

Swedish Rural Fieldsite

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Location of the fieldsite

The municipality of Härjedalen consists of about 12 villages with a total amount of 10,951 inhabitants. Population density is less than 1 person per square kilometre. Three villages have been selected as research field (Sveg 5,000, Hede 2,500 and Lillhärdal 700 inhabitants). The municipality lies at the Norwegian border with a distance to Stockholm of 400-500 kilometers.

Social System

The municipality is an open society based on the nuclear family, with many single parent households. Ideologically and historically the system is egalitarian oriented. The municipality has a large amount of autonomy, politically as well as economically. It is dominated by the Social democrats (50%) and the Left Party (12%). Although farms and landed property did play a role in history, only forest lands are interesting as capital goods. As a consequence of even and partible inheritance laws, capital in forest lands is split within families among the generations since the end of the 19th century. The high level of communal care by the municipality and province administration combined with voluntary associations in the realm of social and cultural life constitute the backbone of social and economic relations.



Landscape and centre of village



Returning cattle from the summer pastures



Peat production at the moors

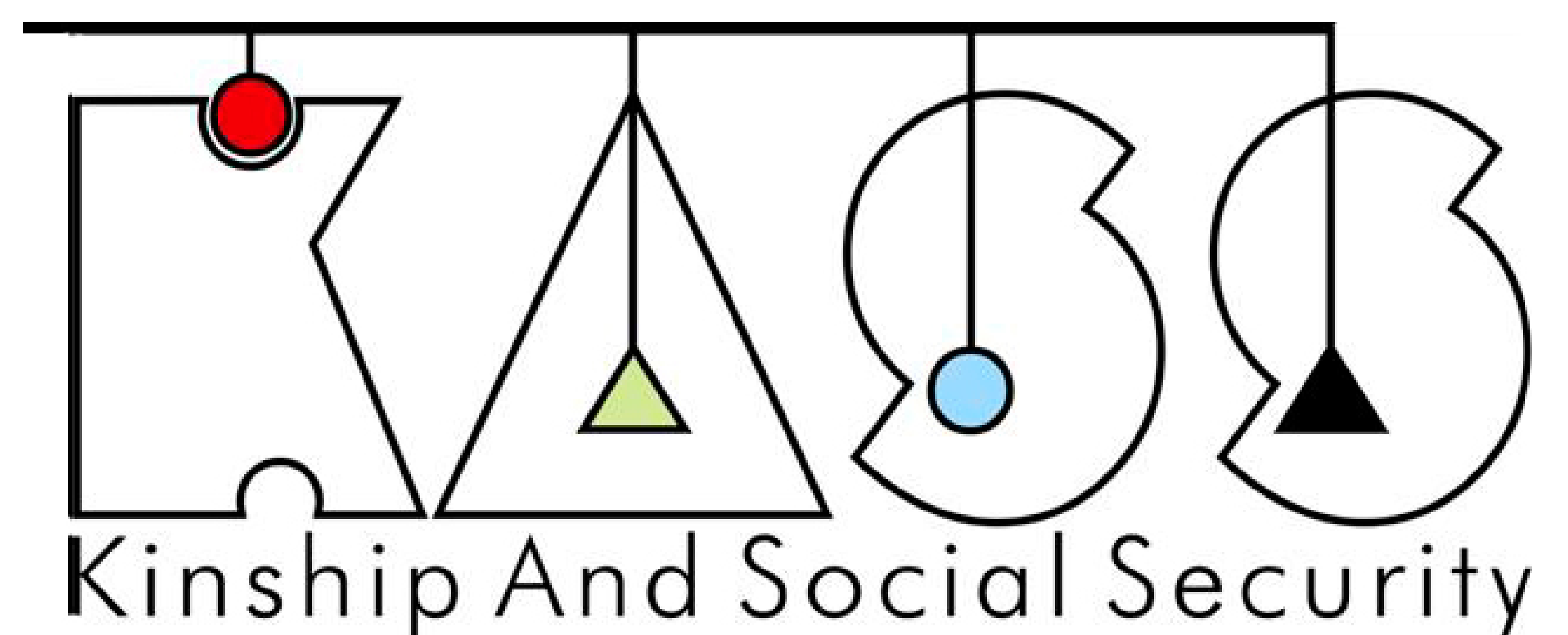


Specific situation

The socio-economic situation in the area has been stabilised during the last years. The rural exodus of the 1960s and 1970s is slowed down. The economic infrastructure is completely changed from a forestry and agrarian dominated region to a tourist and service industry region with labour extensive energy production like wind, water and peat.

Relationships

Neighbours, friends, workmates and family relations constitute the social and cultural context of everyday life, however different in space and time. Neighbours and work relations have a pragmatic and rational character, these are the ones you meet everyday. Friends and family relations are confined to weekends, festive days and holidays. Especially family relations do have symbolic and cultural meaning of belonging that is expressed in Christmas time and summer holidays. By their emotional connotation these relations stand as a separate sphere. This symbolism is not dependent on economic and social solidarity of the family as a group, but on the emotional content of an evolving relationship: nuclear kin. This nuclear kin group can on the basis of voluntariness be an asset in times of crisis.



An interdisciplinary project with an anthropological agenda funded by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme.

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Layout: Kristin Magnucki, Oliver Wehmann
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