population of Gridino has declined during the last three decades because the economic viability of the kolkhoz was reduced and the population migrated towards employment in the forestal or industrial branches (cf. Table 2). Younger people migrated to towns, first for study and then for work. After securing employment, they had virtually no incentive to return back to the village. This process, however, has not been as dramatic as it has been in Virma.

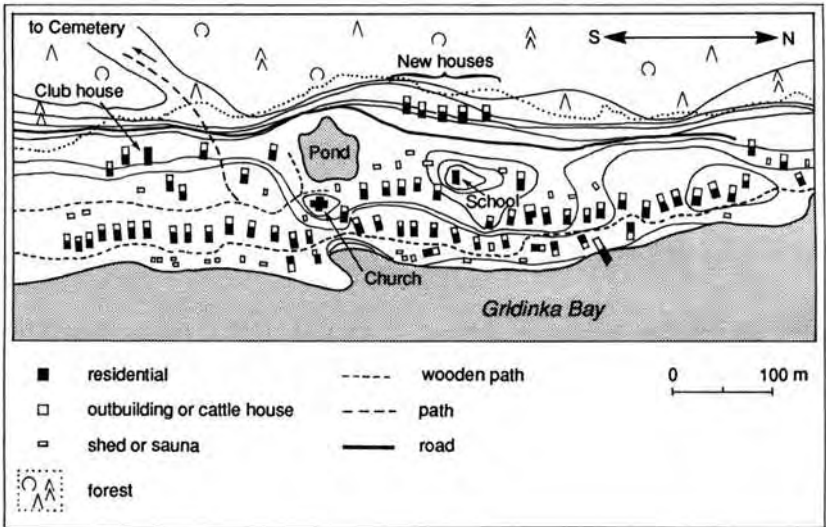


Fig. 5. The Village of Gridino.



Fig. 6. The village of Gridino is located on the rocky cliffs.

There have been some efforts to further develop the village in the last few years, such as the new village road being built in 1989, and a year later, in 1990, the village being supplied with electricity. The kolkhoz has acquired two new fishing boats, both of which have refrigeration (Danilov 1992). With such boats, the fishermen are allowed to work in the Barents Sea. In addition, new houses have been built for the younger generation so that they may remain in the village.

### *The Restructuring Development Periods of the Case Villages*

When analyzing the development processes of the case villages, different time periods of development become apparent (Fig. 7). The basis for the current stage of development was the collectivization process of the Soviet Union at the end of 1920's. Prior to that, the inhabitants were peasants and private fishermen.

Both case villages acquired their fishing kolkhoz in 1930, from which their collective economies were built. Both fishing villages initially succeeded economically and received the merit of being "millionaire" kolkhozes. The Second World War undermined the survival of the villages because many of the men who fought in the war never returned. After the war, the reconstruction of Karelia began.

By the beginning of the 1960's, the development of the villages went in diametric directions. The reorganization of fishing production in Karelia then occurred, which affected every aspect of the villages' economies. The kolkhoz of Virma was terminated, whereas the kolkhoz of Gridino progressed. (To read more about the rationalization, see section 2.2).

Both villages underwent the restructuring and reorganization of their production by the society. There was an immense need of labor for industry and urbanization took place rapidly. For Virma this experience was fatal. Gradually, the village began to perish, as its public services were sequentially closed. Gridino also suffered, but most of the institutions, such as the kolkhoz, school etc. managed to survive intact.

The perestroika period of the 1980's made living conditions in rural areas more economically meager than formerly. The villages faced the lack of a food supply, and, thus, the meaning of

the villages changed. This can be noted especially in Virma, which has evolved into a summer village. And, as for the kolkhoz in Gridino, it was forced to modernize its production or perish.

The present situation in 1993 is also very unstable. Social services have almost collapsed, collective assets will be redistributed, and there is the reconstruction of a new economy taking place. In the case villages, this has become evident with the privatization process. Legislation is constantly changing and the final process currently remains unknown.

The method of development in the case villages has basically been a series of great changes; the villages having undergone extensive restructuring processes from the late 1920's. However, the current process is still one of the most momentous changes within the case villages.

Fig. 7. The restructuring periods of the case villages.

VIRMA	POLITICAL CHANGES AND TIME PERIODS	GRIDINO
	<i>1917-1930</i>	
Private peasants and private fishermen	<i>Post-revolution period</i>  <i>Building of Communist Society</i>	Private peasants and private fishermen
	<i>1929-1930</i>	
Fishing kolkhoz "Truzennik" founded in 1930  From hard work to good living connections; development to "millionaire kolkhoz"	<i>Foundation of collective economy system established</i>  <i>Building of collective economy</i>	Fishing kolkhoz "Popeda" founded in 1930  From hard work to good living connections; development to "millionaire kolkhoz"
	<i>1959</i>	
Kolkhoz was closed and replaced with sovkhos 1960  Dissipation of village begins  School closed 1972 Kindergarten closed 1974	<i>Politics of big economic units</i>  <i>Pressure for change mounts in the beginning of 1980's</i>	Pressure for change within kolkhoz  Population moves to towns to work in factories  Operation of kolkhoz weakens
	<i>1985</i>	
Meaning of village changes; transformation into summer village	<i>Perestroika begins</i>	Re-organization of kolkhoz begins, social problems expand Modernizing kolkhoz
	<i>1991-1993</i>	
Summer village Sovkhos closed down in 1993	<i>Perestroika period</i> <i>Communism was suppressed</i>	Re-organization continues
	<i>1993</i>	
Privatization introduced	<i>Building a new economy</i>	Privatization introduced

## 2.2 The Case Villages and the Division of Labor in Karelia

The economic foundation of the case villages is the fishing trade, supplemented by a subsistence on agriculture. Karelia provides extensive opportunities for fishing and associated industries. There is much inland water (comp. Varis 1993a, 21); however, the most important type of fishing in Karelia is sea-fishing. The largest catches of fish have been yielded from the Atlantic Sea. The fishing areas have been divided into four main regions: the Atlantic Sea, the Barents Sea, the White Sea and inland waters (i.e. inland lakes and rivers). Fishing, however, is a minor source of livelihood for the Karelian Republic as a whole. Fish processing constitutes only about 7% of all production in Karelia. The more important production of the Karelian Republic is based on forestry and agriculture in the rural areas. (Varis 1993a).

In order to maintain the economy of the social system, each area had its own plans and goals for its fishing production, and each area consisted of both types of economic units: fishing sovkhozes (Goslov) and fishing kolkhozes, for which norms were set by the administrative authorities. (For more on the definitions of "kolkhoz" and "sovkhoz", see the beginning of Chapter 2.)

### *A Brief History of the Organization of Fishing Production in Karelia*

After the collectivization of production at the end of the 1920's, the basis of the fishing organization grew in 1932, when the "**Karelian Fishing Kolkhoz Soviet**" (Karel'skii rybak-kolhozsojuz) was founded. It included 8 fishing kolkhoz soviet districts and consisted of 57 fishing kolkhozes.

The "Karelian fishing kolkhozes soviet" had the following purposes:

- to organize the fishing work in fishing kolkhozes,
- to fulfill specified production goals,
- to support the production of the fishing kolkhozes by providing building and other materials,
- to help fishing kolkhozes organize their farms,
- to plan all operations of the fishing kolkhozes and of the "Karelian Fishing Kolkhozes Soviet" itself, and

- to organize the public service economy of the fishing kolkhozes in the fishing production districts in the republic.

(Source: Documents from the National Archives of the Karelian Republic)

In different stages of the Karelian Republic, the fishing industry also received new organizational forms and new names (regarding the stages of Karelian Republic, see cf. Varis 1993a,9). The common aspect for all of them was that of working firstly under the Republic Administration, and then under the entire Soviet Union Fishing Administration. The names of the authorities varied, but the hierarchy ultimately did not.

When the Karelian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (KASSR) changed its name to the Karelian-Finnish Socialist Republic (KFSR) in 1940, a new organization for fishing production was also founded. The "**Karelian-Finnish Fishing Kolkhoz Soviet**" contained 70 kolkhozes. The 1930's and 1940's was a time period of economic growth, when the organizational bases for the republic were formed. The premise for their functioning had remained the same; however, it was impossible for production to continue during the Second World War. After the war began, the reconstruction of production was initiated. In the fishing industry, this can be seen by the amount of operating kolkhozes (cf. Table 3.).

In 1956, the KFSR was suspended and the KASSR returned in its place. In the fishing organization, a new "**Management for the Fishing Kolkhozes and Motor Fishing Stations**" was founded, which worked under the control of the Fishing Ministry of the Karelian Republic.

### *The Reorganization of Fishing Production*

In the 1950's, the number of fishing kolkhozes decreased rapidly, (cf. Table 3), which was indicative of the decline of all fishing kolkhozes, including both sea fishing and inland fishing kolkhozes. This was due to a heavy increase of production in forestry and the demand for forestry labor in Karelia. The labor force was released from the agriculture and fishing trades while rationalizing its production. People also moved from other sectors of production to work in the forestry sector, attracted largely by higher wages. More labor likewise came from the southern areas of the Soviet Union - further augmenting the stream of immigrants into Karelia.



Table 3. Number of Fishing Kolkhozes in Karelia from 1932 to 1993.

YEAR	1932	1939	1949	1959	1960	1966	1993
NUMBER	57	70	77	34	18	13	5

The most significant political change in the fishing production structure occurred from 1959 through 1960, when the reorganization of the entire fishing order took place. It was determined that 16 ineffective fishing kolkhozes in Karelia would be discontinued. This decision of closure was based on reasons of economical rationale.

While reorganizing the fishing production and subduing the majority of kolkhozes, the operations were transformed into state-based organizations, i.e. sovkhoses. The remainder of the employees were transferred to sovkhoses, in which they became wage workers. As a result, they had less influence on the decision-making processes concerned with production and its related operations than they did when they were employed under kolkhozes. In addition, the sovkhoses do not provide as wide of a service sector as do the kolkhozes.

"Brikads"<sup>2</sup> were formed by the workers of the kolkhozes, which went to work under the larger sovkhos. The center of the sovkhos is located in a town or a large village, where the local authority works. The sovkhos works under the general administration of the district.

In practice, this meant that fishermen of the subdued kolkhozes were ordered to work in Goslov. Other labor (mostly women) was directed to work for the farming sovkhos. In some cases, fishing as a livelihood was totally abandoned, and in its place people were employed by the forestry district (lespromhoz). For example, this occurred in Sumskii Posad, which is near the village of Virma.

Generally, this reorganization process affected all of the aspects of the economy of Karelia. In the agricultural field, all kolkhozes were discontinued, and farming sovkhoses were founded in their place. Forestry production was organized under the control of a huge forest organization (later Karellesprom) into forestry districts.

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<sup>2</sup> Brikad is a working unit consisting couple of dozens workers.

### *The Mentality of Intensification*

After the reorganization of the fishing kolkhozes, the new organization "Sevryba" (established in 1962) also set goals for fishing production. Its guidelines emphasized "the maximum use and quality of labor, the modernization of working methods, the economical organizing of all fields of fishing production and the achievement of maximum production". (Source: Documents of the National Archives of the Karelian Republic).

The intensification of fishing production and all other production in Karelia was heavily pursued. Since the beginning of the 1960's, the number of fishing kolkhozes was still diminishing, (cf. Table 3.) and economically feeble units were closed.

By the end of 1970's, the organization of the Karelian fishing production was once again transformed. During the prior decades, the fishing production had been controlled by the "Karelrybprom" (the fishing production group of Karelia). During its working years, the other fishing kolkhozes in Karelia (except the five in the Kem and Belomorsk districts) (Fig. 8) had been discontinued.

In the 1990's, this current production group is also under reorganization. The Karelian Fishermen's Soviet had been founded, which supervises and maintains all equipment. In the autumn of 1993, the Karelrybprom underwent a transformation, due to the privatization process. The most important change in this restructuring process is that a limited company, whose stocks will be shared amongst private owners, has been created. The former workers will be the new owners of these company stocks. The administrative unit, the "Committee of the Fishing Industry", which controls the fishing industry (working under the direction of Ministry Council of Karelian Republic), is currently a distinct unit.

### **2.3 The Effects of Reorganization on the Fishing Kolkhozes in the Case Villages**

During the reorganization period of the fishing kolkhozes of 1959-1960, each district had lost at least three fishing kolkhozes. In the Belomorsk and Kem districts, this decision meant that altogether six kolkhozes had to be closed (Fig. 7).

Even if the Barents Sea fishing project did not fulfill its goals<sup>3</sup> by 1959, economic rationalizing has still failed to explain the reason for closing so many fishing kolkhozes. Virma's kolkhoz Truzennik was operating as a designated "millionaire" kolkhoz, and in 1959 it surpassed its plan by seventy percent; hence, economically, it was far from weak.

There were five kolkhozes located near the Virma kolkhoz in the Belomorsk district. The political decision was not to develop all of them, but to close some of them, despite their economic viability at the local level. Virma's kolkhoz Truzennik belonged to that group.

A far more important reason for the closure of the fishing kolkhozes was the desire to centralize production, i.e. to maintain a minimum number of efficient units of production. Kolkhozes that were geographically close to each other were discontinued. For example, the kolkhozes "Truzennik" in Virma, "Okean" in Suhoje and "Put Lenina" in Suereckoje (Fig. 8) were located very near the town of Belomorsk, which is the center of the fishing industry in Karelia. Regardless of the fact that these kolkhozes may have secured the future of the fishing industry in Belomorsk, their closure had been decided. Also, the competition amongst various fishing areas had grown when the modernization of the fishing machinery occurred.

The closure of the kolkhozes also had an impact on the expenses of village improvement; for example, it was costly to build new roads and to supply electricity and plumbing systems to these rural areas. Maintaining schools, shops, medical and cultural services was also relatively exorbitant. The political decision enacted was to determine the so-called "villages with prospects for the future" and those "villages with no prospects for the future". In such a manner, the rationalization of the settlement structure took place.

The same situation occurred in the Kem district. Kolkhozes located near each other were closed. The village of Gridino was designated as a "village with prospects for the future". Thus, the kolkhoz Popeda of Gridino was saved. Two other kolkhozes which continued to be active in the Kem district were the "12th Year for October" in Kalgalaksa and "Belomorskii Ribak" in Pongoma. As grounds to save these three kolkhozes, the fishing authority of the Kem district emphasized that, "they are economically strong kolkhozes, they guarantee high quality

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<sup>3</sup> The White Sea fishing fulfilled only 86% of its goal in 1959, when the whole production of fishing in Karelia surpassed its goal 8%. (Source: Documents of National Archives of Karelian Republic).

labor and production and they have good prospects for the future of organizing their fishing production units" (Source: Documents of the National Archives of the Karelian Republic).

In 1959, there were 11 fishing kolkhozes in operation in the Belomorsk and Kem districts, and 23 (cf. Table 3) in the other districts. The decision to discontinue some kolkhozes thinned-down the network of fishing kolkhozes in the districts (Fig. 8). As of 1993, there are three working fishing kolkhozes in the Kem district and two in the Belomorsk district. They are currently the only working fishing kolkhozes in the Karelian Republic. Presently, there are plans to link all of the kolkhozes in the Kem district together. Thus, the restructuring will continue, but under new capitalism.

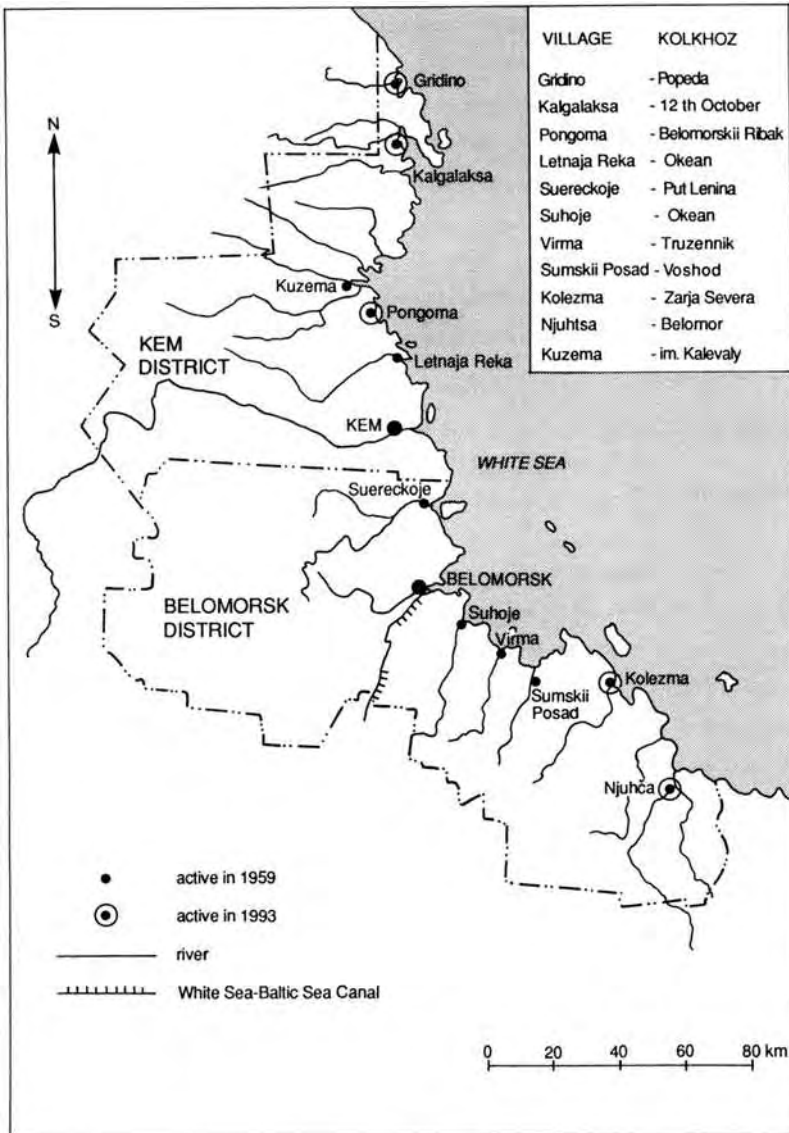


Fig. 8. The Fishing kolkhozes of the Kem and Belomorsk districts in 1959 and 1993.

### 3. THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE CASE VILLAGES

This chapter presents the basic facts of the social structure in the case villages. The population of the villages varies notably in different times of the year: during the summer-time, the population grows to about double its winter-time size. Fluctuations in family relations are indicated by marital status and the childrens' connections to their home villages. Village-born inhabitants feel a strong tie to their home villages, which is manifested by their return in the summer.

The means of living in the villages is fairly satisfied, even though the facilities in the old houses are rather deficient. These residential homes are mainly privately-owned. Public services in the villages have weakened further in the last years, and leisure-time hobbies are more like actions than hobbies.

#### 3.1 Population Structure

Because demographical data of the villages is not available, the distribution of the inhabitants of the case villages has been carried out according to sex and age group in the interviews (Fig. 9). As stated earlier, the population of the case villages varies seasonally. Thus, the inhabitants of the villages are divided into two categories: permanent residents and summer residents. The interviews were conducted during the summer, and so about one-third of the interviewees were summer inhabitants. Thus, approximately two-thirds of the interviewees were permanent residents in the village: in Virma, 24 out of 34 were permanent residents, and, in Gridino, 57 out of 78 were permanent residents.

##### *Permanent Residents*

The average age of the permanent residents of both villages is relatively high. In Virma, 86% and in Gridino, 42% of the permanent residents are at the age of 55 or over (Fig. 9). It is of interest to note that for all of Karelia, the percentage of those in this age group is only 18.5% (Soviet Karelia, 1990). Virma especially is a village of pension-aged residents. There are few middle-aged people (i.e. 35-54 years of age), and inhabitants under 35 years of age are entirely non-existent.

In contrast, all age groups all represented in Gridino, but there also, the older age groups are remarkably accentuated. Permanent, young, working-age residents (i.e. 16-35 years of age) constitute 18% of the permanent inhabitants of Gridino. There are also 27 children who are permanently resident in Gridino. Within the sex groups, there is a majority of women, especially in Virma, among the older residents. Therefore, it can be said that the population of Gridino is considerably more vigorous than that of Virma.

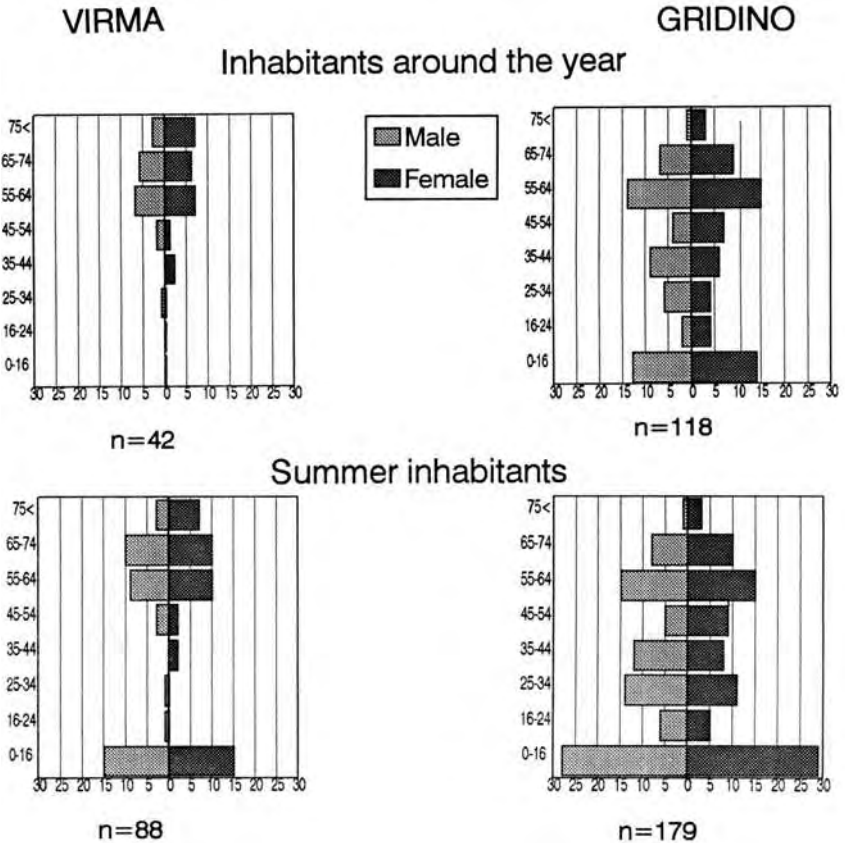


Fig. 9. Permanent and Summer-time Populations in the Case Villages.

The number of inhabitants in summertime has been estimated according to data collected from the interviews. The sex of the children is not referred to, and so it is calculated equally for both sexes.

*Summer Residents*

In summer-time, the population more than doubles in Virma and in Gridino it becomes one-third larger. The largest group of summer residents in both villages is the children, as they usually spend their summer holidays with their grandparents.

Summer-time even transforms the usually composed village of Virma into a very lively community, as approximately 30 "summer children" arrive for their summer holidays. The children come to the village often with their grandparents, who are another large group of summer inhabitants in Virma. In contrast, during the winter, no school-age children can be found at all.

The summer inhabitants of Virma, i.e. 10 of 34 interviewed, usually spend their entire summer (4-7 months) in the village, having come from the cities nearby. They come to the countryside in the spring when it is time to plant potatoes and return to their permanent residences in the autumn, when the potatoes are gathered. The summer inhabitants of Virma, pensioners, have been born in Virma, but have bought a residence in town for winter, because life is easier in the town during winter-time. For example, the town dwellings have heating, indoor plumbing and public services are located nearby. It is common for such ones to have their permanent dwelling in the nearby town of Belomorsk.

In Gridino, the summer inhabitants consisted 21 of 78 interviewed. Many of them represent the young working-age group (16-34 yy). Due to its local treasured feature of isolation, young working-age people often spend their entire holiday in Gridino, whereas, in Virma, it is more common for this group to spend only shorter times there (such as weekends) because of the road connections. However, this time on the average is 1-2 months, so it is shorter time than among the pensioner summer inhabitants in Virma. This is due to the fact that Gridino summer inhabitants are working-age people and must return to their occupations. Summer provides also the children of Gridino with about the same amount of school-age friends, who usually happen to be their cousins. There are also pensioners who spend the whole summer in their home village. The town of Kem is the usual permanent dwelling place for these ones.



*Family relations*

In both villages, the majority of residents proved to be married. Proportionate to an increase in age, many inhabitants were also found to be widows or widowers. In Gridino, there are many unmarried men<sup>4</sup>, the main problem being the low availability of young, marriage-age women, as most of those available are relatives, and women from outside the village are unwilling to re-locate to the village. The same problem likewise exists amongst the young women, and very often they leave the village because of it (Table 4.).

Table 4. Marital status.

Marital status number (%)	Virma n=34	Gridino n=78
married	22 (64,7)	48 (61,5)
single	3 (8,8)	16 (20,5)
divorced	3 (8,8)	2 (2,6)
widow/er	6 (17,7)	12 (15,4)

It was noted in the interviews that those families which have children usually have more than one. The largest number of children found in a family was 8. There are no permanently resident adolescent children in Virma. Some of the young adults of Virma are dwelling in the village, but most have moved to the town of Belomorsk or to other nearby centers, and many have moved to Severodvinsk, in the Archangels region. One of the reasons for that is that Virma is located near the railway to Archangels, and so transportation is very convenient.

In Gridino, it is common to find many generations living in the village together. As for families with children, usually at least one of the adult children stays in the village. However, the majority of village-born people have migrated. The most common town to move has been Kem and there are also many Gridino-born people working in Tsupa, in the Loukhi district. The small children who live in the village live with their parents.

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<sup>4</sup> The common-law marriage is very rare in Russia, only one of the interviewees in Gridino said to live in a one.

### 3.2. Life in the Villages

#### *Ties to their Home Villages*

Most of the village dwellers have been born in the village itself, the amount of interviewees having been born in the village being 62% for both villages. Ties to their home village are strong and there is no willingness to move away. The will to remain in the villages is intense. In Virma, 80% (23 out of 29) of the interviewees wanted to remain in the village. The old pensioners refuse to migrate because they have lived in the village for most of their lives. They have roots in their home village and they simply do their best to survive, despite often the dire conditions of life. Only one interviewee admitted his desire to move away, and he was the only unemployed young man in the village.

In Gridino, there was more of a willingness to migrate elsewhere, as there is a larger percentage of young people whose "roots are not in very deep". They have a desire to experience something new. Twenty percent (15 out of 75) of the interviewees stated their intention not to stay in the village. However, only 16 percent (11 out of 69) indicated that they wanted to migrate elsewhere. This seeming contradiction can be accounted for in that the interviewees had not seriously given thought to what migration really means. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the villagers do not have any serious or realistic plans to move elsewhere. In general, it can be said that the people of Gridino likewise want to remain in their village.

Those who have lived elsewhere have very distinct attitudes from those of the case villagers. In Virma, all of the permanent inhabitants who have lived elsewhere have lived there for an extended period of time. Generally, they have worked secularly in larger towns. This change of residence occurred during those times when the larger towns were seeking industrial labor. After reaching pension age, they migrate back to their villages to spend their retirement days there.

In Gridino, those born elsewhere but who have resided in the village are mostly those other than the village-born women, which have spent their youth in their home village (very often in the neighboring village of Kalgalaksa) before marriage with a Gridino man. There are also inhabitants who have studied in Belomorsk, Kem or Petrozavodsk and worked there for a couple of years and then returned back to home village.

In Virma, 53 percent (18 out of 34) of the interviewees have relatives who are also living in Virma. This number is even greater for Gridino: 93 percent (72 out of 78) of those interviewed had relatives in the village. This very close relationship causes some social problems: for example, marriage among relatives (which is quite common in isolated regions).

### *Residence*

The case villages are old coastal villages, which have been populated since the 1500's. People live in detached houses, which are architecturally rich. These houses are a combination of both the old Karelian and the old Russian building styles. The majority of the houses date back to the 19th and early 20th century. Due to the lack of building materials and equipment, the structure of the houses has become dilapidated. In Gridino, the kolkhoz has constructed five new houses during the last 5 years. Also, 3 new private houses have been built. The building of houses is quite unregulated; there are no particular regulations in regards to construction, and there are no plans to devise such regulations.



Fig. 10. The view of the village of Virma is dominated by an orthodox church.

The village houses are relatively small: on the average, there are two rooms and a kitchen. The kitchen is, however, a large main room, where the family action is concentrated - very rarely is there a separate living room. The toilet is usually outdoors - a common feature for Karelian houses. On the other side of the family house, the toilet along with the cattlehouse (barn) can be found. Customarily, a separate sauna building can be found near the home which is nowadays known as a "white sauna", since the smoke is filtered outside via a pipe. In earlier times, the "black sauna", in which no such pipe is used, was common. The sauna is very crucial for personal hygiene, as no showers exist in either of the villages.

Technical facilities are scarce, regardless of how new the house may be. All houses in both villages have electricity, but lack indoor plumbing and gas. Water is obtained from the community well of Gridino. In Virma, the water is taken from the river and rarely from the spring, because it is located four kilometers from the village. In both villages, rain water is gathered very carefully. In Virma, electricity has been in use for about twenty years, but in Gridino it is quite a new commodity, having been supplied just in 1990.



Fig. 11. The kolkhoz has constructed new houses for young people in Gridino.

When people were questioned about the satisfaction with their housing conditions, some indicated dissatisfaction. The residents would like to have indoor plumbing and gas. The houses are also rather cold (especially in winter-time), because they are old and poorly insulated, and in the summer, there is not enough ventilation. However, regardless of a lack of facilities (eg. no indoor plumbing, no gas, and poor insulation) the people in general seemed quite satisfied with their housing (Fig. 12). They have gotten used to living in such a manner, and are not accustomed to any other sort of lifestyle.

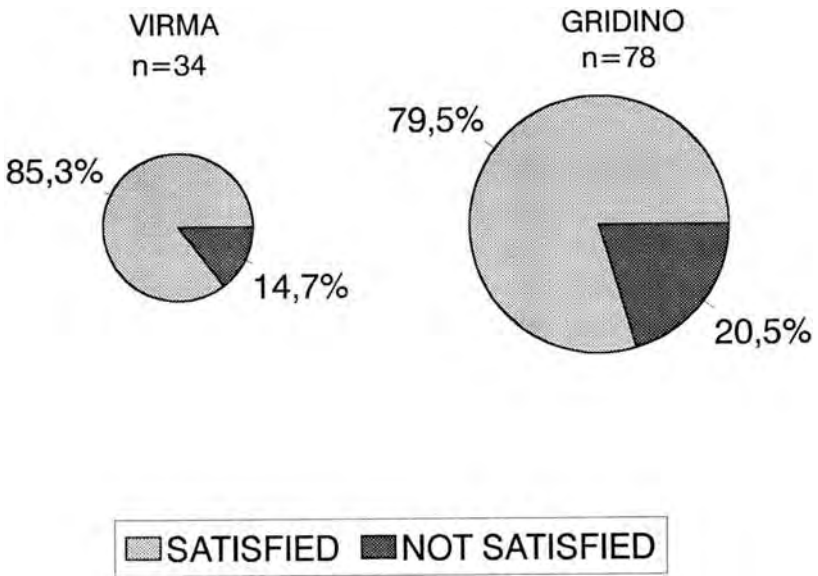


Fig. 12. Satisfaction with Housing.

### *Ownership of the Residence*

The family house is usually the only concrete property that these rural dwellers own. In Virma 80% (27 out of 34) of the interviewees' homes were owned by the interviewee and 20% (7 out of 34) of the homes were owned by relatives. Only one interviewee, a summer inhabitant, was living in his relative's house during the summer-time. Otherwise, summer inhabitants own their summer residences themselves.

In Gridino, 92% (72 out of 78) of the houses were owned by the interviewee or his/her relatives. Six houses were owned by the kolkhoz (the newly built rentable houses), which have been built for younger people in order to attract them to the village. 70 % of the summer inhabitants of Gridino spend their summers in the houses of their relatives.

Permanently, there are approximately two persons living in a Virma house and three in a Gridino house. When summer guests are living in the village, the houses are rather crowded, as there can be as many as ten summer guests living in one home.

The villagers do not own their plot of land, but pay a small rent for it to the village soviet. Nowadays, a land division process is taking place, which allows the villagers the option to buy the plot of land on which they live. The price is relatively low, but the purchasing of the plots is strictly controlled. Certain stipulations exist which determine who is allowed to purchase the land. For example, foreigners are not allowed to purchase any land, and even the citizens themselves cannot purchase any land aside from their own specified plot.

### **3.3 Public Services**

The level of public services found reflects each village's economic base and population development. In Gridino, there are some working public services, but in Virma there are very few.

*Inadequate Services in Virma*

In the village of Virma, general services are rare. The only active services are the village shop, the bus connection to Belomorsk and Sumskii Posad and the nurse's reception, available once a week. According to the interviews, the shop is open irregularly, causing frustration amongst the people.

In addition to that, the supplies found in the shop are very minimal these days. There is even a lack of basic products, such as bread, sugar, meat and milk. They are available only occasionally. Industrial supplies, farming equipment, kitchen ware, clothing and all other commodities cannot be found in the shop. Bread is brought, in principle, regularly twice a week from the town to the village, but especially during the winter obtaining bread is uncertain, due to the scanty snow plowing of the roads. A common opinion among the villagers is that the service of the shop has deteriorated significantly during the last ten years (Table 5).

Transportation to and from Virma is quite substantial, compared with its other services. This is due to Virma's location near the road that goes from Belomorsk to Sumskii Posad, as the route buses must also stop in Virma (Fig. 2). Also nearby Virma, a small village called "Virma Station" is located. Through it run the trains between Murmansk and Archangels, of which some stop at Virma Station. The post office is open a couple of hours each week, but there is no telegraph service. A few telephones exist in the village.

There is no kindergarten, school, active club-house or active church in Virma. The village school was closed in 1972 and the kindergarten was subsequently closed in 1974. Nowadays there is not even a need for these public services for children, because there are no children permanently resident in Virma. The club-house, as such, still exists, but it is inactive. In its active days, movies, dances and cultural events were organized for the village dwellers. The club-house includes also the library, which is open only occasionally.

Many services are completely missing in Virma. For instance, there is no hairdresser or barber, no shoemaker, and no repairman of technical vessels. The nurse of Virma has an open reception once a week. The people would like to have it open more often, and would also like the reception of a doctor. Since this has not occurred, if the villagers are in need of a doctor, they must travel to Belomorsk (38 km away), where the nearest hospital is situated.

There was a large active Orthodox church (Fig. 10) in earlier times in Virma. However, the church was closed in the 1930's not been in operation since. The icons were removed and their location is still unknown. A couple of years ago there were some proposals by the "Administration of Cultural Matters of the Republic" to reconstruct the church because its architecture is very unique. The church has been protected, but no other activities have happened since then. Most of the people hope that the church will become active again in the future; however, the villagers have not done anything revive the church themselves.

There have been requests to repair the village road, and especially the bridge over Virma river. The bridge is wooden, in bad condition and consists of only one lane. This is, however, a matter for the district authorities.

The gradual disappearing of services has taken place due to the disappearance of the economic base and depopulation. The vicious cycle of service closures, depopulation and a lack of investments have lead to social segregation; the people, who have no other choice, remain in the village. The minimization of services is due to depopulation, which accounts for the decreasing demand for goods.

### *Public Services in Gridino*

The village of Gridino provides significantly more general services than Virma. There is a working 8-year school, two shops, a club-house and post office with telegraph service. The bus route goes to Engozero, where there is a railway station.

Villagers would like to develop the village school into a 10 year school, and along with this upgraded school, a modern sports hall, including a swimming pool, is desired. A swimming pool would be the first in the whole district. Such a goal seems to be quite unrealistic, at least for the present time.

There are also some plans to build a new club-house for the village. Nowadays, the club is operating: movies, dances and invited orchestras and ensembles are performed regularly. The club-house has a library, and there is also another small library at the school that is for public use. There is also a separate discotheque for the youths.



Both the village soviet and the kolkhoz have their own shops. Also, the shops of Gridino are minimally equipped, there is a lack of basic supplies, and minimal possibilities to buy clothes, vessels and tools. Luxury commodities, such as candies and coffee, are available only occasionally. Sometimes there is even a lack of basic foods, such as sugar, flour, hulled grains and tea. Seldom are meat and milk products available. Also, baked goods are not to be found.

There is a road connection to Engozero (a distance of about 50 km), and the kolkhoz bus travels there three times a week. The road is unsealed and bumpy and during the spring season it is blocked-off, so the connection at that time of the year does not exist. However, the people of Gridino seem satisfied with this connection, as the road has just been built in 1989, and prior to that, they had only a once-a-week helicopter connection to the outside world. In addition, they used reindeer and, naturally, the water routes. The villagers feel that the road is a good improvement on their public services, despite its poor condition, because prior to it they had no road connection at all (Table 5).

According to the interviews, the worst deterioration has been in the service sector within the last ten years. As in Virma, there is no hairdresser or barber, no shoemaker, and no repairman of technical vessels. The demand in Gridino is not sufficient to maintain any of those services.

There is continuous health service in the village, because there is a nurse on duty in the special "health house" (medpunkt). However, there is the lack of a resident doctor - the nearest hospital being in Loukhi, over 100 km away.

Gridino has an Orthodox church, but it is a ramshackle and has been closed. The people would like to repair it, and the repairing work had even begun, but for some reason it was interrupted. The church nowadays serves as a playground for children.

### *Satisfaction with Public Services in the Case Villages*

In both villages, the people agree that the supply of services has weakened during the last ten years. Only the medical services in both villages were recognized as having improved in the last few years. The school in Gridino operates, but the general consensus is that it, too, has deteriorated recently. The care of young children is done within the home.

When inquiring as to the villagers' attitude about their public services, interesting viewpoints were found: for example, when the question, "Are you satisfied with your school?" was asked in Virma, there were no answers, because there is no school. Interviewees expressed the point that if they don't have or don't use some service, they cannot have an opinion of it. That can be noted in table 5., "Satisfaction with Public Services", as there are many in the "no answer" category.

Most of the interviewed people felt that their services were adequate. Cultural and retail services faced the hardest criticism. Those interviewed were surprisingly satisfied, taking into consideration the fact that they have seen T.V. films depicting life in wealthier parts of the world. Perhaps such lifestyles seems so strange that they are not desired.

Table 5. Satisfaction with Public Services.

Are you satisfied with your...?	VIRMA, n=34			GRIDINO, n=78		
	YES	NO	NO ANSWER	YES	NO	NO ANSWER
SCHOOL	0	0	34	44	29	5
KINDERGARTEN	0	0	34	3	5	70
MEDICAL SERV.	25	7	2	61	11	6
GENERAL SERV.*	0	19	15	2	36	40
CULTURAL SERV.	1	19	14	38	30	10
CONNECTIONS	28	2	4	29	47	2
TRANSPORTATION	32	1	1	71	7	0
SHOP: FOODSTUFFS	16	18	0	27	51	0
SHOP: OTHER GOODS	13	21	0	24	52	2

\* eg. barber, shoemaker, repairman etc.

### 3.4 Free Time Activities

Life in the villages is leisurely. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish between free time and other modes of spending time. The majority of inhabitants are on pension and they are continuously busy with their own private tasks.

The most remarkable hobby is working in the home garden. As a matter of fact, it is not so much a hobby as it is a way of life. This also refers to fishing and the gathering of berries and mushrooms. These are very important means of supplementing one's livelihood, and are a natural part of everyday life.

An important free time activity is paying visits to friends and relatives. In a small community, people know each other well (in fact, they are often relatives), and visit each other very often. Such visits are informal, very often people just "drop-in" on a neighbor. Naturally, anniversaries and other parties are celebrated with friends and relatives. Maintaining social contacts is an important way of spending time in the villages.

The various seasons of the year dictate everyday life in these villages. In the summer-time, the village is full of summer inhabitants and guests. In Virma, 85% (29 out of 34) of the interviewees and in Gridino 90% (67 out of 70) of interviewees reported to have had summer guests. The number of summer guests in different families varies from one guest to thirty guests. A family with multiple children and grandchildren would account for a large number of guests. The people are very polite and hospitable by nature, and so it is relatively easy to tolerate and take care of so many guests. This consideration was also noticed by our research group, which was treated with hospitality and curiosity at every place.

Winter brings silence to both villages; there are few communal activities that take place. Most people spend their long winters watching television, reading and performing various handicrafts.

#### *Free Time Activities Lacking in Virma*

There are no cultural activities such as going to a cinema or concert, visiting the library or participating in hobby clubs, because there are no such possibilities in Virma. Sports are

merely a matter of personal interest. Some of the inhabitants (6 out of 34) stated that they attend church services when they are visiting towns that have an active church. Only some summer inhabitants noted having cultural hobbies, but only at their place of permanent residence. Summers are spent tending the garden and gathering the gifts of nature. Winters are passed by being busy in the home with various tasks, and visiting neighbors' homes is a part of everyday life.

*Free Time is Spent Largely at the Club-house of Gridino*

Also in Gridino, the most important way to spend free time in summer is by private gardening, gathering berries and mushrooms and fishing. Also, visiting friends and relatives is a way of life. In general, the village of Gridino has relatively more opportunities for free-time activities than the village of Virma has. There is an active club-house where movies, organized dances and concerts are performed. The villagers have indicated, however, that the club-house has become quieter in recent years. Almost half of the interviewees (35 out of 77), mainly the youths, told of their time spend at the movies. A light interest exists in visiting the library (18 out of 77) and in playing sports (20 out of 77). No interest in children's clubs (among the adults) existed in Gridino.

Gridino has the same problem as Virma: there is no active church. Twelve people stated that they would visit the church when they have the opportunity. There is some sort of church action in Gridino. The old church had begun to be repaired, but for some reason the work was interrupted. Church ceremonies are sometimes held in the village homes. Occasionally the priest, "Father Vladimir" from the town of Kem, visits Gridino and conducts weddings, funerals and christening parties.

Working-age people have, in winter-time, a relatively large amount of spare time. One reason is that fishing is not possible at all times of year. The kolkhoz has provided a small sawmill for winter-time activities, where the men can create various woodwork for both private use and for the use of the kolkhoz, too.

*Mobility from the Case Villages*

The mobility of Virma inhabitants is relatively low. Only 14% (5 out of 34) of the interviewees stated that they leave their village more than once a month. A greater number of interviewees (15 out of 34) noted that they leave their village only once a month, and there were five interviewees, older ladies, who said that they never leave the village at all.

The most usual visiting place is Belomorsk, where access to better services is gained. In Belomorsk, shopping, as well as caring for personal matters (such as visiting the hospital or a doctor) is done. However, the most common reason for leaving the village is to visit relatives, mainly children of the villagers. The center of local authority is not important to the inhabitants of Virma, because only three of the interviewees stated that they visit Sumskaa Posad more often than Belomorsk, as it is the center of the village soviet. However, the supply of services in Sumskaa Posad is also meager.

In general, it can be concluded that the people are satisfied in spending their time at home in the village. For example, visiting the capital, Petrozavodsk, is very rare. Also, taking holidays trips to the south is very seldomly done.

Departing the village is also rare in Gridino. Only one of the interviewees stated that he left the village many times a month. 43% (29 out of 67) of the interviewees stated that they leave the village once a month and the rest depart even more rarely. There were 16 (23%) interviewees stating that they never leave the village. Gridino's accessibility is very limited, so departures from the village are usually concentrated to only a few times a year. Making the trip itself takes a lot of time. For example, the ride to Engozero by bus takes about two hours, if the weather and road conditions permit. If road conditions are poor, the travel time becomes longer.

In Gridino, the amount of potential visiting places is larger than that for Virma. The most usual visiting place is the town of Kem. There are also many people who visit the capital, Petrozavodsk. Other usual visiting places are Belomorsk, Tsupa (in the Loukhi district) and Murmansk. Some of the Gridino inhabitants have relatives very far away, even as far as Tallinn, Estonia, where they visit regularly.

As in Virma, the most important reason for leaving the village is to visit relatives or friends. In Kem, shopping and the care of personal matters, such as visiting the hospital is done. Some of the trips can be done also out of duty; for example, teachers must visit regularly the district educational administration.

## 4. ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE CASE VILLAGES

This chapter presents the basic facts of the economic structure of the case villages. Fishing is the dominant profession in the coastal villages. Nowadays, its meaning differs in the case villages. Fishing has also had a significant effect on the education the villagers. Their livelihood is meager and is supported by private back-yard gardening. The rising inflation is nowadays causing anxiety.

### 4.1 Fishing Production - the Dominant Profession

#### *Education*

As noted earlier, both the kindergarten and school of Virma were closed about twenty years ago. In earlier times, only the 4-year school operated in Virma. Upper classes were located in the neighboring village (15 km away) of Sumskii Posad, and pupils attended their upper classes there while living at a residence hall. That is one reason why Virma's inhabitants have a relatively low level of formal education: half (17 out of 32) of those interviewed had only a 4-year or lower level of education, which they have obtained from the village school. Two of the villagers stated that they had no education at all. Four interviewees have received professional education and one has obtained a university-level education (teacher/agronomist). (Cf. Table 6)

The 8-year school operating in Gridino allows the children the possibility of obtaining a so-called "under full middle education" (a full middle education is 10 years). The largest group of interviewees (19 out of 77) have an 8 year education (Table 6). There are plans to construct a full middle school (10 year school) in Gridino.

Older people have usually obtained a 4-year education (14 out of 77), because during their school days only a 4-year education was required. The formal education level among the Gridino inhabitants is higher than that of Virma. Nine of those interviewed have received a full middle education and fourteen have obtained a professional education. They have received their education in nearby towns or in Petrozavodsk or St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad). University-level education (five inhabitants are teachers) has been obtained in Petrozavodsk.

In the school year of 1992-93, there were 16 pupils enrolled and 5 teachers teaching at the Gridino school. Three of these teachers are village-born and the other two have migrated to the village. There is no functioning kindergarten in Gridino and the children are generally looked after by their grandparents while their parents are at work.

Table 6. Levels of Formal Education

Educational level	Virma n=32	Gridino n=77
University	1	5
Professional	4	14
Full middle (10 years)	3	9
Under full middle (8 years)	3	19
5-7 years	4	12
Primary (4 years)	13	14
Less than primary or no formal education	4	4
No formal education	2	1

### *Professions in Virma*

Virma is basically a village of pensioners. The pension age in Karelia has been 55 years for women and 60 years for men. Eighty-five percent (29 out of 34) of those interviewed were on pension and only 15% (5 out of 34) were still actively engaged in secular work. Three out of five of the working active people were summer residents. Out of the two permanent inhabitants, one worked as a driver occasionally and the other worked in the fishing factory of Belomorsk. He was also the only one who was considered a commuter in the two case villages. Commuting, in practice, is not feasible because of the long distances, lack of private cars, poor road conditions and transport connections.



Pensioners who have spent their working years in Virma have generally been connected to the fishing kolkhoz by profession. Other common professions among the men of Virma have been mechanic, electrician, motorist, foreman, fisherman or a worker of the kolkhoz. Among women, there were such professions as cleaner, baker, saleswoman, nanny, seamstress or a worker of the kolkhoz.

It was very common for one person to have worked in different fields of the kolkhoz. This was especially common amongst the women workers. Village men were mainly fishermen and the women worked in the farming sector of the kolkhoz. Before the 1960's, when the kolkhoz was in operation its farm cared for 150-200 horses, about 60 cows and occasionally for pigs. After the suppression of the kolkhoz, the women worked for the farming sovkhos and the men worked in the fishing sector for an institution known as "Baza Goslova", which has the same kind of organizational bases as the sovkhos, but it specializes in fishing.



Fig. 13. The traditional profession for men in Virma is that of fisherman.

In the beginning of the 1970's, the farming sovkhos was discontinued. At that time, a large hen farm was planned for the village, to which five kolkhozes would be connected. The hen farm was in operation for a year and the village women worked for it, but then it was closed for being uneconomical. In the kolkhoz time, a bakery functioned in the village, but nowadays bread is brought from Belomorsk twice a week.

Presently, in 1993, the Virma sovkhos merged with the Belomorsk sovkhos. In actuality, this joint sovkhos has not operated for a year, because the last fishermen of the Virma village retired in 1992.

### *Professions in Gridino*

In Gridino, the ratio of pensioners to working people is not as dramatic as it is in Virma. Naturally, this is due to Gridino's active fishing kolkhoz. However, 51% (40 out of 78) of Gridino's inhabitants are pensioners, while working people consist of only 45% (35 out of 78) of those interviewed.



Fig. 14. The kolkhoz office offers jobs for many women in Gridino.

In Gridino also, the occupations mainly stem from the fishing kolkhoz. Of those who stated their profession, twenty were fishermen and thirteen were workers of the kolkhoz. Among the men, other stated professions were, for example, worker of the brikad, motorist, driver, filer, telephone fitter, and electrician.

Among the women, there were the usual professions of cleaner, nanny, bookkeeper, post office worker, cashier, teacher and saleswoman. Some women without work were uncertain as to whether were unemployed or were housewives. Usually, they chose both alternatives. Finally, three summer inhabitants were students. In both villages, retired women who have worked in the kolkhoz during the 1950-1960's have very often worked as fisherwomen too, but nowadays fishing as a profession for women is very rare.

### *Satisfaction with Occupation*

Questions concerning work and working conditions were not particularly appropriate in the village of Virma, because only three of the interviewees were employed. Two of those three were female summer inhabitants, who indicated satisfaction with their work and working conditions. Only one male permanent inhabitant was working in the fishing sovkhov of Belomorsk and he stated dissatisfaction with his work, citing that he only enjoyed free time. Other interviewees were pensioners or unemployed, thus, they were not interviewed with these questions.

Conversely, approximately half of those interviewed in Gridino were employed and they answered questions concerning their work, working conditions, salary, working time, fellow workers and free time. Most of them are working in various tasks of the fishing kolkhoz. Less than half of them stated satisfaction with the operations of kolkhoz. There were only a few answers (23 in all) to questions which estimated the activity of the kolkhoz. On the other hand, they were quite satisfied (28 out of 37) with their work in the kolkhoz. On the average, the workers were also satisfied with their working time (20 out of 34), workmates (22 out of 32) and free time (22 out of 34). However, there was a lot of will for improvement upon the working conditions. The greatest dissatisfaction concerned salaries. In general, the wages of the fishermen are higher than average. Nowadays, high inflation has reduced the value of their salaries, since salaries do not rise at the same rate that inflation does.

## 4.2 Livelihood

### *Rising Inflation Causes Anxiety*

The inflation of the Russian rouble has been tremendous in recent years. This is a major cause of anxiety amongst the common people because goods become increasingly expensive, and wages and pensions have not risen with the inflation. The inflation is illustrated by the fact that one rouble was equal to 0.005 Finnish marks in July of 1993, and so 1 FIM was approximately equivalent to 180 roubles. And, yet, about 5 years ago, one rouble was approximately equivalent to about 7 Finnish marks.

The inflation is the reason why the interviewees have very little personal savings. In Virma, only 38% (13 out of 34) of those interviewed cited having some form of savings, and, in Gridino, only 23% (17 out of 73) noted having a form of savings. However, it was indicated that their savings have virtually no value, because of the accelerating inflation. People who have had a savings of a couple of thousand roubles stated that nowadays their savings has no value at all. Even 100,000 roubles is considered a small sum, when in earlier times, it was the result of many years of accumulated salaries. In addition, the villagers have had to use their savings in recent times, mainly for buying non-food commodities.

### *Wages and Pensions*

The minimum living expenditure of the inhabitants of the Karelian Republic was estimated at 18,356 roubles per month in May of 1993. The minimum wage at that time was 4,250 roubles per month and the minimum pension was surprisingly higher, at 8,120 roubles per month (Popova 1993). With this background, it is easier to understand the value of wages and pensions in the case villages. The value of these wages can be estimated with indicators of the prices of bread and petrol in July of 1993. One kilogram of bread cost about 100 roubles and a liter of petrol cost about 250 roubles; thus, with the minimum salary in Karelia, one could buy 42 loaves of bread or 17 liters of petrol per month.

In Virma, the inhabitant pensioners received an average pension of 18,300 roubles per month, while the maximum pension was 50,000 roubles and the minimum was 10,000 roubles. Only 4 interviewees received a salary between 30,000 and 50,000 roubles per month (cf. Table 7).

To the contrary, the majority of the villagers in Gridino were employed, receiving an average monthly salary of approximately 57,300 roubles, while the minimum salary was 4,000 and the maximum was 200,000. The 4,000 rouble salary is regarded as a "relic" of earlier times. At times, the interviewees did not remember or did not know his/her current salary. That is not surprising, because the currency inflation changes the value of their salaries constantly. On the other hand, 200,000 roubles per month is a very high salary in Russia. This level of income was attained by only a few hard-working fishermen. Pensions also varied very much, the minimum being 4,000 roubles per month, and the maximum being 24,000, when on an average, pension incomes were 13,800 roubles each month.

Table 7. Monthly Wages and Pensions in the Case Villages and the Minimum Wage in Karelia in July, 1993 (roubles).

JULY, 1993	AVRG.	MIN.	MAX.
VIRMA: salary	41,750	30,000	50,000
pension	18,300	10,000	50,000
GRIDINO: salary	57,300	4,000	200,000
pension	13,800	4,000	24,000
KARELIA: salary (May 1993)	-	4,250	-
pension	-	8,120	-

The men received higher salaries and pensions in both villages. The older men were often war veterans and invalids, and thereby received an extra supplement to their monthly pension. The salaries were high among fishermen, but, in contrast, women office workers received comparatively low salaries. The bread-winner of the family is usually the man, and, thus, income which is attained by the wife is considered only a marginal supplement.

### *A Meager Livelihood*

Because of the rapid inflation and difficult living conditions, poverty is commonplace in both case villages. In Virma, over 80% (28 out of 34) of the interviewees could afford to purchase only the most basic food products. Only one interviewee (1 out of 34) stated that he could afford to buy whatever he liked. A small portion (5 out of 34) of the interviewees could also afford the most essential non-food supplies. There are currently major difficulties in purchasing any products at all, because the pensioner villages are so scantily supplied.

In Gridino, the standard of living is relatively higher than that of Virma. Half (37 out of 74) of the interviewees stated that they can afford to purchase more than the most essential products. Conversely, the other half of the interviewees stated that they can only afford to purchase the most basic food products.

Nevertheless, the people do not complain of being hungry. The villages have become very self-sufficient. Food supplies are grown privately (cf. chapter 4.3.). Basic food products are coming from their own private gardens. There are sheep and cows for meat and milk producing. In addition, fish are caught, berries and mushrooms are gathered and forest animals are hunted for meat.

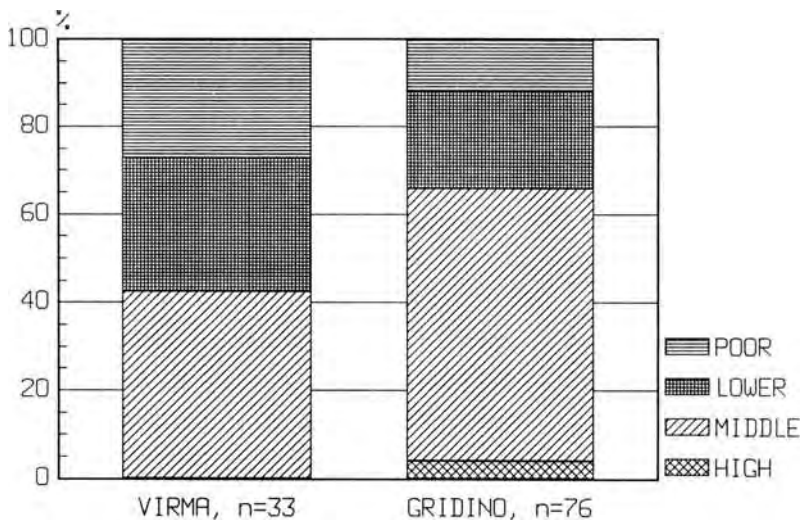


Fig. 15. Livelihood in the Case Villages

When asked individual opinions about their livelihood level, the middle-income residents stated their level to be at: "middle level or lower than middle level". In Virma, the lower variants were emphasized because virtually everyone defined their level of livelihood at the middle bracket or lower. On the other hand, there are a few inhabitants with high incomes in Gridino. However, the most usual level of livelihood is the middle level (Fig. 15). The results show that each individual tends to compare his/her income with the income of his/her neighbors.

### **4.3 Private Gardening**

#### *Small Back-Yard Gardens Feed the Villagers*

Private back-yard gardening is a very significant means of producing food in Karelia. Its significance has grown during recent years, since the food supply delivery system in Russia has been in turmoil. It is estimated that private small-scale farming and gardening is producing one-third of the food supply in Karelia, food which is privately used (Karkinen 1993).

The value of private farming can also be noted in the case villages. In both villages, every house has its own kitchen garden (only one student in Gridino did not have a one). Kitchen gardens are rather small, the average size in Virma being 7.8 ares, and, in Gridino, even smaller: 4 ares (Fig. 16). Almost the entire plot of land is used for gardening, because privately owned plots are also very small. The average size in Virma is 8,6 ares and in Gridino it is 5,9 ares. Thus, there is scarcely any room for the house to be situated on the plot.

The smaller size of the Gridino gardens is due to the fact that Gridino is located on a rocky cliff beside the bay, which is near the sea, so it is difficult to find the land for a kitchen garden. Conversely, Virma is surrounded by abundant wetlands, and so there is plenty of room for fields. It should be noted that the surrounding fields of both villages are not in use because they are owned by the state and authorized by the local village soviet.

The local villagers are not allowed to use the fields and the village soviet has no prospect of utilizing them. When inquiring about using the land of the surrounding fields, the interviewees responded that they haven't given it consideration. There hasn't been any practice of privately

utilizing state-owned land, although there is a profusion of unused fields surrounding the villages. This odd phenomenon is quite commonplace in all of Karelia.

*Basic Food Supplies are Privately Produced*

The most common plant to grow is the potato, which is grown in every kitchen garden. Other vegetables are also commonly grown (Fig. 17). The difference between the case villages is that in Virma there are more varieties of vegetables grown than in Gridino. In Virma there are also very often greenhouses in which tomatoes and cucumber are grown for the family's use, whereas greenhouses are rare in Gridino.



Fig. 16. Private plots are carefully used for kitchen gardens. Picture from Virma.



The main reason for this is the favored soil conditions in Virma: it is located on fertile soil, whereas the soil of Gridino is rocky and rather infertile. Because of Virma's favored soil conditions, there are virtually no other activities outside of maintaining the kitchen garden and food gathering. In Gridino, the villagers are employed and don't have as much as free time as people do in Virma.

Figure 17. shows the variety of vegetables and plants which are grown in the case villages. The bar shows the percentage amount of households which grow each vegetable or plant. Basic vegetables such as the potato and carrot are commonly grown. Also, there are some specialities cultivated, such as tobacco and pepper. Roses were grown by only one household, which emphasizes that the land is very carefully used and that there is little room for luxury.

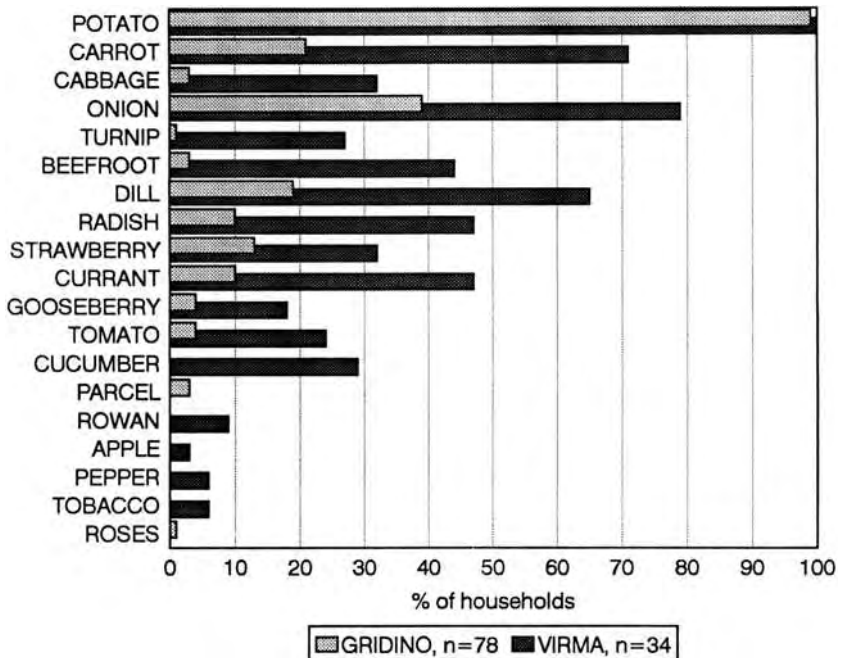


Fig. 17. Private Gardening in the Case Villages.

### *Small Cattle Raising Supplements the Livelihood*

Many houses maintain small cattle. The most usual animal raised is sheep. A very common sight in the case villages (as well as generally in Karelian villages) is a large sheep herd, wandering about. The herd includes sheep from many households. Also, herds of cows can freely graze upon the surrounding fields. At milking-time, the owners milk their own cow. Cattle is kept in the cattlehouse, which is very frequently under the same roof as the owner in Karelian type of houses.

There are relatively more animals raised in Virma than in Gridino (Table 8). This can be explained by the surrounding natural conditions. The terrain is not very suitable for cattle raising in Gridino. However, sheep can easily manage on the rocky land. In earlier times, reindeer was a very important animal in Gridino. It was used both for transport and for meat production. After the road construction, reindeer disappeared from Gridino. Table 8. represents the number of animals and the number of households who keep them in the case villages. In addition, to farm animals, some horses and rabbits were kept in both of the villages.

Table 8. Number of Animals in the Case Villages.

NUMBER OF ANIMALS/ NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	VIRMA	GRIDINO
COWS	7 / 5	14 / 11
SHEEP	106 / 13	122 / 37
GOATS	3 / 2	6 / 5
PIGS	1 / 1	4 / 4
HENS	68 / 9	26 / 2

### *Food Gathering Provides Extra Income*

As mentioned earlier, maintaining the kitchen garden is not merely a hobby, but is an important way to earn one's livelihood, to supplement the stock of food supplies for a family. This is shown by figures of the case villages. In Virma, 88% (30 out of 34) and in Gridino 85% (66

out of 78) of the interviewees stated that they supplement their family's food supply by private gardening.

The products of the kitchen garden are also provided for relatives which are living in the town. The most common occurrence, however, is that they come to the countryside to grow the vegetables they need for themselves. There is no marketing of garden products to the summer inhabitants, although some may give or sell some of their products to the other villages. Generally, there are rarely extra products to give or sell to those outside the family.

Aside from private gardening, there are other means which supplement the family's food supply, such as picking berries and mushrooms, and going hunting and fishing. Since both case villages are fishing villages, fishing is obviously crucial to the inhabitants' livelihood. Picking berries is the most common occurrence. In Virma, 79% (27 out of 34) and, in Gridino, 81% (63 out of 78) of the interviewees take an interest in it. Picking berries and mushrooms is mainly the job of women and children. The economic benefits of hunting is minute, and nowadays it is mainly a hobby for men. As for fishing, over half of the interviewees fished.

Fish, berries and mushrooms are occasionally sold to the village shop, or the equivalent can be paid as goods. Bartering between private persons and/or families is considered secret, the occurrence of which is not divulged. This sort of trade occurs, but misunderstandings can easily arise. For example, those who try to trade their fish could cause contentions because their fish has been caught with the ship of the fishing kolkhoz. Some social problems also arise with that kind of business; for instance, the instrument of bartering for fish is very often vodka (alcohol).

## 5. THE LOCAL LEVEL VIEWPOINT ON RESTRUCTURING

This chapter presents the point of view of the individual at the local level of restructuring. This has been reflected by the current situation and the future prospects for the village. The elements which describe restructuring at the local level have been the decision-making process and the role of the different authorities in it. Social dilemmas have appeared as consequences of socio-economic restructuring. The current process of privatization forms the future prospects of the case villages.

### 5.1 Decision-Making

#### *The Role of the Village Soviet has Declined*

The public quarter representing the state in the villages has been the village soviet. In principle, it has cared for the public services of the village. It has hired the teachers, librarians, salespersons, medical staff, etc., and has maintained their residences. It has kept the accounting of the village, such as population statistics. It governs the land and stipulates land usage, renting private plots to the villagers.

The village soviet area includes several rural villages. Usually, the village soviet has hired a few permanent workers, at least a chairman of the village. It may also have a secretary and book-keeper and occasionally some other workers. The soviet council gathers at least twice a year, and usually all rural villages have deputies in the council of the village soviet.

Virma village is one of the ten rural villages which comprise the village soviet of Sumskii Posad. In 1960, the same year that the kolkhoz was suppressed, the Virma village soviet was also suspended. Nowadays, Virma doesn't even have a deputy in the village soviet. The last deputy was terminated in 1986. The existence of the village soviet institution has a very small significance in Virma village nowadays. The village soviet council seems to be very distant from the Virma village (although physically it is only 15 km away).

Gridino has kept its position as a village soviet; until 1968 there were seven village soviets in the district, but nowadays only five remain. One of them is the village soviet of Gridino. The

village of Gridino is the only rural village in the village soviet. In earlier times, it included also the small rural village of Sosnovc, which is nowadays quite desolated and has no administrative significance.

Despite the status of village soviet, in Gridino as well, its significance is these days very minute. The chairman and the secretary are the only permanent staff, which work in the village soviet council. Inhabitants of Gridino foster the opinion that there is no need for a chairman, because he is, for the most part, only tending to his own personal interests. The secretary alone can handle the soviet business well. The role of the village soviet, in practice, is marginal and is merely one of tradition.

Despite its marginal significance in the everyday lives of the villagers, the village soviet still dominates land ownership, land usage, rent collection, etc. It still maintains governmental status in the village, but plays no actual role in providing for the people. The villagers ascertain that the village soviet does not exist to assist them, but functions only as the controlling organ of the state in the village. Village soviet meetings are thus not of interest, because of the village soviet's overall unnecessary. Such village soviet meetings have not convened for three years now.

#### *No Possibilities for Participation in Virma*

For above mentioned reasons, and due to a poor infrastructure, it is no wonder that the inhabitants of Virma feel as if they have been abandoned. When inquiring as to who is responsible for the decision making in the village, almost half of the inhabitants of Virma said that no one takes care of their business (Fig. 18). About one-third (9 out of 33) of those interviewed felt that the village soviet has some significance in village life. Therefore, if there is any interest in taking care of their businesses, Virma inhabitants thought that it is at the local level. In principle, the biggest influence on decision-making is the village soviet. Only 24% (8 out of 33) of the interviewees thought that there is interest in decision-making for Virma at the district level and none believed that such interest exists at the state level.

When asking people in Virma about their views on the possibility of an effect on the decision-making process occurring within the village, many thought the influence at the local level

(within the village) is the only possibility. However, over half (19 out of 43) interviewed thought that the business of the village cannot be influenced, even at the local level.

On the other hand, the people of Virma haven't been very active themselves in the decision-making processes concerning their village. They have not taken part in meetings which are organized by the village soviet council or other institutions. This can be explained by the simple reason that there are only a few public institutions in the village. Among the older people, there are some who have taken part in such meetings in the earlier times of the village soviet council (8 out of 32), and of the kolkhoz (6 out of 32) and of the Party itself (1 out of 32).

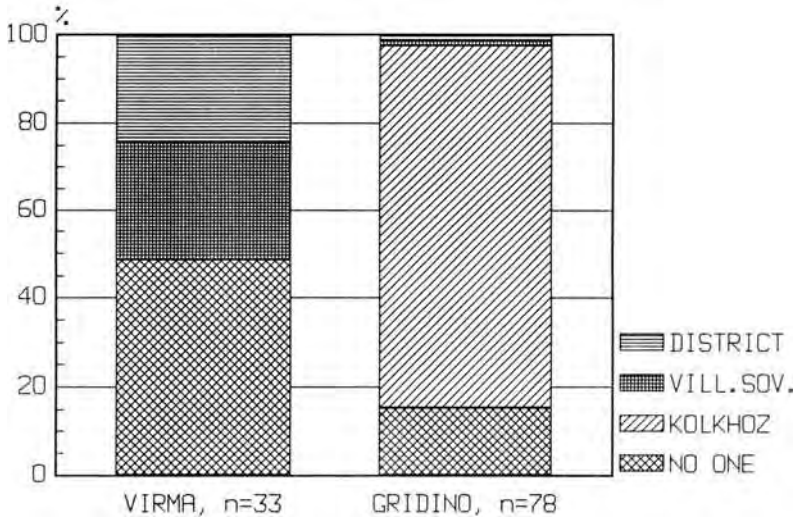


Fig. 18. Decision-Making in the Villages

*The Kolkhoz is Responsible for Decision-Making in Gridino*

The main decisions of the village of Gridino are made by the kolkhoz, which has traditionally been responsible for the living conditions of the village. It has organized work, residences for the population and has helped with organizing the general services of the village. There are, for example, two shops in the village: the village soviet shop and the kolkhoz shop.

Over 80% (64 out of 78) of the interviewees of Gridino expressed the opinion that the kolkhoz makes the decisions in their village (Fig. 18). Also, there were some pessimistic opinions of the decision making: 15% (12 out of 78) stated that no one is responsible for their business. Decisions seemed to be decided at the local level also in Gridino. Generally, the people expressed the idea that the republic or district level authorities are not involved in their village's affairs. Interestingly, the inhabitants themselves exert no influence over their own matters at the regulatory level.

The possibility of the villagers taking part in the local level decision-making within their own village seems to be rather high. 80% (62 out of 78) of the interviewees stated that they have an influence on the matters of their village. Mainly, having such an influence is possible by conducting all business through the kolkhoz. Almost 50% (46%) of those interviewed have taken part in meetings of the kolkhoz.

Political activities have not gained very much interest for those dwelling in the countryside. As in Virma, participating in Communist Party meetings was very rare in Gridino. There were only a scarce few (4 out of 74) inhabitants which have taken part in the Party meetings. Party action has not included the "common people" of the countryside, despite the internalization of political motives.

## **5.2 Social Dilemmas**

Shortages in the supply of goods, the relatively large number of pensioners and the precarious position of village society are all instrumental in the fabrication of social dilemma. Such social problems significantly exist in both case villages. In the interviews, it was discerned that these social problems had expanded in the last ten years. This may be the consequence of the growth

of economic uncertainty during the perestroika period, when the basic framework of society began to crumble.

One sobering predicament is poverty itself. There are only a few select items which a pensioner can afford to buy with his/her monthly allowance, and there exists no public elderly health care system. Elderly persons dwell with their children and grand-children in very cramped conditions, or, even worse, they are living alone. In such a case, perhaps their children who reside in a neighboring town will tend to their needs. Such children generally visit their parents during the weekend, bringing with them enough water and firewood to last their aged parent(s) throughout the week, during which the parent must manage alone, without the aid of his/her children.

Public services have very little to offer the villagers. Medical care is not always available in Virma or in Gridino, and it is virtually impossible to hail an ambulance when one is needed.

Alcoholism is a prominent malady in both villages, being a disease which does not discriminate on the basis of gender or age. This was especially noted in Gridino, where the majority of working-age people drink heavily, and many of them are thus alcoholics. Alcoholism creates social problems of yet another kind: family crises and violence. In Gridino, the general opinion was that villagers need some sort of discipline administered in order to curb their affinity for alcohol.

The interviews indicated that the villagers were generally dissatisfied with the kolkhoz system's manner of regulating village life. The general opinion was that the prior chairman of the kolkhoz in Gridino had not taken care of village interests and had let the social deterioration gradually slip into commonplace alcoholism. There were claims that he had even supported alcoholism for his own private gain. On the other hand, some said that his willingness to modernize the village was not supported and that is why he had to leave the village.



### 5.3 The Privatization Process

#### *An Ongoing Process*

The rural villages have undergone many changes in the last decades. Nowadays, the most current change concerns that of privatization. The process is occurring in Russia, but there is no clear impression of what it is and how it will affect the local levels of society. Especially in the peripheral countryside its impact very minute.

The "voucher" is the privatization cheque that the villagers receive. The value of such a voucher was 10,000 roubles during the winter of 1992-1993. People in general cannot form a definition of its true purpose. Even after 70 years, there exists no genuine practice of private ownership. People own virtually no property of their own. Many villagers have sold their vouchers, and elderly people have often given them to their children. This has caused some misconduct amongst the businessmen, who have bought them for virtually nothing.

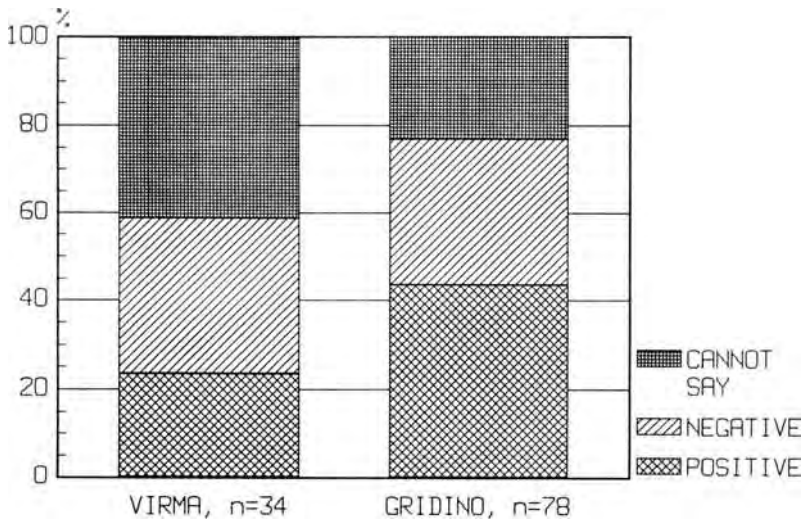


Fig. 19. Attitudes on Privatization in the Case Villages

*Attitudes on Privatization Uncertain*

In the case villages, a definite uncertainty in regards to privatization can be noted. There are opinions for privatization as well as against it. Very often, the people stated that they don't really understand what the concept means (Fig. 19). People were asked about their attitudes in general on the privatization process and then asked separately about various elements of privatization.

*The Privatization of Land*

Because people did not understand the real significance of the privatization process, it was difficult for them to form an opinion on privatization and its various facts. Generally, the opinion was negative towards privatization. Many aged villagers didn't have the desire to own anything. The most popular idea concept of privatization was the thought of owning one's own apartment in town (i.e. those who were currently renting one, such as summer inhabitants). However, the villagers also expressed an unwillingness to purchase such an item, because of high repairing expenses.

In the interviews, it was noticed that people did not fully understand what land owning in a traditional way means. This is due to the fact that they have never owned any land. In the countryside, people usually have owned their house, but not the plot it is situated upon. Nowadays, a process of "land division" is occurring, that is, the land on which a home has been situated for decades can now be purchased by the inhabitants of the home. Such land division concerns only the plots of land under and immediately surrounding the house, not any other land. Other land is generally still owned by the state.

After the field study of October 1993, a new law of land ownership was passed in Russian at the state level by President Yeltsin, known as the "Land Reformation" law. This law makes it possible for Russians to own, buy or sell land. How does this decision affect the local levels of society will be determined in the near future. The prospects, anyhow, are muddled because there now exist possibilities to speculate land ownership. The citizens are not accustomed to owning or trading land, and so they may not necessarily be aware of the significance of this

new law. This allows for the possibility of businessmen and/or influential leaders to take advantage of others' ignorance of the law and to reap unmerited profits.

Although people have never genuinely owned land, the road to private enterprising is long. Even in the countryside, the people have had their own specific professions, combinations of various professions have not existed. For example, becoming a private farmer in one's own forest is not that simple because of the lack of technology, even it is feasible in principle. The lack of money and equipment and a poor infrastructure make the construction and maintenance of one's own farm exceedingly difficult.

### *The Effects on Private Life*

When inquiring as to how the privatization process in general will affect one's family life, the most common answer in both villages was that it has no effect whatsoever (Table 9). Usually, its only significance has been the selling of vouchers, allowing the villagers some extra money. This has been a very usual practice among the poorer people. Those who could afford to live without the aid of the voucher, have usually put it inside a chest-of-drawers and have saved it. In the future they will discern whether it has any actual value or not.

Table 9. The Significance of Privatization in Family Life.

	DOES EFFECT	DOES NOT EFFECT	CAN-NOT SAY
VIRMA n=34	12	18	4
GRIDINO n=78	30	43	5

## 5.4 The Future of the Villages

### *Prospects for the Future*

The unstable situation in the villages makes people uneasy about their future. On the other hand, life in the countryside has a different meaning: during the winter, life continues at a leisurely pace, but, in the spring, many people arrive in order to reside in the village during the summer. Both villages have become "summer villages".

Summer inhabitants comprise approximately one-third of the population in Gridino, and, in Virma, the population doubles in the summertime. Grandchildren spend their entire summer in these villages, and the working-age, village-born people spend their summer holidays in their home village. When asking people of Virma what they see for the future of their village, the most usual response was that it will become a summer village (Fig. 20), and about one-third of those interviewed speculated that life will not change.

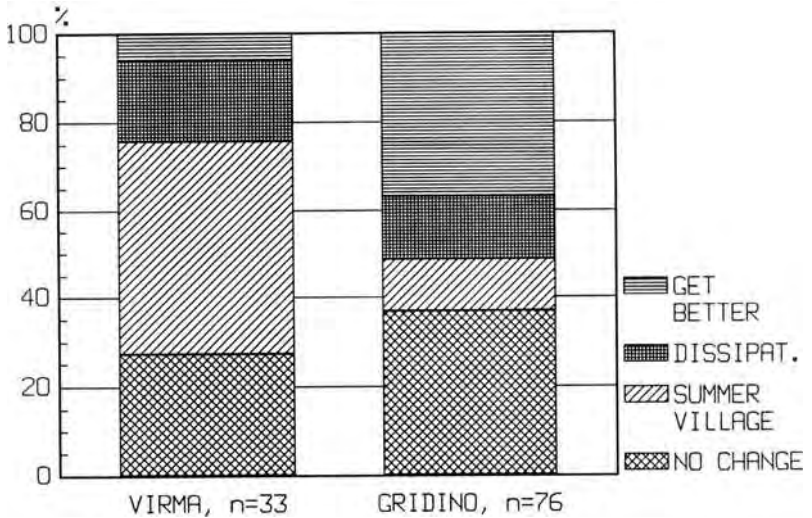


Fig. 20. The Future of the Villages.

As for the dissipation of the village of Virma itself, people did not generally believe it would occur, as only 18% (6 out of 33) speculated that the village would totally perish. The most common belief was that life in the village will continue, despite the often desperate living conditions and the precarious situation of the village society as a whole.

On the other hand, in Gridino, the inhabitants did not believe in the development of their village into a summer village. Only nine out of 78 interviewees thought that their village will become a place of summer cottages. Despite that, they answered quite positively about the future of the village. 37% (28 out of 76) thought that their village will revive and acquire new inhabitants. This development has been affected by the action of the kolkhoz. It has tried to offer new possibilities to younger people and has somehow even managed to do so. Worthy of noting, is that there are the same amount of opinions (28 out of 76) that life in the village will not change. Life in the village is thought of as safe and perhaps there is not any real willingness for change in the village (Fig. 20).

### *Proposals for Development*

Future prospects of the villages differ from each other. The interviewees of Virma said that there are no prospects for the future of the village functioning as it has traditionally if there are no means of employment for the younger generation. The development of some fishing enterprise was suggested. However, it was thought that it is not a very realistic idea, because decisions are not made within the village itself. They expected that some higher authority will again manage their problems and make good decisions for them. They themselves do not have the possibility to find the enterprise alone.

Also, they hoped that the higher authorities would improve the general services of the village. They thought that they "have to do something", but there was a unwillingness to do something by themselves. Only one of the interviewees fully realized that the villagers have to take some action themselves. Unfortunately, he was the only one with such an idea.

On the other hand, in Gridino, there were many practical proposals for the future. It was stated that the kolkhoz needs to acquire a good director which will make decisions for the village.

Modernizing the fishing industry and developing the kolkhoz were important tasks mentioned. One facet of the desired "discipline" is the banning of vodka imports to the village.

Also, the desire for an improvement of the general services was noted. The interviewees wanted both the shops to be better equipped and the church to be repaired. For those who will move back to the village, modern houses should be constructed with modern facilities, such as indoor plumbing and gas for heating. The road connection should be improved and cultural services could be further developed. There were also proposals to introduce new jobs during the winter, which would support the future of the village.

A desire amongst the single men of the village was to somehow attract more eligible women to the village, so they could start their own families. The villagers speculated that the lack of adequate general services fails to attract the settling of eligible, young women in the village.

Similar aspects in Virma was also noted in Gridino. The inhabitants hope that there will be an influential authority who can create and maintain order within the village. There were only a few of such private activities among the village people.

In Gridino, there were some reorganizing plans in the kolkhoz. There will be an attempt to integrate two neighboring kolkhozes from Pongoma and Kalgalaksa into the same administration of Gridino's kolkhoz. In that way, a strengthening of the possibilities and prospects of the fishing industry can occur in that area by the White Sea. This will be an important occurrence state property is privatized. The new land law, mentioned earlier, will also affect these plans. The manner in which it will affect them will become apparent in the near future.

## CONCLUSION

When conducting research on rural development within the Karelian Republic, it is readily discerned that these rural areas have undergone a far-reaching process of change during the last few decades. The rationale for this restructuring has been economical and political decision-making. Such decision-making processes have occurred at the state level, and rural areas have thus been considered the resources of production and labor. The impacts at the local level have had only a minor significance in decision-making.

The socio-economic restructuring of rural Russian Karelia has certain developing tendencies and has occurred in a series of changes. The restructuring process emerged from a consequence of political decisions. The development processes of rural Russian Karelia are divided into different time periods, which are the results of the restructuring processes. The most important occurrences have been the collectivization and reorganization of production. The fishing industry as a form of production has been analyzed in this study, but indeed, this restructuring has occurred in every field of the economy of Karelia, as well as in the entire former Soviet Union.

The change in economic and living conditions in the rural areas has led to an urbanization process within the Karelian Republic. The population, being considered the key to production, has been led to employment by the manufacturing and the public service sector in urban areas. Thus, the number of villages and inhabitants of the rural areas has decreased drastically as the population has emigrated to urban centers. This tendency has continued until the present, with the rural population diminishing, and the rural areas thereby gradually becoming desolate.

### *Restructuring at the Local Level*

Restructuring has become evident in distinct ways at the local level, and therefore analyses of local communities are important. As the examples of the case villages show, a political decision enacted at the state level may have a completely different impact at the local level. Further, there are distinct types of rural villages that must be separated from one another. Such distinct village types are often generalized to represent the whole of the Karelian Republic.

Most of the rural villages of Russian Karelia have totally perished. This can be readily be noted as the number of villages has diminished to fraction of their quantity 7 decades ago. In 1926, for example, there were over 2,800 rural villages in Karelia, while nowadays there are under 700. Most of these villages have been totally obliterated; often, even the deserted buildings themselves have been relocated or have burned down.

Many villages have lost their original significance and have taken on a new meaning within the Karelian settlement structure. The case village Virma is representative of such a village. It has undergone a dissipation, but possibilities for survival still exist, as it has attained a new definition as a summer village.

The village of Gridino is representative of the third type of village in this study: it has also undergone far-reaching changes, but is trying to maintain its position in the division of labor. At the local level, it can be easily discerned what has accounted for its survival: its location in an isolated region amidst the fishing resources and the fact that it has benefitted from the political decisions concerning economic rationale. Further, there has been activity amongst the authorities of the kolkhoz both to modernize and to expand it.

When the state fails to care for the needs of its people, the people must fend for themselves. The rural villages of Russian Karelia have acquired a new means of sustenance: private gardening. The villagers have needed to develop their own strategies for survival, and these gardens supplement their food intake. In addition, food found growing wild in the forests is gathered to further supplement their livelihood.

Such a survival strategy is merely a manifestation of the people's own industriousness, which they have developed in this socio-economic situation in order to improve their own living conditions. On the other hand, activities to foster decision making within the village are minimal, as there has never been the practice of being involved in the decision making concerned with their individual lives. Previously, the lives of the individuals have been controlled by the state and its various branches. As a consequence, participation in effectual decision making is minimal.

The last few years Russian society has been on its way to becoming a market economy, an obscure and challenging process at every level of society. At the local level, it can clearly be



determined that the people are perplexed in regards to their future. They are presently living often unbearable lives: poverty and other social problems are rampant. The organizations which have been the bases of their lives for decades are undergoing fundamental changes, and thus the people have become weary of trusting institutions in general.

Restructuring is a continuous process and socio-economic transformations don't happen overnight. The process of substituting market economy policies in the place of former socialist economic ideals is gradual and occurring constantly. The dissolution of the socialist framework, however, is not compensated in proportion to the emerging market one, as the basic framework will still remain. Many organizations left over from the old socialist system still remain, but the way in which their policies emerge and are enacted with follow a capitalist format. Thus, the result is a sort of "mixed economy". The effects the capitalist system has exerted over the populace have not necessarily been premium, as regrettable features of capitalism have arisen. This has fostered anxiety amongst the people and has forced them to often resist of socio-economic reformations.

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