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**FROM LOCAL CULTURES TO A GLOBAL CULTURE.  
*Emerging of mass media and consciousness industry in Finland.  
Helsinki 1992***

**MICHEL BASSAND and JEAN-MARIE MOECKLI (eds.), Do Villages Have a Future? (pp. 29-57). The Finnish Anthropological Society. Helsinki 1992.**

Original publication: **Villages: quels espoirs? Peter Lang, Berne 1989.**

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**A summary of the study "Information Technology and Structural Change in Local Cultures".  
Publications of the Finnish National Commission for Unesco No. 39. 1987.**

## **1. Local and Nonlocal Cultures**

It is possible to consider industrial development as an overall change in cultural ecological systems. As ecosystems the traditional ethnic cultures have adapted to their particular physical environment, and they have also been dependent on their local resources and possibilities. Today, local communities and nations have ecologically adapted to the interna-

tional, non-local environment, dominated by scientific – technological progress and international trade. The direction of the adaptation has been totally reversed and the change is reflected in every structure of the former cultural system. This is illustrated in Table 1. The production methods of the former peasant villages were based on a technology adjusted to local conditions and perfected over hundreds of years, and on energy sources and community forms of labour, which were local. The social structures (institutions) operated primarily at the local level. The system of knowledge was also local: the people spoke a local dialect; they used local ideas in their thinking and identified themselves principally as members of their own village.

In the non-local, global cultural system, resources derive from world commerce and are part of the mechanisms of international trade. The basic unit of the cultural system (economic, social, spiritual) is no longer the local community, but a centralized organization. All over the world, material culture is founded on a similar technology and on similar scientific and technical knowledge and skills. As the means of production become more and more similar, so do other aspects of culture: social, administrative and political institutions, science, the arts and entertainment. Culture becomes an international industry, mass culture. Local communities no longer create their own culture. An ever-increasing majority of people are merely consumers whose personal independence and spontaneity are limited to the act of choosing cultural services produced elsewhere in the centralized agencies. In non-local western cultures, village communities like all societies, are more and more dependent, technologically, organizationally and intellectually, on the technocratic machinery, which monopolizes international development in its particular area. The power of the new elite, the "meritocracy" (technocracy) is based on the destruction of local ethnic cultures: the structures of the local technology and local way of life, the system of knowledge and ethnic cultural values. The most effective way to govern the masses is to monopolize their culture. The new meritocratic elite has created its own ideological or religious system, a cult of development with its own myths, rituals and measures of progress (growth rates). The cultures of non-local meritocratic power have been at work standardizing the content of culture in every part of the world.(1.

Mass communication has been an essential factor in the structural change of local communities from a local to a non-local type of culture. In this article we shall consider the role played by mass communication in this cultural process. (Table 1).

## ***Table 1.***

### ***Delocalization of cultures***

## Local culture

## Non-local culture

### *1. Ecological Independence*

### *1. Ecological Dependence*

#### **Environment**

local environment  
local form of production

global environment  
industrial world economy

#### **Resources**

local resources  
local energy

global resources  
external energy

#### **Technology**

local technology  
local knowledge

supranational technology  
international knowledge

#### **Mode of production**

total production  
total work

mass production  
serial or phase work

#### **Distribution of production**

within the local community  
community exchange

outside the local community  
organizational exchange

#### **Control**

local control  
local niches

external, centralized control  
organizational niches

#### **Adaptation**

local adaptation  
local choices

global adaptation  
non-local choices

### *2. Local institutions*

### *2. Centralized organizations*

#### **Structure**

within the community  
community field of activity

centralized, specialized  
activity centred on the  
organization

#### **Participation**

local participation

professional statuses and  
roles

#### **Hierarchy**

local co-operation  
local hierarchy  
personal relationships

organizational co-operation  
centralized hierarchy  
structured subordination

#### **Motivation**

community solidarity  
community integration

ideological solidarity  
egocentric integration

#### **Objectives**

local objectives

objectives centred on the  
organization

#### **Activity**

local standards  
local forms of activity

uniform global standards  
organizational forms of

	local rites and ceremonies	activity hierarchical and organizational rites
	<b>3. Local person</b>	<b>3. Centralized person</b>
<b>Identity</b>	local identity community consciousness	organizational identity egcentric consciousness
<b>Models</b>	local idols local illusions	global ideas global, urban illusions
<b>Experience</b>	spontaneous experiences local reality	externally guided experiences instrument, technical reality
<b>Explanations of life</b>	local way of life local truths	organizational way of life institutional truths
<b>Mode of thought</b>	local concepts local language	professional, class concepts metropolitan language
<b>Values</b>	local values ideology of self-sufficiency	externally directed values mass ideology

## 2. The Communities Studied

The material has collected by interviewing total 290 persons in two villages and a suburb of Helsinki during the years 1986-87. Traditionally, Finland has always had two ethnic cultural regions: West and East. Thus, one of the villages (Mekrijärvi) is situated in the Eastern Finland; the other (Otalampi) represents West Finland. In western Finland there have been, since the fifteenth century, villages where the principal means of livelihood was agriculture. This village culture has displayed the characteristics of an agrarian organization and a way of life centred around the community. Class distinctions were based on landed property. The culture of the eastern villages was based on slash-and-burn cultivation and supported by intensive fishing and hunting until the end of the nineteenth century. Kinship structures (joint families) were important, and family solidarity was a significant value.(2 Nowadays South-western Finland belongs to the modern

industrialised part of country, Eastern areas are considered less developed in the hierarchy of national economy.

### ***Mekrijärvi – small village***

One of the communities surveyed is Mekrijärvi, a small Karelian village in a remote region of East Finland, near Russian frontier. Up to the beginning of the century the village was a relatively self-sufficient community with a mixed economy comprised of small-scale agriculture, hunting and fishing. Social and economic changes that took place in the sixties made small-scale agriculture unprofitable, and the village almost died as a result of migration.

Recently, however, the flow of migration has reversed and people are now coming to reside in the village. People are returning to their home village as they retire. Young people, who have found work nearby in the small town of Iломantsi, are buying houses in the village: land and houses are cheap. The region is attractive and Iломantsi is not far away. Mekrijärvi still has a certain amount of local, community culture, even though life values have changed and many villagers now live in greater isolation than before, identifying with the common culture.

### ***Otalampi – large village***

The second village is Otalampi, in the municipality of Vihti, an old well-to-do agricultural region about 40 km from Helsinki. Agriculture is still one of the principal sources of livelihood, but many new inhabitants have arrived in recent years: labourers, clerks, people employed in the service professions, etc. Many of the inhabitants work in the small industrial towns nearby, and today farmers are in a minority. Otalampi can perhaps best be described as something in-between a rural village and a suburb.

For many of the inhabitants of Otalampi the village community has little significance. Home and family are the most important things. Many of the new inhabitants find Otalampi an ideal spot in which to live, since it has the characteristics of both individual and family life.

### ***Kannelmäki – suburb***

The third locality is a typical suburb of Helsinki called Kannelmäki, built between the late fifties and the late seventies. It has a shopping centre offering many services and a wide range of leisure activities. Kannelmäki was selected as the third study area in order to highlight the specific character of the urban environment.

### **3. The Advent of the Media**

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, village culture in Finland was relatively local, but with the advent of industrialization the villages became increasingly integrated into a national culture. Central institutions suitable for the creation of this national culture, such as schools, books, popularised knowledge, and idealist and political associations, were established in the villages. This occurred sooner in the western than in the eastern cultural region, and was supported by the development of the road and railway systems and the postal service. Factory-produced food and goods were available in the village store, and the self-sufficient economy began to be superseded.

The coming of the media to the villages was part of this process of acculturation. Newspapers and magazines penetrated the rural regions at the turn of the century, although they found few readers until after the Second World War. Radio sets became common in the countryside during the forties, television sets in the middle of the sixties and information technologies at the end of the seventies. The expansion of communications in the villages is reflected, by the shift from a local to a non-local cultural system. Each means of communication added a new non-local structure to the lives of the villagers. (Table 2).

#### ***Radio and the new cultural climate***

The arrival of radio at the end of the twenties was a great event in the remote village of Mekrijärvi. People would gather in houses where there were sets in an atmosphere of respectful devotion. They listened to the news, religious services and children's programs, and the young people might even dance to the music.

*"I was 17 when my uncle got a radio. It was such a holy thing to us that on Sunday my mother and father would take us to my uncle's to hear the church service, and we all had to behave as if we were in church. Even the benches were set out just as if we were in church. How we laugh now! Now we've got television at home and all sorts of other gadgets, but we no longer stand up even if we are watching the church service on television. Before the war, if there were an evening program on the radio, a lot of people would come in to listen to it; not many people could afford a radio. The children liked to listen to the stories and the young people liked the music, of course, and there was dancing if the music was really good, as long as our parents gave their permission." (...)*

*"We really appreciated the radio; when people told us about something, we weren't in the dark. Before radio we were completely in the dark. When I finished at domestic science school, I came back home with new ideas on how to run the household. We felt we were coming up in the world". (Mekrijärvi, farmer's wife, aged 73).*

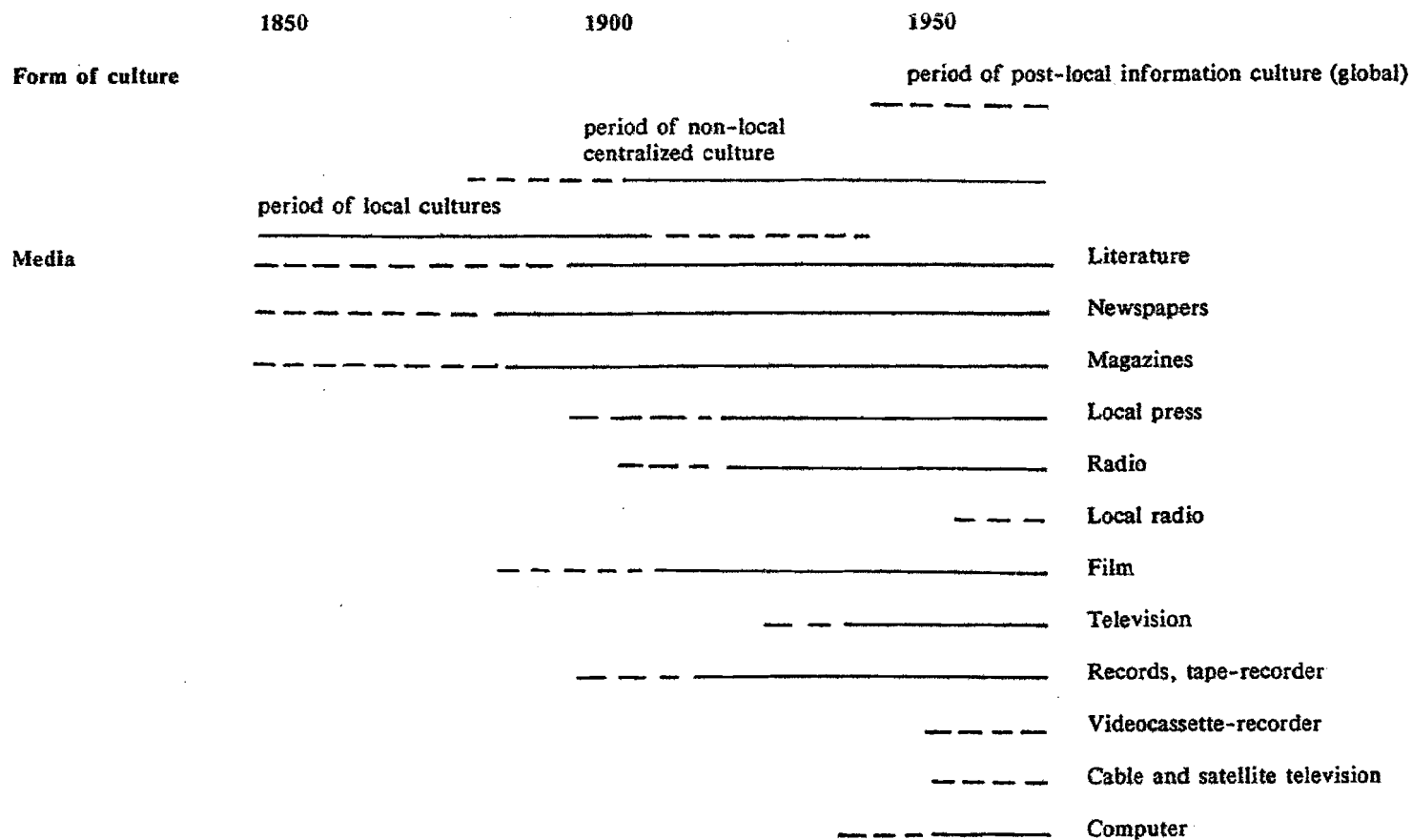
Although the villagers had received the news from the world outside through the newspapers, the radio had a revolutionary influence on the village culture. The consciousness of the villagers was flooded with sounds, news and ideas directly from the capital and the rest of the world. The world outside the village became more and more interesting for the villagers; their interest in their environment lost its local focus. Schools, press and radio were part of a new, non-local system of knowledge and culture sustained by industrialization. The village began to look towards the towns, the future metropolises.

The advent of radio also affected the community life of the villagers and even their oral tradition. It now became the custom to sit silently together with members of the family or other villagers to listen to the radio. Time became divided up in accordance with the regularly scheduled radio programs. Things heard on the radio became subjects of conversation, as did an increasing number of topics external to the village. Radio programs enriched the traditional children's culture for children. In this way, Finland found its first "media idol", a radio personality on whose programs children played, sang and recited poems. The new idols, likewise the elementary school teachers, built up a national culture whose symbolic centre was the fatherland and no longer the local community. In the era of the local community the cultural idols emerged from immediate local environments. Now the new media idols belonged to the world outside the village.

Listening and dancing to popular music became a new form of entertainment for young people; they learned the latest hits on the radio, the music of the people acquired new, nonlocal characteristics. The radio probably reduced the importance of the oral tradition, although it also gave it new stimulus. It changed the internal hierarchy of village culture.

Taulukko 2.

***The coming of the media***



The radio was the symbol of a new, progressive era. The first people to buy sets were the people who were rich and "progressive", and who were most strongly oriented towards national culture. In the countryside these were mainly rich landowners, elementary school teachers and government officials. Radio was part of the system of symbols of "modern man" and "modern times"; it stood in opposition to the local traditional culture.

### ***Television and the new way of life***

The first television sets arrived in the remoter villages as soon as transmission began in the early sixties. The arrival of television was just as great an event as the earlier arrival of radio.

*"We had so many people in every time there was a good program – up to 20 when the neighbours came in. We said they were welcome to come and watch television whenever they wanted to. There were people everywhere watching television, even people lying flat on their stomachs, under the table. Yes, we were the first to have it, my husband said we had to get a TV. And of course, it was rather nice, it was still a very wonderful thing at that time. There were always people watching it, and I used to make them coffee. They said I shouldn't, but I said of course I would. Here's a photo: everybody sitting there, their noses glued to the screen as if they were at the movies, hardly enough room for your feet. We were pleased that people liked to come to our place to watch television". (Mekrijärvi, farmer's wife, aged 61).*

At first television was a cohesive factor, but it soon became one of isolation. It spread rapidly and people began to spend their leisure time at home with their families, watching television. Former social institutions ceased to be observed. People no longer dropped in on their neighbours with the same spontaneity, or, if they did visit, they might watch television while chatting. Today the tendency is to turn off the television if visitors come, because visits are rare events, which deserve one's full attention.

*"People used to visit much more in the evenings, but now that they have television, most people watch it and they have stopped visiting with the neighbours in the evenings. They used to go out a lot. Somebody would say: 'Let's go calling', we would take our sewing or knitting along and visit the neighbours".*

*"Tell me, if people turn up one fine evening and the television is on, do you go on watching?"*

*"Sometimes yes, sometimes no, we just talk. Especially if there's nothing very interesting on, and even if the television is on we turn the sound down. It doesn't disturb us at all, we can chat com-fortably". (Mekrijärvi, farmer's wife, aged 59).*

The advent of television coincided with a second industrial structural change in rural culture and living conditions. Finland entered an era of international mass production. Agriculture became mechanized and centralized, the young people moved in to the towns. Communal forms of activity in the villages and the entire local culture began to disappear. In the countryside too people started to adopt a new way of living, emphasizing one's private existence, in accordance with the models of the urban "consumer culture" of international origin. Television helped to speed up this development by transmitting the images and ideas of an urban way of life, but it also created a means of spending time in a family setting. It legitimized a new way of life and a new way of allocating the use of one's time.

In its day, radio was an important step on the way to a non-local culture; television brought this trend to fruition. Since the advent of television it has become impossible to speak of a village culture in the true sense of the term: culture has ceased to be local. In the wake of the industrial progress of the fifties and sixties, international mass culture has come to occupy an ever-larger place in the daily life of the villagers. Radio played a part in creating a state culture, national and romantic; television is one of the primary instruments of world culture. The villages have become an integral part of a uniform national culture, which is becoming increasingly international.

## **4. Mass Communication and the Culture of Daily Life**

Folk culture has not disappeared with industrialization. Rural folk culture has given way to the "folk culture of a technical world".(3 Mass communication is a manifestation of contemporary culture and can be studied as the folk culture of today. Mass communication pervades everyday existence, it is part of the knowledge of everyday living, guiding everyday thoughts and actions and making possible the routine dispatch of daily business.(4 Postlocal communication is increasingly international, and is part of daily life in both town and country. We will now make a few observations regarding mass communication seen as the specifically non-local daily culture of village people.

Table 3

**Media and daily life**

	Community			Sex		Age group				Profession				total
	Small Village	Large Village	Suburb	Women	Men	15 - 16	16 - 25	26 - 45	46 -	self-employed	blue-collar	white-collar	students	
N	83	89	118	135	155	62	35	71	122	53	94	54	89	290
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>1. Listen to radio in the morning (N = 280)</b>														
No	31	54	46	48	41	77	46	37	32	31	33	36	69	44
Yes	69	46	54	52	59	23	54	63	68	69	67	64	31	56
														100
<b>2. Watch television</b>														
Not regularly	13	18	36	23	25	65	40	14	5	6	6	17	59	24
Regularly	87	82	64	77	75	35	60	86	95	94	94	83	41	76
														100
<b>3. Videocassette recorder and friends</b>														
Do not watch	70	73	44	55	66	14	15	80	87	88	83	76	13	61
Watch	30	27	56	45	34	86	85	20	13	12	16	24	87	39
														100
<b>4. Read newspaper during the day</b>														
A little	5	6	8	5	8	3	3	6	9	9	11	0	3	6
Quite a lot	59	72	74	64	73	89	77	68	58	70	56	59	88	69
A great deal	35	23	18	31	19	8	20	27	33	21	33	41	9	25
														100
<b>5. Role of media in daily life</b>														
slight	19	13	7	6	18	10	9	6	19	25	11	7	10	12
large	81	87	93	94	82	90	91	94	81	79	89	93	90	88
														100

The media are part of daily life in both town and country. Rural residents make more use of the traditional media (radio, newspapers, television). The adolescents in particular have also adopted the latest media.

## ***Rituals of daily life***

Mass communication has given rise to routines and even rituals, which are repeated in exactly the same fashion and at exactly the same time. They appear at many transitional points in the course of the day. Turning on the radio is part of the ritual of waking up; and in the towns, so is reading the morning paper. While on their way to work, car drivers listen to the radio or a cassette. Press, radio and even television are part of the culture of the workplace. When one comes home from work, it is common practice to turn on the radio, to switch on the tape recorder or to read a magazine; the evening begins when the television is turned on, and when the programs are over it is time to go to bed. Mass communication is like a daily program, which creates a feeling of security. If the daily paper is not delivered one morning, the daily routine is broken and people have a feeling of insecurity, as if the powers influencing their lives had ceased to have any effect.<sup>(5)</sup> In the heyday of local culture, life was directed from inside the village community and was based on local knowledge: in the post-local culture, the role played by external knowledge is decisive.

On the other hand, mass communication can be considered as part of the total set of cultural rites. It creates a common consciousness and acts as a transmitter of the principal symbols of culture. It is an instrument for enculturation and for learning the cultural symbols, which build an image of the reality of the environment.<sup>(6)</sup> What is real is what is portrayed by the media. In a postlocal system events reported worldwide, which are followed by millions of people throughout the world at the same time, acquire ever-increasing importance via the media. Daily life is studded with items of world news and world sociodramas in which the main actors are the stars of the world stages. The rites of local cultures are exchanged for universal rites.

## ***The concept of time***

People's real time is tied to information events. The exact time can be checked from the radio or TV. Radio and television broadcasts provide a timetable for daily life from morning to evening. Even personal information technology, such as tape-recorders and videocassette recorders, become part of the apparatus of ritual. They are used "at certain times" or when there is nothing that appeals on television.

In the agricultural era, time was conceived as something cyclical. People spent their time collectively in accordance with

daily rhythm. Industrial culture is based on a carefully programmed use of time, and the timetable can be seen as a symbol of the concept of time and of the culture itself.(7 Radio, television, the cinema and, to some extent, the press make up a culture of exact, fixed times, dividing the day into numerous short episodes.

The media make the use of time a private matter. People become centred on themselves, they use the media in private and live in an inner world of their own. Although vast numbers of people share the reception of the same mass communication, this communication does not foster a communal way of living.

Today, there is no real difference in the ways in which the inhabitants of rural regions and urban regions spend and perceive time; mass communication allocates the time of events in the same way in both town and country and thus standardizes the basic structures of culture.

### ***Delocalized folklore***

In the heyday of agrarian culture, the entire cultural heritage – values, norms and philosophy – was transmitted to the successive generations by oral tradition. The oral tradition was part of work and leisure. Many genres of oral literature were called into play when people gathered together, fairy tales and epic poems, for example, have disappeared, and the functions of folklore have been assumed by schools, the arts and the media. Oral tradition no longer occupies the time of the village people as it once did. Yet, folklore has not disappeared, and such genres as jokes and witticisms, anecdotes, modern legends and other forms of narrative are still an element of social interaction at work and during leisure time. Most modern folklore has taken its inspiration from the media or has borrowed directly from it. Moreover, folklore subject matter is also to be found in the media; the relationship is symbiotic.(8 Young people and children in particular relate to one another the sketches they have seen on television and the jokes they have read in the paper. It is also common to summarize the events in television serials and films, and to act out certain scenes. Children can even play at being the character in a serial. The heroes, the villains and other characters are the product of international entertainment.

There are some resemblances between mass communication and the old folklore. For example, mass entertainment can utilize the same motifs and structural schemes as the old folklore, and a television serial can be looked upon as a contemporary folk epic.(9 Mass communication and folklore have similar functions but they are different in many respects. Mass communication is centralized culture produced for the masses without regard to time, place or social situation, while the basic folklore community was the country village, stamped with a unique local character; it reflected the standards and

aspirations of the immediate environment.<sup>(10)</sup> Mass communication creates a semantic environment which is contextual and non-local: every resident of the village knows what is meant when a magazine reads "Pamela quits Dallas", while a sensational piece of village news (e.g. "So-and-so is going to have a baby and she isn't married") will not necessarily get everybody's attention. The supranational tradition is more familiar to many people than is the local.

### ***Mass mediated integration***

Mass communication supplies the subject matter for the social relations in the village. The information obtained through the media provides the topic of conversation during the coffee break at work, at meetings with friends, in the sewing circle and during school recess. Items of news in the paper can even be read aloud during the coffee or lunch break at work; people watch television together, criticize the programs and comment on what they see and hear. But the media also provides an opportunity for sitting together in silence. Watching television or a film on video together, and playing with home computers, have become popular things to do, especially for young boys. Gathering around a piece of electronic information equipment is a new form of young people's culture – a new way of getting together to have fun.

Mass communication presupposes latent or background elements in social situations; people mention information events, or they suppose that others have also read an article on a particular subject or have seen it on television. Communication with the world outside is like a collective experience and forms part of the common body of knowledge, just like the local knowledge transmitted orally in the era of local culture. Knowledge sustained by mass communication will grow still more with the expansion of cable television and commercial radio stations, which fill up the communication environment.

In the countryside too, mass communication has become an integral part of the privatisation of family life. Keeping up with the media is a way of life; they add substance to evenings with the family, they fill up the time spent together and give it a rhythm. Following the media requires less energy and active participation than visiting the neighbours. During interviews, many villagers stated that the reason for their passivity was fatigue. Nowadays they have no energy for visiting after a day's work, it is easier to stay at home and watch television. Some have told us that the television or the radio was like another person: the sound (and the picture) creates the illusion of being with someone. With the disappearance of the community spirit mass communication takes the place of Kith and Kin.

## ***The media and the socio-cultural context***

Mass communication does not make itself evident in the external appearance of the villages, but it is present in the other daily environments of the villagers. Most of them go about their business or go to work or to school in the nearby rural centre or further away from town, Here the signs of media influence are visible wherever one looks: in the streets, the stores, the cafes, the barber shops and other service establishments.

People are also subjected to the influence of the media in the way they furnish their homes. Even in the traditional farmhouse, television has modified the layout of the living room, and it determines how furniture is arranged. Communications occupy a high position in the furniture hierarchy. Television, videocassette recorder and record player are very visible, the home computer and the videocassette recorder find their way into the living room. One of the radios is usually in the kitchen; the children's room has a radio, and also a videocassette recorder and sometimes a video game with its own television set. Newspapers, magazines and comics are the mobile items which are to be found on the tables and magazine racks. The material environment of the country-dweller is also a mass communication environment.

The media environments of the minor village, the major village and the city suburb are different. In an urban environment people encounter, and also confront, the world of media more frequently, in everyday situations of work and leisure. In the cities there is also a greater abundance of media experiences, which are different and more international: television programs specializing in entertainment and relayed by satellite, local radio which gives priority to international music, a wide range of reading matter, films, videocassettes, records and computer games; at the workplace and in the service establishments the socio-cultural context is dominated by the computer. These means of communication have not yet penetrated the villages in any massive scale and they have less potential use there than in the cities. The resident of a remote village sees the media culture as an urban culture: he is outside it and he lags behind. In the course of the interviews, the idea was expressed that the remote village is culturally out in the bush; the urban culture hands only out crumbs to it – and even they come late.

Yet the difference between the media environment of the city-dweller and that of the distant villager is only one of degree. Basically their ways of life are not very different. We can no longer speak of a village culture as we could in the era of local culture.

In fact, mass communication has at least an indirect effect on all the elements of culture, such as the prevailing ideas

about clothes, food and furniture. Popular industrial culture reflects a mass inter-national culture, a superculture. Villagers are not, of course, a homogeneous group of consumers of mass culture, but structurally speaking, this culture does have the same significance for everyone. In the era of local culture, the daily life of villagers was filled by local affairs; today it is dominated by non-local affairs.

## **5. The Users of the New Information Technologies**

Communication technologies are an integral part of the daily life of almost everybody. However, different groups have, to some extent, a different media culture. The most distinctive cultures are those of age groups and genders.

The new information technologies are not a fixed element in the daily life of children to the same extent as they are in the life of adults. Children listen to the radio and watch television less than adults do. However, many children regularly watch children's television programs. Most of them also have some experience of new devices, videos and home computers (computer games), but children in remote villages use them less than the others do. Children grow up in an environment dominated by the media, which is an instrument of family living. The media is also a part of children's culture and their group activities. Many symbols of childhood existence, such as Donald Duck, already have global significance. Mass communication is a fundamental part of delocalized socialization and the acquisition of a new culture.

Most adolescents watch television and listen to radio less than adults do. But they have their own media world, inhabited by record players, cassette players, videocassette recorders, comics, youth magazines and home computers. The media environment of adolescents already has a completely international bias.

To a marked extent, communication has become an integral part of adolescent existence, including the time the young people spend together. Many city youngsters watch television programs broadcast by satellite and listen to popular music on the radio. They feel they are caught up in the development of an information society.

The rhythm of the daily life of older people is divided into distinct parts by communications. The ritualized use of radio,

newspapers and television is more typical of adults than of children or adolescents. Adults have some experience of the latest technology but these do not have for them the social and ideological significance they have for young people. Adults adopt a cautiously favourable attitude to the information society, but most of them make no real attempt to adapt to it.

The use of the mass media (press, radio and television) is most highly ritualized with seniors, for whom they represent a major element of daily life. Such people generally find the very latest appliances (videos and computers) to be alien things, which leave them indifferent. The advent of an information society seems remote to seniors, who feel that it is no longer part of their lives. These people have the strongest local orientation of all the age groups: they are interested in local newspapers and Finnish programs.

There is no perceptible difference between men and women in their use of their traditional media (radio, press and television). However, men's use of the new media is greater than that of women. Videocassette recorders and home computers are part of the culture of boys and men in particular. Moreover, more men than women use computers for working or studying. Men have a more positive attitude than women have towards the information society; they adapt to it better and feel that they are keeping up more closely with developments. (Table 3).

## **6. Are Local Media New Tools of Local Culture?**

The most important local medium of information in Finland is the local press, which has a very large circulation. Newspapers are sold through subscription or are delivered free of charge. In the latter case, they are financed entirely by advertising. Some rural regions have local (commercial) radio stations and the cities and towns have cable television networks. The state regional radio (Finnish Broadcasting Corporation) can be heard throughout Finland and offers a provincial program for about one hour a day. Local activities may also receive brief mention in the provincial papers.

The only local media in the villages studied are the local papers. The minor village has a newspaper sold through subscription to almost all households. A few people also order the free newspaper published in the provincial capital, but this does not seem to be considered a local paper within the village. The major village has a local paper sold through

subscription to about 95% of the households; in addition, two newspapers are delivered free to village residents. Some of the villagers can listen to the local commercial radio stations in Helsinki on their way to or while working.

The statistics collected 1986-1987 show that the typical local newspaper reader lives in the minor village, is past middle age and self-employed (farmer). And yet nearly everyone in the country reads the local paper, carefully in the case of seniors, more rapidly in the case of younger readers. People are more interested in the community and local affairs in the minor village in Karelia than they are elsewhere; 78% of the inhabitants of Mekrijärvi are actively interested in their locality, for Otalampi the figure is 44%. On the other hand, the people have access to more newspapers in the major village and in the suburb, and this probably tends to reduce the degree of attention with which a particular newspaper is read. The regional radio deals with topics of interest to the whole province, so that it is less focussed on local affairs than the local newspapers are. Nevertheless, 68% of the villagers listen to the regional radio, but only 14% of them do so regularly. The regional radio and the local newspapers are primarily of interest to seniors, and the inhabitants of the minor village listen to the programs somewhat more attentively than do the people in the major village.

### ***New forms of local knowledge***

The following extract from an interview gives an idea of the importance of the local newspaper:

– *Do you read the local newspaper thoroughly?*

– *Well ... it's very important for me to take a look at it immediately. I'm always in a hurry on Tuesday and Thursday when it comes out.*

– *Why is it very important?*

– *I suppose it's because it has a lot of local news in it, and that's what makes it interesting. You get to know who has died or got married, who has just come into the village and who has left, it's all in there. And I look at the store sales right away. I glance over them before I get back home, to find out which way I should go home, which store is offering the best bargains... (Mekrijärvi, nurse, aged 55)*

The local newspaper transmits local news. It contains news about people in the region, about deaths, births, marriages, birthdays and appointments. One person said he learned of his neighbour's death only by reading the paper. The local paper provides important information for the residents: what the local stores are offering. The more a villager's attention is focussed on the local affairs the more attentively he will read the local newspaper. Now that people have less contact with

one another, the local paper is for many of them the only link with village affairs.

The local papers are also useful in the organized life of the community. Official announcements are made through the local paper: public meetings, special events and meetings of particular groups, activities organized by the village committee.

The importance of news of personal interest has declined and the community life of the villagers is organized through the local paper, which is an important instrument of social, cultural and political life in the village. In the rural regions the number, and the popularity of the newspapers has grown as spontaneous community culture and personal contacts have declined. For many people the newspaper helps them to feel that they belong.

The information passed around in the period of agrarian culture was oral and collective. The community had its providers of information with various specializations: village gossip, political ideas, stories and proverbs. Oral communication and local providers of information no longer have a role to play in the delocalized cultural system. Even local information comes through the centralized media.

### ***Has local identity been preserved?***

Knowledge of local interest still fosters a feeling of local identity and a sense of belonging to the local community, especially among people who have reached or passed middle age. The local papers have, in fact, become symbols of identity: they do not restrict themselves to local affairs; they also represent, they symbolize the locality in a more general way. About half of the copies of the local newspaper in Mekrijärvi are distributed to addresses in other regions. People who have moved away want to have news about their old village, but the emotional significance of the paper is undoubtedly an even stronger reason. Every time the paper reminds its readers of their own roots it sends "a message from home" to these people. It is common in Finland to build a small house in the country, and many people who do this have the local paper sent to them in the city, even if it is practically their only contact with the locality. One city-dweller said that while he was on vacation in the country he liked to listen to the regional radio so that he could have a greater feeling of belonging to the region. The local media are therefore internal and external symbols of the region.

Do the local media represent local culture? We have seen that the press and the radio are delocalized; they come from

outside the village. Today's "village culture", at the end of 1980s, rests on non-local structures and the communication environment of the villagers is also dominated by non-local mass communication. A local current can be observed in the flood of communication – news about the reader's own environment (local papers). As a cultural experience local news is still important to the majority of rural residents. It represents news, which is more or less personal or close to them. But local mass communication cannot really replace a non-local form of culture. It is impossible to create a real local culture within a global structure of non-local culture. Local culture must be founded on local structures in all areas of culture.

Local media, however, still help to maintain local identity and to disseminate news in a context within social exchange and other structures of local culture are becoming increasingly rare. Of course, we may ask what sort of local culture is supported by a local radio station, which broadcasts mainly international light music. Frequently, the only items of news about the local community are the announcements, the references by the announcer to local events and a few news bulletins. The principal message transmitted by all local radios in Finland is, however, international in character. (Table 4).

## **7. Adapting to the Future**

### ***The advent of postlocal technology***

The new information technologies mentioned in this report consist of videocassette recorders, cable and satellite television, home computers and computers used as working tools. The new information technologies are represented in the villages by videocassette recorders and computers, and in the suburb by a cable television network as well, which offers, for example, programs relayed by satellite, a superstation, FR 3-France, a sports station, etc. Only a few people in the minor village have a videocassette recorder (8%) as compared with those in the major village (27%). The same difference can be seen with regard to video-watching; 57% of the residents in the minor village had never seen video, as compared with 35% of the residents of the major village and only 20% of the city-dwellers. These differences also appear between people of the same age. There is not much difference between manual and office workers; however, for the self-employed and persons not gainfully occupied (farmers, mothers at home, unemployed persons) percentages are slightly lower. Tire young people watch significantly more video than do seniors, and men watch more than women.

Table 4

**Local media**

	Community			Age-group				total
	minor village	major village	suburb	15 -	16 - 25	26 - 45	46 -	
N	83	89	118	62	35	71	122	290
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Read local paper								
seldom	1	24	-	50	0	14	8	13
summarily	27	30	-	44	67	16	25	29
carefully	72	46	-	6	33	70	67	58
	100							
2. Read free paper								
seldom	-	8	53	82	38	15	14	34
summarily	-	48	39	14	54	46	57	43
carefully	-	44	8	4	8	39	29	23
	100							
3. Listen to regional radio								
seldom	23	41	-	95	31	33	18	32
sometimes	55	52	-	0	69	56	61	54
often	22	7	-	5	0	11	21	14
	100							
4. Importance of regional radio								
indifferent	53	66	-	95	75	62	47	60
rather important	47	34	-	5	25	38	53	40
	100							
5. Most important about local radio (suburb)								
local bias	-	-	33	0	28	78	47	33
music	-	-	30	45	67	13	3	30
nothing	-	-	37	55	5	9	50	37
	100							

Table 5

**New media**

	Community			Sex		Age-group				Occupation				total
	minor village	major village	suburb	men	women	15 -	16 - 25	26 - 45	46 -	self-employed workers	blue-collar workers	white-collar workers	schoolchildren, students	
N	83	89	118	135	155	62	35	71	122	53	94	54	89	290
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Watch video														
never	56	35	20	28	41	1	3	41	58	62	50	35	2	35
seldom	28	35	24	26	31	26	17	34	30	34	22	43	24	29
sometimes	12	21	33	28	19	39	57	21	7	2	18	13	48	23
often	4	9	23	18	9	34	21	4	5	2	10	9	26	13
	100													
2. Attitude to videos														
negative	18	17	14	10	21	3	8	25	20	32	15	22	4	16
indifferent	49	45	25	35	41	13	23	34	57	51	50	39	17	38
positive	33	38	61	55	38	84	69	41	23	17	35	39	79	46
	100													
3. Use home computer														
never	83	71	56	57	79	21	40	79	95	98	87	71	30	69
sometimes	13	22	31	29	18	53	40	20	5	2	11	26	47	23
quite often	4	7	13	14	3	26	20	1	0	0	2	2	24	8
	100													
4. Attitude to home computers														
negative	7	11	11	5	14	10	14	6	11	8	11	9	11	10
indifferent	64	52	57	50	64	37	37	55	75	75	66	56	38	57
positive	29	37	32	45	22	53	49	39	14	17	23	35	50	33
	100													
5. Use computer for work														
never	83	81	68	68	84	96	43	60	85	98	76	50	80	76
sometimes	15	10	23	22	12	2	46	21	13	2	18	30	16	17
often	2	9	9	10	4	2	11	19	2	0	6	20	4	7
	100													

The typical reader of the local newspaper and listener to the regional radio is past middle age and lives in a minor village. As a local medium the local press is more important than the regional radio and there are also many young people who read it. The young people think that international popular music is the thing that really matters on City Radio, the older people find the local viewpoint more important.

At the end of 1980s, barely 2% of the residents of Mekrijärvi, 10% of those of Otalampi and 10% of the suburban dwellers had a home computer; 83% of the residents of the minor village, 71% of those of the major village and 56% of the city-dwellers had never used a computer. The principal users of home computers are young people, those in the minor village use them somewhat less than do the young city-dwellers. Two percent of persons working for themselves, 13% of the manual workers and 28% of the office workers had used a home computer at some stage. There is a difference between the sexes: 45% of the men have a positive attitude to computers and 43% of them have been using one occasionally or more frequently, while the corresponding percentages for women are 22 and 21% respectively.

The city-dwellers, young people and office workers are the people who use a computer most of the time for their work or their studies. They are also the ones who usually have a home computer and a video and display a more positive attitude to the "information and computer society". They feel they are keeping up to date with developments and want to benefit from them as much as possible. The women, the less educated, the seniors and the village residents are not familiar with computers and have not assimilated the new technology so quickly. (Table 5).

### ***Can we speak of an old and a new human species?***

Information technology has become a symbol of the "information society". Consequently, the people who assimilate the new technology are those who are the most involved in the evolution of this society. They adapt better than others to the new cultural environment. Table 6 illustrates the rate of adaptation to the expansion of media.

Table 6.  
**Adaptation to media**

***Easy adaptation***  
Young people

***Difficult adaptation***  
Seniors

People with training  
Men  
City-dwellers

People without training  
Women  
Inhabitants of remote villages

For example, adaptation to the new trend has not occurred in the case of the 64-year old wife of a retired small farmer who lives in the minor village with her husband and two daughters. She is socially active and has always lived in the region; she had only three years of formal education. She may properly be considered as representative of the local personality type. The family has had a radio for twenty years, but has had a television set for only a few years. The mother listens mainly to radio and watches television for news, the weather outlook and the religious programs. The radio is more important to her than television; it is part of her daily round and keeps her in touch with what is going on in the world. She has less than average interest in the media, since she has not adopted the practice of regularly watching television every evening. She grew up in accordance with a different cultural model and finds the volume of information excessive: *"For me, life consists of working and getting pleasure out of my work. There wasn't any of all that when I was young, I didn't have those things"*. She glances at the news in the provincial papers and takes no interest in politics, but she reads the local newspaper with greater attention. The events, which are close to her, the local community, are the topics that matter. *"I read the (local) paper right through, the things in it are things I really know, I read it all, deaths, births and birthdays"*. She knows nothing about videocassette recorders and home computers and is not much interested in them. *"I've heard about them, but that doesn't interest me. All that stuff is for young people. The young people are crazy about these machines, but I'm too old-fashioned and too stupid"*.

She has never used a computer, but she knows that computers are useful. She sees computers as a sort of modern miracle, they represent a form of progress of which she is simply an observer, and that is all she wants to be. You can't stop progress, and she has no precise ideas on the subject – at the most the slightly ironic attitude of an observer. She has a cultural model, which is different from the one, which the information society has introduced. She sets great store on matters affecting those immediately around her, and stands aside from the technoculture. Progress passes by people like her. Those who want to be right in the centre of developments take as their cultural model the new media of communication and they live in an atmosphere of international media culture.

Adaptation to the new cultural environment has occurred, for example, in the case of the young technician, 25 years old, born in our major village but living as a single person in the capital. He lives in a media environment with an international focus. There is always international-style popular music playing where he lives; it comes from the local radio, which caters

mainly to young people, from his record player, his video or a musical video on television satellite channel. In the evening he regularly watches the television satellite channel, the entertainment programs and the movies – mostly Anglo-American – on Helsinki television. He watches the Finnish national television less often. He reads the major Helsinki (and the national) dailies every day; he sometimes scans the local paper from his home village. He has a videocassette recorder and a home computer. Computers are, in his view, an important element of society and future progress depends on them.

### ***The local and non-local personality***

There are still some locally oriented personalities in the villages; such people speak the local dialect and are interested in village people, the way they live and what happens to them. Nevertheless, the local personality is disappearing in Finland, as it is elsewhere. A person of this kind has grown up in his/her own village, knows the other villagers of the same age (if they are still living there) who went to school with him/her. In his/her youth this personality went with contemporaries to village dances and social gatherings organized by local associations of young people or by other organizations in the locality, and many such people married a girl or a boy from the village. The local personality has resisted the structural change of the fifties and sixties. Where media are concerned, he/she reads first the local paper, gets the provincial news from the local radio station, and selects the Finnish movies and entertainment programs on television. Having learned to be independent, he/she does not look to the supranational shows for models and is reluctant to change his/her habits. The local personality lives on an old farm in the village.

Recent trends in society have brought non-local personalities into the villages. They are owners of single-family dwellings and work in the nearby town or urban centre. They live like the residents of suburbs; for them the village is an opportunity to live close to nature without being part of a community. The non-local personality lives and consumes in his/her own family circle. After working hours, he/she gets on with various jobs about the house, watches television or videos, listens to music or engages in some particular hobby with a small group of friends. Non-local families have few contacts with village people; their friends are often people whom they have met at work or in the exercise of their profession. They are interested in village affairs only insofar as they affect their personal interests. In looking after his/her own affairs the non-local personality relies on the system, on groups sharing the same interests, on the political organizations or the trade unions. He/she was not born in the village and does not see any local cultural traditions in his/her environment. That environment, tile house and the house decor reflect commercial standards and international trends.

The non-local personality is a consumer of culture who is interested in global culture outside the village. He/she does not read the local newspaper, and is, as a person, representative of his/her professional class or status as a consumer. The character of this person, the information world in which he/she is entrenched, and the personality all bear the stamp of market influences and international consciousness industry. The world of the non-local personality increasingly depends on communication channels, his/her life is increasingly self-centred, and for him/her "standard" of living means consumption, not social relationships. In a postlocal world, these people even become "information terminals", that is to say, they are no longer capable of establishing personal contacts with the other people in their environment.

### ***Grounds for optimism***

Only 9% of the persons surveyed in this study (1986-1987) displayed a negative attitude to the information society, and 6% were directly opposed to the growth of information technology. Fifty-six percent had a positive attitude, but not always without reservations or criticism. The majority of the persons surveyed thought the trend was inevitable, but made no active effort to adapt to it. Fifty-five percent considered that they were not part of the trend; most of the residents of the villages think they no longer have any control over the non-local technology from the outside world. A growing number say that the trend leaves them indifferent; they neither try to change it, nor do they think they can. Non-local "development" has become a generally accepted cultural value. Since the advent of radio and television all the new media have been accepted right away. They are not even really newsworthy. Few people know whether their neighbours have a video or a computer. The villagers have accepted the trend as an integral part of their world and have quietly adapted their daily life to the new media and tile external influences. In Finland, as in other countries, the progress of science and technology has the status of a cult: progress is in a sense sacred and above suspicion. Like religion, the cult of progress supplies obvious answers and creates a feeling of mental security. The future depends on technology.

Table 7

### ***Basic cultural systems***

<b><i>Environment</i></b>	<b>Local</b> natural ethnic framework	<b>De-local</b> national development	<b>Postlocal</b> universal control
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<b>Basic social unit</b>	local community	centralized organization	global technosystem
<b>Basic technical tool</b>	human hand	production line	robot
<b>Type of person</b>	villager	meritocrat	information technologist
<b>Language/tools of communication</b>	spoken language, folklore	writing, book audio-visual media	data, files, internet audio-visual universum
<b>Primary task of the culture</b>	maintain local character/community	manipulate development	control the masses

When local cultures have made the transition to a national cultural system the written message takes the place of memorized information (folklore). The environment gradually comes to be managed by numbers; cultural development too is measured in terms of growth statistics. The villager has lost his/her cultural significance to the meritocrat whose background and training are national in character. These people are in a centralized organization. The primary task of culture is to manipulate the development of the state and the growth of the economy. Communication, like science and even art, has served the culture of the state and the rites of power concentrated in it.

In tomorrow's postlocal system, autonomous technosystems which have monopolized a particular area of life will replace state machinery; humankind will turn towards universal cultures controlled by world filing systems; the language of technology and communication and their content form a single whole. Human beings are being ever more clearly subdivided into (A) producers (those who execute) and (B) consumers (those who receive) of the products of the information industry. Benefiting from their supranational training, the producers, type A persons will control the technical equipment, design and manufacture the products of the consciousness industry and form the cast of global sociodramas. Culture is becoming increasingly a means of monopolizing the attention of human beings, a global variety which has the same meaning as drugs: tranquillization of the consuming masses, extinction of the consciousness of type B persons, and destruction of reality.

## **8. The Postlocal Media Culture**

## ***The global information society***

The next mass production cultural era will probably be characterized by a global "space culture", a world information society wholly devoid of local elements. This global culture system will be founded on space technology, automatic mass production and computerized world databases. Communications in the new culture system will be handled by satellites and cable networks operated by mass production systems, the giant scientific, technical and economic institutions, and the global information industry of the great powers.(11

This new information technology, especially the computers and satellites, will make it possible to manage bigger and bigger economic and cultural systems. The global culture could be run by the same means as the present mass production society, by handing over to the global institutions all the real information, which will have an impact. In the postlocal supersystems the personality will be a minute part of the machinery, and people – the "average person" or the local community – will never again be able to manage their environment as they could in the era of autonomous cultures. The global culture system could divide people into two classes: a supranational elite and the masses, whose social duty would be to consume the culture and receive services.

The "ordinary person" – a computer terminal living in his own niche within the information society – will get most of his experience through his personal information media: television, videocassette recorder, hi-fi system, or from services supplied through his home computer. The relationships of this person will also have an instrumental character, for example, speaking to human images through videophones and monitor screens. In this world of videos and television sets, the consumer of the information society will undoubtedly be able to listen to the very best music in the world, become acquainted with the principal social power rites of the world and see performances by persons of exceptional talent who will capture the attention of humankind at regular intervals. Comfortably ensconced in their visually oriented world, the members of this service society will be able, if they so wish, to experience everything without leaving their compartments.

The machinery of space information will bring forth a new dominant species of human being – the data meritocrat and the information star. These new economic, political and religious leaders will need above all to be able to wield their influence through television and to have the "personality for the job" which the masses expect. An economic and technological world culture is already in existence; the era of satellite television will see the final cultural fusion. The human race will

enter the postlocal world.

### ***The essence of the new knowledge***

In the contemporary development of the information society, there is a strong tendency towards a uniform global superculture, which is liable to bring about the disappearance of local cultures (Table 8). The structures of knowledge will have to change once again. Nothing will function in the global system except computer data, that is to say data stored by the big firms and required by the global economic system and its control mechanisms. The structure of written information, on which our present non-local culture rests, is not appropriate to the new great system. Local oral knowledge would have to disappear in the end, not because it is no longer useful, say, for the management of a farm, as it was for hundreds and thousands of years, but because the new scientific and technical written knowledge is appropriate to the centralized production systems and conforms to the power structures which are specific to the meritocratic organization culture. In the space culture, written knowledge will be relegated to the status of folklore – a mere hobby for people interested in tradition. (12)

The dominant knowledge of the information society, utilized by the principal systems, will be primarily the total product of centralized institutions of superculture. The knowledge and the technology will be structural elements in a global cultural system which of itself already eliminates the opportunity for the average person to create and use his personal knowledge, the information which is his own or which flows from his own culture.

Global communication with an up to date structure and content will determine what nations expect from existence and from the future. The global culture will provide a new description of the past, will define the relationship between the human person and nature and will resolve the problems of good and evil. Mass communication will create uniformity of the masses and the human race will know everything that is going on through global information. Each person's self will be like a fashionable dress, which is designed and created by the illusion industry outside the confines of everyday reality.

If this trend reaches its culmination, the quality of localness – one dimension – will be totally absent from the new system of culture. Only universal structures will have any real meaning. Culture will consist of global sociodramas, information rites surrounding the world leaders, the cult of world idols and global spectacles, such as the world games, which will be watched by television audiences of one, two or three billion. The hierarchy and the structures of culture – and knowledge

– will grow. In the global information culture, the whole human species will throb to the same pulse. Reality will be programmed into the global databases, the human race will finally be one: it will have an environment, a personality and a definitive idea of itself as a superior being.

## Notes

The article is based on the study Eero Julkunen & Matti Sarmela, *Information Technology and Structural Change in Local Cultures* (1987). The theoretical framework is set out in the following publications of Matti Sarmela: "What is Cultural Imperialism?" 1977. "Paikalliskulttuurin rakennemuutos ('Structural Change in Local Culture') 1979.

2.) Sarmela 1974, 1984. 3.) Bausinger 1961. 4.) Berger – Luckmann 1984. 5.) Bausinger, 1984. 6.) Gerbner 1976. 7.) Sarmela 1984. 8.) Allen 1982. 9.) Esslin 1975. 10.) Kuusi 1975. 11.) See for example Shiller 1976; 1981. 12.) See for example Postman 1986.

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