

The Sociological Review, 1996, 44(1):35-57.

Personal histories and social restructuring: the transformation of a peasant society

Beryl Nicholson

Abstract

Using the capacity of linked census data to combine two levels, individual and aggregate, and two dimensions, longitudinal and cross-sectional, the process of structural change is explored to reveal aspects of change which are usually hidden. North Troms, in North Norway, which still had a peasant economy at the end of the Second World War is used as an example. The trajectories of those economically active in 1960 and 1970 are disentangled then reassembled to show how they combined as structural change. Only a minority of personal histories paralleled the change in society as a whole. Much more structural change resulted from succession of cohorts leaving and entering the labour force. By joining the study of individuals to that of structures, it is possible to see how change occurs in the spaces between people out of the effects of many contradictions.

Some of the most far reaching changes in post-war Europe have occurred where the local economy remained broadly 'peasant' (in the Chayanov sense) long after other areas industrialised, changes which began over a century earlier elsewhere. This transition tends to be seen as a 'reshuffling' of people from old into new positions and places (Themstrom, 1964: 85). It is assumed that changes at the individual level parallel those in society as a whole, that they 'reflect' the 'structural facts' (Dex, 1991: 2), or the 'impact of . . . the master processes' (Elliott, 1990: 63). Life histories, we are told, 'will necessarily record the *effects* (my italics) of labour market structuring' (Walby, 1991: 169). Yet as Foucault, among others, has pointed out, histories that are written on different levels are different histories. Microscopic and macroscopic arrangements of events and their consequences are not the same (Foucault, [1969], 1972: 4-5). The trajectories

Beryl Nicholson

followed by individuals are not simply microcosms of change in the wider society.

This observation has important implications for understanding social change. It reiterates in a dynamic context the warning against the ecological fallacy, that conclusions about lower order phenomena cannot be drawn from higher order data. It also suggests a line of enquiry with rich potential for studying change in any period.

Data constructed by linkage of large sets of individual level data, which have so far been used for longitudinal studies at the micro-level, also allow histories written on different levels to be related to one another. They can show how the life courses of the various actors, together, have brought about the 'recurrent redistributions' (Foucault, [1969], 1972: 5), out of which we construct the narrative of societal change. Aspects of change not previously accessible to investigation can be explored to find out if, and how, the process of change itself varies over time. This is particularly useful for studying major long-term developments which have affected different societies in different periods. Pre-eminent among these is the process of industrialisation and urbanisation over the past two centuries, of which the decline of peasant societies is a part.

To substantiate this argument I examine developments in an area which experienced this transition quite recently, northern Norway. My aim is not primarily to construct an account of change in a specific society and period (though the findings do have empirical value), still less to seek to explain it. The size and complexity of such a task is beyond the scope of one article. Rather it is to show how one means of aggregating individual level data, linking successive censuses, allows us to combine two levels, individual and aggregate, and two dimensions, longitudinal and cross-sectional, to reveal aspects of change which would otherwise remain hidden.

The setting

The data are taken from three communes in the north of the county of Troms: Skjervøy, Nordreisa and Kvænangen, which I shall refer to as North Troms. Together they constitute a cross section of Arctic Norway from the mountain plateau to the outer skerries. Of a total population of about 10,000, over two thirds

Personal histories and social restructuring

lived scattered along the shores of fjords and islands and the floors of valleys, the rest lived in four villages. At the end of the Second World War the economy of the area was still dominated by the classic combination of fishing (men's work) and agriculture (women's work), often supplemented by income from other work (Brox, 1966; Bratrein, 1976; Flakstad, 1979; Nicholson, 1979; 1989; 1995). Fishing was of greatest importance in Skjervøy on the outer coast, which consists mostly of islands, and agriculture, supplemented by forestry, in Nordreisa, a valley which opens onto a sheltered fjord. Kvænangen, which encircles a larger fjord, occupied an intermediate position. In 1950, most of those economically active in North Troms were classed as self-employed or family labour, statuses characteristic of the peasant economy. Only about a third had employee status, which predominates in the secondary and tertiary sectors. By 1980 the position had been more than reversed. Over three quarters of those economically active were classified as employees (Statistisk sentralbyrå [henceforth SSB], 1956: 90-93; SSB, 1983: 84-85).

Change in North Troms 1960 to 1970

The analysis is confined to the central decade of this period, 1960-1970. By 1960 restructuring was well underway, but had yet to run its course. Table 1 shows the decline in the traditional sectors, fishing and agriculture, in the decade.

Table 1 Occupationally active population with agriculture or fishing as most important source of livelihood, 1960 and 1970.
Per cent of total

	1960	1970 ^a
	%	%
Skjervøy	46.0	30.6
Nordreisa	45.7	18.9
Kvænangen	55.6	29.6

^a Excluding women classified as housewives in 1960. Men undertaking military service in 1970 are omitted from the total. In 1960 they were classified by normal civilian occupation.

Sources: SSB, 1964: 104; SSB, 1975: 173.

Beryl Nicholson

In 1960 the primary sector was still the most important source of livelihood for about half the economically active population, more if the uncounted women, wives, daughters and unmarried sisters working on their families' smallholdings are added. There was a strong interdependence between these sectors, and between traditional and other sectors (Nicholson, 1979: 185-186); in the two coastal communes (Skjervøy and Kvænangen) about half the agricultural holdings were operated by fishermen (invariably, that is, by their wives) (SSB, unpublished; SSB, 1962a: 93). In these communes fishing was at least a subsidiary activity for a good third of the men (SSB, 1962b: 66). All but a small number had done some fishing in the census year. About half of all households still lived on agricultural holdings (SSB, undated a: 7; SSB, undated b: 7; SSB, undated c: 7), and could engage in subsistence production, if only on a small scale, and many did.

By the end of the decade only between a third and a fifth of the economically active population, which had also declined, obtained the greater part of their income from the primary sector. Only a quarter of households lived on agricultural holdings still in production (SSB, 1971b: 140; SSB, 1973a: 19; SSB, 1973b: 19; SSB, 1973c: 19), and the proportion of men in the coastal communes counted as fishermen had likewise fallen to a quarter (SSB, 1973d: 34). There was also an increase in the number of economically active women which exceeded that due to definitional changes but did not outweigh the decline among men (SSB, undated a: 6; SSB, undated b: 6; SSB, undated c: 6; SSB, 1975: 173). The area still had the appearance typical of a peasant economy, but the main sources of livelihood of most of the population were the secondary or tertiary (the non-traditional) sectors.

The data

The data consist of special tabulations compiled from linked census data for 1960 and 1970 for a project on labour market flows between industries and regions (Myklebost, undated).¹ The tables show persons resident in each commune on the respective census, dates (1 November in each year) and those resident only in 1970 by main source of livelihood in each census year. They distinguish four main categories: economically active (subdivided by industry, or sector, *næring*), pensioner, housewife² and dependant.

Personal histories and social restructuring

Published sources provided limited data on sector in 1960 for those economically active at both censuses and resident in 1960 but not in 1970.

In the data, 'personal histories' consist of traces of people's lives, arbitrarily plotted in time. Compared with full life histories the data are exceedingly sparse. They refer to only two points in time, both of which 'freeze. . . (a) knife-edge moment' (Mills, [1959] 1970: 168) detached from the 'flux of living' (Douglas, 1975: 120), separated by a large blank space, a time window of absent data. The 1970 data are 'right censored' (Marsh and Gershuny, 1991: 100), and the 1960 data left censored. We do not know how they relate to what preceded or followed this decade. What we have are nonetheless fragments of biographies, situated at the 'intersections' between biography and history (Mills, [1959] 1970: 12). Unlike conventional life histories, therefore, they are both located in their context, and constitutive of it. For the present purpose this far outweighs their inevitable limitations.

The three communes are considered separately throughout, allowing us to see that, minor differences between them notwithstanding, on the whole, the process of change has been similar in all three. The analysis is informed by prolonged familiarity with North Troms and acquaintance with some of its inhabitants and their biographies.

I start by disentangling the individual trajectories of inhabitants of North Troms who were economically active in 1960 and 1970, or one of those years. Then I put them together again to show the combinations of personal histories which underly structural change. Explaining this procedure through two dimensional tables and linear text is necessarily complex. However, habitual inclinations to streamline information of this kind, thereby losing a dimension, must be resisted if the argument is to be understood.

The level of the actors: the personal histories

The personal histories of the inhabitants of North Troms who were economically active in either 1960 or 1970 are summarised in Table 2. It shows that few personal histories paralleled the course of social change, and thus the inadequacy of the impression created by cross-sectional studies of social change as reshuffling from traditional to non-traditional sectors.

Table 2 Economically active population 1960 and/or 1970 by type of personal history. Per cent

	Skjervøy %	Nordreisa %	Kvænangen %
Economically active 1960 and 1970			
Resident '60 and '70	37.6	35.8	34.0
Same sector ^a	21.6	20.3	16.1
Changed sector (Trad. to non-trad.)	16.0 (6.8)	15.5 (7.2)	17.9 (8.2)
Absent 60 or 70	15.2	15.1	17.8
In, same sector	1.7	2.3	1.2
In, changed sector	2.1	3.9	2.5
Out, still active	11.4	8.9	14.1
Left/entered labour force 1960/70			
Left labour force	23.1	25.9	28.7
Retired	11.3	13.1	15.4
Absent ^b	9.3	11.2	12.4
Housewife 1970	2.1	1.0	0.7
Dependant 1970	0.4	0.6	0.2
Entered labour force	23.8	22.5	19.4
New entrants	17.7	15.8	14.5
In, new entrants	3.2	4.5	2.3
Housewife 1960 ^c	2.9	2.2	2.6
Total (n = 100%)^d	2549	1409	1220

^a Includes housewives in 1960 economically active in agriculture in 1970.

^b Persons economically active in one of these communes in 1960 not resident there or economically active elsewhere in Norway in 1970 (ie deceased, emigrated and out-migrants classified as retired, housewives or dependants in 1970).

^c Includes some resident elsewhere in 1960.

^d Includes a few persons not resident in Norway in 1960 not included in the table.

Sources: Unpublished linked census data; SSB, 1964: 104; SSB, 1973a: 17; SSB, 1973b: 17; SSB, 1973c: 17; SSB, 1975: 173; SSB, 1977: 72; SSB, undated a: 6; SSB, undated b: 6; SSB, undated c: 6.

Personal histories and social restructuring

The most common type of personal history consisted of working in the same sector and living in the same commune at both the beginning and the end of the decade. This was the experience of approximately half of those economically active at both censuses. For these people (unless they had temporarily changed residence or sector between censuses, which some undoubtedly had) this decade of change was characterised by continuity.

The other half of those economically active at both censuses had changed sectors, but these shifts contributed little to structural change. Barely half those who changed sector, only some 7 or 8 per cent of all those economically active at either census, were in a traditional sector at the beginning of the decade and a non-traditional one at the end of it. Moreover, some of this change was statistical, resulting from a shift in the relative importance of the components of the mix of income sources (see note 1). The remaining moves between sectors had a neutral effect on the overall structure, or even cancelled out some of the modernising moves. Similar patterns have been found in places experiencing industrial change (Walby, 1991: 172, 178, 182), so these findings cannot be dismissed as an aberration.

Nor does movement into or out of the area account for structural change, as reshuffling conceptions of change suggest (Goldstein, 1955: 403, 405, 408; Thernstrom, 1964: 215). The number of economically active persons resident in North Troms at only one of the two censuses was similar to the number who changed sectors, but their contribution to structural change (not shown in the table) was negligible. In Skjervøy and Kvænangen this change in personnel produced a net loss from the non-traditional as well as the traditional sectors, which cancelled out the modest modernisation caused by intersectoral shifts. What is more, some of those resident only in 1970 had traditional sector occupations but had been in a non-traditional sector in 1960. Some had moved in the 'wrong' direction within the country as well, towards the periphery from the centre (SSB, 1977: 40-41; Nicholson, 1992: 404). Only in Nordreisa was there a net gain to non-traditional sectors from migration, but it was very small.

Residential moves are ambiguous, as they may preserve continuity as well as initiate change (Petersen 1969: 298). For almost half of those resident only in 1970, the move to the area implied continuity, since they were active in the same sector at the beginning and end of the decade. The remainder had changed sector at least once, experiencing a change in their working lives, but such

changes need not have occurred concurrently with a residential move (of which there may have been more than one). The sector in 1970 of those no longer resident in these communes is not known, but evidence suggests that some were in the traditional sectors in places similar to North Troms (Nicholson, 1971: 114, 116; SSB, 1977: 40-41), so their personal histories would not parallel structural change either.

The remaining histories are of people who entered or left the working population during the decade. Their sheer volume shows more clearly than anything else the inadequacy of reshuffling *∴* conceptions of change. Almost half of the people economically active in North Troms at one or other census were not in the labour force at the other, a pattern replicated at the national level (see Kaldager, 1977: 4; SSB, 1975: 51).

The outflow consisted mainly of those who retired or died during the decade. The latter are subsumed in the amorphous category 'Absent', those resident and economically active in 1960 but not in 1970, together with those who had left and were retired or housewives.³ Some residents classified as economically active in 1960 were in the category 'housewife' in 1970, and a very few were classified as dependent. The inflow comprised young people who had entered the labour force,⁴ and women classified as housewives in 1960 but as economically active in 1970.

Succession and structural change

Table 3 shows, not unexpectedly, that more, relatively, of those economically active in 1960 but retired in 1970 were in the traditional sectors in 1960 than those still active in 1970. The difference is smaller than might be expected, probably due to the unavoidable omission of those who had died. Nonetheless, retirements resulted in a perceptible sectoral shift.

New entrants to the labour force, that part of the inflow comprising young people, are sufficiently numerous to require modification of perceptions that young people had been 'drained' out of the countryside (Brox, 1980). Far more local young people had entered the local labour market than had moved out of the area (Nicholson, 1983: 5). What is more, by 1970 some of the local young people who had left had been replaced by young people from other areas. Table 4 shows their distribution between sectors in 1970 compared with those economically active

Personal histories and social restructuring

Table 3 Retired and economically active resident 1960 and 1970 by sector 1960. Per cent

	Skjervøy		Nordreisa		Kvænangen	
	Ret'd	Active	Ret'd	Active	Ret'd	Active
	60/70		60/70		60/70	
Primary	54.3	52.4	68.3	52.0	72.3	61.4
Secondary	23.4	19.4	19.1	27.1	13.8	19.4
Tertiary	22.3	28.2	12.6	22.9	13.9	19.2
n = 100%	282	903	183	473	188	397

Sources: Unpublished linked census data; SSB, 1977: 72.

and resident at both censuses. It shows that more structural change occurred at the point of entry to the local labour force than at the point of exit.

Tables 3 and 4 considered together show that cohort succession, the change in personnel in the work force, brought about a relative decline in the traditional sector twice as great as moves between sectors, and a relative increase in the tertiary sector, though it varied between communes, that was greater still. These findings are in keeping with Ryder's observation that 'the rapid industrialization of a previously traditional economy ... is accomplished not so much by educating the population as a whole as by introducing each new cohort in turn to the modern

Table 4 Local and in-migrant new entrants and economically active and resident 1960 and 1970 by sector. Per cent

	Skjervøy			Nordreisa			Kvænangen		
	New entrants in-migr.	local	Active 60/70	New entrants in-migr.	local	Active 60/70	New entrants in-migr.	local	Active 60/70
Primary	10.0	22.2	40.3	0.0	15.2	28.9	0.0	27.6	35.5
Secondary	22.5	33.3	34.2	25.0	31.4	42.1	21.4	36.8	37.0
Tertiary	67.5	44.5	25.5	75.0	53.4	29.0	88.6	35.6	27.5
n= 100% ^a	80	406	906	60	204	473	28	163	397

^a Excludes military service and sector unknown.

Source: Unpublished linked census data.

way of life' (1965: 851), but show it needs some qualification. Change was relative not absolute. In 1971 there were fewer fishermen aged under 30 than in 1960 (though in Nordreisa there were more) (SSB, 1973d: 35; SSB, 1974: 115), and in 1969 only half as many *brukere*, farmers or smallholders, were aged under forty as a decade earlier (SSB, 1962a: 93; SSB, 1971b: 140). Fewer young people had entered the traditional sectors than in the preceding decades, but recruitment had by no means ceased.

Among new entrants, incomers were, relatively, still more likely than local young people to enter non-traditional sectors, especially the tertiary sector. This does not, however, imply that they were recruited to jobs for which qualified local young people were not available. In absolute terms more local young people than incomers had jobs requiring advanced qualifications, and still others had moved to such jobs elsewhere. Evidence from the migration notifications of young people shows little difference between the occupations of incomers and local out-migrants (Nicholson, 1983: 8), and this appears to be typical. In the county of Finnmark in 1980, the distribution between sectors of new entrants to the labour force who had moved in from elsewhere was almost identical to that of local young people who had left in the previous decade (Aarstad, 1984: 16).

Local new entrants were distinguished from incomers in that some had access to niches in traditional sectors rarely open to outsiders. These, like the 'at home' (*hjemmeværende*)⁵ niche for young women assisting in the family household (though that was not counted as economically active), had traditionally been an apprenticeship (Brox, 1984: 75), but for some they were a 'waiting niche', a temporary position. Later, men perhaps after military service and women at or following marriage, they would move on. In the 1960s the merchant fleet played a similar role for young men, as did the personal services sector, including domestic service, for women (Direktoratet for sjømenn; SSB, undated a: 6; SSB, undated b: 6; SSB, undated c: 6; c.f. Barth, 1952: 34; Sejerstad, 1992: 46). Many women classified as housewives in 1970 had been in the personal services sector in 1960, and 80 per cent of women doing paid housework of any kind in 1970 were new entrants to the labour force.

These were part of well established life course progressions (see Listhaug, 1977: 534-535). Some moves from traditional to non-traditional sectors during the decade would have been such progressions. Likewise, some moves in the opposite direction, into

the traditional sectors, were undoubtedly progressions of young people who had occupied waiting niches, in their home commune or elsewhere, until they inherited (or married into) an agricultural holding. Many waiting niches occupied by young women, poorly paid jobs with a high turnover, necessitated a move to another area or a town. Some young people resident in 1970 who originated elsewhere were at various stages of life courses that followed similar patterns, and would be followed by others when they left. Many young people were mobile, but there was more back and forth movement, (Nicholson, 1971; Thorsen, 1993: 78) than is usually recognised.

Women who had been housewives in 1960 moved into manufacturing and, in smaller numbers, banks and the post office, growing sectors which recruited women of all age groups. Increasingly, paid employment was an alternative to unpaid work on the family smallholding. Some of those classified as housewives in 1960 had probably made this transition, a shift analogous to the change in the economic structure. Numbers were small, but more women followed this lifecourse progression with each successive cohort.

Even in these limited data, succession emerges as much more than simple replacement at one point in time. Rather, it appears as a continually on-going process through which any given cohort repeatedly contributes to the maintenance or change of established patterns at successive stages in their lives. On this evidence, White's hypothesis that 'a structure of positions emerges as the skeleton deposited by, that is the residue in cultural terms from, repetitive enactment of orderly networks of relations among men' (*sic*) (White, 1970: 329) is a very plausible one.

The components of structural change

The successive aggregations from which we construct descriptions of change at the societal level come together as combinations of individual personal histories at the point they happen to have reached at any given time. Structural change, and renewal, are the outcome of the combined effects of the fluctuating fortunes of different life course progressions. Change in the working population is continuous, so cross-sectional data show the relative importance of the components of change in each sector for any

given interval fairly reliably, unlike household structures which vary over the phases in the family cycle (Berkner, 1972: 405, 408).

Tables 5 and 6 show how combinations of personal histories brought about changes which affected each sector between 1960 and 1970.

Table 5 shows those in each sector in 1960 still there in 1970 and those who had left it and where they had gone. Though those who were in the same sector at both the beginning and end of the decade were the largest single category (see above Table 2), in every sector most of those in it in 1960 had moved out of the sector, or the commune, by 1970. This is as true of growing as of declining sectors. Moreover, in all sectors, except the primary sectors in Nordreisa and Kvænangen, there was a remarkable balance between outflow resulting from movements within the labour force, that is to another sector, and loss due to retirements or death. At a time of structural transformation greater differences might have been expected.

However, sectors differed in the proportion of loss accounted for by movement out of the respective communes, shown in the lower half of the table. In the primary and secondary sectors it was quite small, but in the tertiary sector at least half of those who left the sector (allowing for some hidden in the 'Absent' category) also left the commune. That these were not just moves of careerist professionals (c.f. Larsson, 1968 133-134), but also of young people with typical young people's jobs, can be inferred from movement within communes from the tertiary sector, much of it from personal services, into the housewife category. Evidence from migration notifications is consistent with this interpretation (Nicholson, 1983: 8).

Table 6 shows those in each sector in 1970 who had not changed sectors together with those who had moved in since 1960, and it presents a quite different picture.

The contribution of the different types of life courses to the inflow to each sector varied noticeably. The secondary sector owed more to moves from other sectors than recruitment of new entrants, whether residents or in-migrants. In the tertiary sector new entrants, predominated, especially among those already resident. The relationship was less clear-cut for in-migrants, for there were differences between the communes. In the primary sector there was also a slight predominance of new entrants over inter-sectoral movers, but that must be seen in the context of very low

Table 5 Economically active in each sector in 1960 by status 1970 (outflow). Per cent.

Status 1970	Skjervøy			Nordreisa			Kvænangen
	Primary	Second.	Tertiary	Primary	Second.	Tertiary	Primary
		Second.	Tertiary				
Same sector ^a	40.9	36.9	24.9	28.2	42.3	32.8	28.6
	34.0	26.8					
Other econ. active	29.8	29.0	39.5	28.4	26.6	30.8	31.6
	36.0	39.2					
Not econ. active	28.9	33.2	35.4	43.3	30.5	34.4	41.8
	30.1	34.0					
			Economically active outflow				
Diff. sector	20.2	15.1	14.4	20.9	14.9	10.3	19.5
	15.7	10.0					
Diff. comm.	9.6	13.9	25.1	7.5	11.7	20.5	12.1
	20.3	29.2					
			Not economically active outflow				
Retired ^b	18.1	20.2	11.3	26.5	16.6	8.6	26.6
	17.0	10.8					
Out/deceased ^c	10.7	9.1	17.5	16.8	13.5	21.5	15.0
	13.1	20.8					
Housewife	0.1	3.9	6.6	0.0	0.4	4.3	0.2
	0.0	2.4					
Total 1970 ^d (= 100%)	860	331	610	483	222	302	519
	153	250					

a Includes those in agriculture classified as housewives in 1960.

b Includes a very small number classified as dependent in 1970.

c Deceased and non-economically active resident elsewhere.

d The total includes sector in 1970 unknown.

Sources: As Table 2.

Table 6 Economically active in each sector in 1970 by status 1960 (inflow). Per cent. _____

Status 1960	Skjervøy			Nordreisa		Kvænangen		
	Primary	Second.	Tertiary	Primary	Second.	Tertiary	Primary	
	Second.	Tertiary						
Same sector ^a	65.6	23.0	28.0	72.0	30.2	23.2	65.1	
	21.1	30.0						
Other econ. active	15.6	40.7	19.8	10.6	41.8	26.7	11.8	
	46.7	23.7						
Not econ. active	18.3	34.6	51.3	16.9	27.3	50.0	21.7	
	31.2	45.3						
			Economically active inflow					
Diff. sector	1.9	33.9	12.6	6.9	33.8	12.2	7.1	
	38.2	18.4						
Diff. comm.	3.7	6.8	7.2	3.7	8.0	14.5	4.7	
	8.5	5.3						
			Not economically active inflow					
Dependent	16.8	25.4	33.4	16.4	20.6	28.8	21.2	
	24.4	26.0						
In-migr. dep.	1.5	3.4	10.0	0.0	4.8	11.9	0.0	
	2.4	9.9						
Housewife	0.0	5.8	7.9	0.5	1.9	9.3	0.5	
	4.4	9.4						
Total 1970 ^b (= 100%)	537	531	542	189	311	378	212	
	246	223						

-

a Includes those in agriculture classified as housewives in 1960.

b The total includes sector in 1960 unknown.

Sources: As Table 2.

recruitment, indicated by the high proportion in this sector already in it in 1960.

The secondary sector had the highest growth in all three communes, that is inflow exceeded outflow, which is consistent with conventional conceptions of restructuring. The greatest gain was from the primary sector, though it hardly conformed to the stereotype of movement from the farm or fishing boat to the factory. Over half the gain was in building and construction, where the discontinuous nature of the work both provided more opportunities for entry than other sectors, and could be accommodated within the framework of what Morin has termed 'dynamic poly-activity' (Morin, 1970: 52), progressively adding income from non-traditional sources to existing traditional ones. In 1969 building and construction provided the main or supplementary income of more men with an agricultural holding than any other industry except fishing (SSB, 1971b: 141). Work in the secondary sector became a more important income source than the primary sector, but it was often a relative shift, not necessarily a definitive move.

The tertiary sector declined in two of the communes, an apparent anomaly, as it includes domestic service, which complemented the traditional sectors and declined with them. There were fewer women (but more men) in the tertiary sector in 1970 than in 1960 (SSB, 1973a: 17; SSB, 1973b: 17; SSB, 1973c: 17; SSB, undated a: 6; SSB, undated b: 6; SSB, undated c: 6). Only in the following decade was expansion of employment in other services sufficient to make up for this decline. Inflow from other sectors came about equally (though varying slightly between communes) from the primary and secondary sectors, not predominantly from the latter, as gradualist theories of modernisation predict. The much greater inflow of new cohorts entering the labour market undoubtedly consisted to a considerable extent of a new generation taking advantage of new opportunities. It was also in part the continuing turnover of young people passing through waiting niches, who also may have increased in number.

One of the most important findings of the analysis of the composition of change is that the sheer volume of turnover exceeded many times over the amount of movement required to bring about structural change. Moreover, merely comparing the beginning and end of a decade takes no account of the much larger number of moves between jobs and sectors between censuses, which cannot be detected in these data. The number of moves

into or out of a job *per year* (excluding self-employment) during the 1960s (Arbeidsdirektoratet, unpublished) equalled the number of moves into or out of the non-traditional sectors shown by the census data.

The whole as more - and less - than the sum of the parts

Longitudinal studies have done much to make visible the lives of persons and classes, such as peasant farmers, which tend to disappear from narratives that describe social change in terms of trends (see Hobsbawm, 1968: 78; Reed, 1986: 89). However, like all individual level data, diachronic or not, they do not show how these 'unimportant minorities' (Reed, 1986) relate to the wider whole. Nor is this problem overcome by using life histories together with data on structural change, as has been suggested (Walby, 1991: 185), so long as individual and structural data are detached from one another. Only when personal histories, such as those which can be traced through census data, are linked together can 'the study of persons' be 'effectively joined to the analysis of social structure' (White, 1970: 4). Then one can begin to address 'the paradox of the life history or family approach', that so much of what one wants to explore is to be found in the 'blank spaces' between individual trajectories (Bertaux, 1991: 87-88).

However, when histories on different levels are linked, that too reveals paradoxes. In North Troms few personal histories followed a trajectory that paralleled the changes in the wider society. Far from being 'unimportant minorities', the deviant histories were in the majority. Contrary to what is often thought, the transition from a peasant to a modern society was not effected *in* people's lives, but in the spaces in between. Change was manifested in 'synchronisms of a purely individual nature' (Simmel, 1895: 416n) brought about by the combinations of the various histories, between which more often than not there was unlikely to be 'reciprocity of cause' (Simmel, 1895).⁶ What was decisive to structural change was not whether individual persons moved between positions in the traditional and modern sectors, but whether the positions they vacated, or equivalent ones, were filled by someone else. It is a characteristic of the 'demography of jobs that a substantial proportion fall out of use when their occupants leave them, and a similar proportion of movers enter

newly created positions (Granovetter, 1974: 68-69). The point of entry to the labour market stands out in these data as a particularly 'critical point of . . . transmission' (Thompson, 1976: 359), but in the sense of one cohort succeeding another, rather than generational succession, which has habitually been paid more attention. Subsequent transitions in the life course, such as that from a waiting niche, also appear to play a significant role in structural change.

When the personal histories were reassembled to show how they had combined to produce structural change, the overall picture was one of numerous contradictions, rather than more or less cumulative change, such as might have been expected. Indeed, movement and change contributed at least as much to the maintenance of existing structures as to the destruction of old ones or the creation of new ones. Continuity was not the outcome of little or no movement, but of continual renewal. The 'illusion of . . . stability' (Wylie, 1963: 236) was maintained by continuity in the structure of positions, irrespective of changes, perhaps several, in their occupants. It is, after all, quite normal for people to change jobs (Walby, 1991: 176). Change resulted from the progressive failure to renew, which altered synchronisms and led to the creation of new continuities. A further paradox was that these changes were constructed in large measure out of actions which at the individual level could well have been perceived as part of normal life course progressions, though perhaps ones which differed from those of previous cohorts. But then, as Lucy Mair remarked, 'social change is interesting, not because it illustrates *different* social processes' from stability, 'but because it illustrates *the same* ones' (Mair, [1964] 1967: 15).

The analysis thus far goes a small way towards showing how actors on the ground contribute to the making of history. The variety and sometimes contradictory nature of actions in comparable situations show the more deterministic assumptions about the influence of context on the individual life course to be an oversimplification, a rather ironic writing of individual level histories by reference to the macro-level. However, these data only *trace the outcome* of actions and show the existence of coincidences. They do not tell us which individuals may have been aware that by their actions they influenced structural change and which perceived themselves to be reacting to opportunities created by the actions or decisions of others. The distinction is in any case not at all clear, for even those who perceive themselves

as only reacting to circumstances, by acting as they do instead of in some other way, contribute to the creation of the context within which they and their fellows act.

Individual level actions with direct structural consequences include failure of an heir to enter agriculture or fishing, with the consequence that an existing niche falls out of use, or the setting up of a new business. According to trade calendars, fifty or more people in North Troms did the latter between 1960 and 1970 (*Norges Handelskalender*, 1974: 1155, 1160-1162), creating new niches for themselves and others. Yet these actions can equally be perceived as reactions to a wider context, perhaps the national one. That is to restate the micro-macro problem at the next level up, but here too other histories are being written within which, at the national as well as the local level, these actors, in their varying capacities, play a role.

The necessary ambiguity in interpretations of the significance of individual actions for structural change reminds us that there remain areas of explanation, spaces, about which data of this kind barely allow speculation. The *politics* of change, in the broadest sense (c.f. Walby, 1991: 184-185), which include the participation of these actors, and the ways they influence the structure of their local labour market, remain all but invisible. We do know that, as voters, the inhabitants of North Troms contributed to a change in government, and with it a change in policies towards areas such as theirs, in a national election in 1965,⁷ but we do not know how their votes articulated with their life courses. The analysis also begs the important question of how higher level histories are constructed, and, indeed, *whose* constructions of macro-history we are, or should be, concerned with at anyone time (Gatt-Rutter, 1991: 13). For the present that question must remain unaddressed.

These unresolved problems notwithstanding, extension of linkage to encompass other levels and different data would undoubtedly add greatly to our understanding of change. Disentangling individual trajectories (or as in this case, certain traces of them) and showing how they relate to structural change, helps to lay bare the *process* of change. Even if it cannot explain that process, it can vastly improve the basis for formulating hypotheses about it, and doubtless lead to the revision of some existing ones.

Acknowledgements

The main data used in this study, unpublished tabulations of linked census data, were kindly made available by Professor Hallstein Myklebost, University of Oslo. Field work in North Troms and data collection at various times between 1964 and 1983, have been supported by Fondet Nord-Norges Universitet and Norges almenvitenskapelige forskningsrad (NAVF). Earlier drafts of this article formed part of papers presented to the 1992 Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association and at a seminar of the ESRC Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.

Notes

1 Linked census data were compiled by the Norwegian Central Statistical Bureau by matching the personal records from the 1960 and 1970 censuses of persons enumerated in both. The data are subject to certain limitations, notably the failure to distinguish between men and women. Only one category, housewife, indicates gender. The economically active are classified by the sector that provided their most important source of income, even though many people in the area in this period obtained income from several sources (Nicholson, 1979: 183-186), and in some cases the household, not the individual, was still the unit of production. In 1970 women working in a family enterprise were included in the economically active population, but in 1960 they were not, so its size in that year is correspondingly understated. The 1950 census had enumerated wives and daughters who helped the head of household in his (*sic*) work. In Troms there were some 7,000, an underestimate no doubt, one for every two men listed as farmers, smallholders or fishermen (SSB, 1959: 366, 370-373). On definitional changes, see Vassenden, 1987: 50; SSB, 1978: 22. Assignment to a particular sector (or to the economically active or, say, the pensioner category) is also partly a matter of chance, due to variations from year to year in the importance of income sources. Some moves recorded between sectors are just a rearrangement of the mix of activities within an existing combination (Nicholson, 1979: 187-188). This makes for a greater blurring of categories than might otherwise be the case.

The population defined by the source material consists of persons *domiciled* in each commune on the respective census dates (1 November in each year). Between a quarter and a third had their main source of income in the preceding year outside the boundaries of their commune of residence at the census. They included commuters across commune boundaries, merchant seamen and people who had moved a short time before the census. In addition, a smaller number of residents of other communes worked in North Troms (SSB, 1969: 55; SSB, 1971a: 44; SSB, 1975: 309). Thus though reference may, for convenience, be made to the local economy or labour market, change at the societal level is, for present purposes, defined as change in the economic structure which sustained each commune's inhabitants.

Changes of residence refer only to difference in domicile between censuses. These shifts must not be confused with migration in total, which was much

- greater (Nicholson, 1990: 113), nor do they distinguish local out-migrants from previous in-migrants who were moving on (see Nicholson, 1991: 1286), or in-migrants from return migrants (Nicholson, 1971: 105).
- 2 'Housewives comprise married women who do not have a main occupation. In addition, where couples get an old-age pension, but the wife did not have a paid occupation of her own, the wife is classified as a housewife, whereas the man is classified as a pensioner' (SSB, 1956: 12; translation BN).
 - 3 If a similar proportion had retired among those who had left as among those who had moved in, they would make up about 1 per cent of all personal histories.
 - 4 The term young people denotes all those classified as dependants in 1960, most of them children of school age, some still at school and dependent in 1970.
 - 5 The number in the 'at home' niche fell steadily in the post-war period (SSB, 1964: 105; SSB, 1974: 67).
 - 6 Unlike Simmel, I do not consider 'reciprocity of cause' to be 'the real principle of society', or even a necessary one.
 - 7 In North Troms votes for opposition parties increased markedly, while those for the ruling Labour Party, whose centralisation policies were unpopular in North Troms, increased only slightly (SSB, 1962: 78; SSB, 1965: 35).

References

- Aarstad, Steinar, (1984), *Yrkes- og næringsstrukturendringer i Finnmark 1970-1980*, NIBR-notat 1984: 137, Alta: Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning (mimeo).
- Arbeidsdirektoratet (Oslo) unpublished, Inn- og utmelding av arbeidstakere (Sysselsetting II), 1965 and 1966, manuscript forms.
- Barth, Fredrik, (1952), Subsistence and institutional system in a Norwegian mountain valley, *Rural Sociology* 17, (1): 28-38.
- Berkner, Lutz, K., (1972), The stem family and the developmental cycle of the peasant household: An eighteenth century Austrian example, *American Historical Review*, 77(2): 398-418.
- Bertaux, Daniel, (1991), From methodological monopoly to pluralism in the sociology of social mobility, in Shirley Dex (ed.), *Life and work history analyses: qualitative and quantitative developments*, pp. 73-92. Sociological Review Monograph 37, London: Routledge.
- Bratrein, Havard, Dahl, (1976), Det tradisjonelle kjønnsrollemønster i Nord-Norge, in Bratrein *et al.*, *Drivandes kvinnfolk. Om kvinner, lønn og arbeid*, pp. 21-38. Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Brox, Ottar, (1966), *Hva skjer i Nord-Norge*, Oslo: Pax.
- Brox, Ottar, (1980), Mot et konsolidert busettingsmønster, *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 21(3-4): 227-244.
- Brox, Ottar, (1984), *Nord-Norge. Fra allmenning til koloni*. Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.
- Dex, Shirley, (1991), Life and work history analyses, in Shirley Dex (ed.), *Life and work history analyses: qualitative and quantitative developments*, pp. 1-19. Sociological Review Monograph 37, London: Routledge.
- Direktoratet for sjømenn, annual, *Årsberetning* (1963-1970). Oslo: Departementet for handel og skipsfart.

Personal histories and social restructuring

- Douglas, Mary, (1975), *Implicit Meanings. Essays in social anthropology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Elliott, Brian, (1990), (1994), Biography, family history and the analysis of social change, in S. Kendrick *et al.* (ed.), *Interpreting the past, understanding the present*, pp. 59-82, London: St. Martin's Press.
- Flakstad, Anne-Grethe, (1979), *Kvinnevilkår i kombinasjonsbruk*. Mellomfagsoppgave, Tromsø: Institutt for samfunnsvitenskap, Universitetet i Tromsø, (mimeo).
- Foucault, Michel, [1969], (1972), *The archaeology of knowledge*, London: Tavistock.
- Gatt-Rutter, John, (1991), Macrohistories and microhistories: Jaroslav Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*, *Journal of European Studies* 21(1): 1-17.
- Goldstein, Sidney, (1995), Migration and occupational mobility in Norristown, Pennsylvania, *American Sociological Review* 20(4): 402-408.
- Granovetter, Mark, S., (1974), *Getting a job. A study of contacts and careers*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E.J., (1968), *Industry and Empire*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Kaldager, Alf, Terje, (1977), 'Koblet folketellingsmateriale' fra 1960 og 1970. *En brukerveiledning*, Meddelelser fra Geografisk institutt ved Norges Handelshøyskole og Universitetet i Bergen nr. 42, Bergen, (mimeo).
- Larsson, Lars-Erik, (1968), Lärarna och den nya generationen, in *Vad sker i glesbygden?*, pp. 129-140, Luleå: Norrbottens Museum.
- Listhaug, Ola, (1977), Gardsarbeid, *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* 18(6): 532-548.
- Mair, Lucy, ([1963] 1967), *New nations*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Marsh, Catherine and Jonathan Gershuny, (1991), Handling work history data in standard statistical packages, in Shirley Dex (ed.), *Life and work history analyses: qualitative and quantitative developments*, pp. 93-119. Sociological Review Monograph 37, London: Routledge.
- Mills, C. Wright, [1959], (1970), *The sociological imagination*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Morin, Edgar, (1970), *The red and the white*, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Myklebost, Hallstein, (undated), *Registrering og analyse av strømmen av arbeidskraft mellom næringer og regioner*, unpublished note.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1971), Tilbakeflytting til et utkantdistrikt, *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* 12(2): 99-122.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1979), The structure of the household economy in rural North Norway, in Lili Maria Szwengrub (ed.), *The integrated development of human and natural resources: the contribution of rural sociology*, pp. 177-199. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1983), The absorption of the periphery? An analysis of recent rural migration patterns in Norway, paper presented to the Annual Conference of the British Sociological Association, Cardiff, Wales.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1989), *Women, farm butter and the dairy. Division of labour and division of income*, Skrifter/Papers 1 b, Newcastle upon Tyne: Centre for Scandinavian Studies.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1990), The hidden component in census-derived migration data: Assessing its size and distribution, *Demography* 27(1): 111-119.

- Nicholson, Beryl, (1991), Longeur des périodes intercensitaires et ampleur des omissions dans les données migratoires issues des recensements, *Population* 40(5): 1283-1289.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1992), If the theory fits: a tale of academic self-delusion and policy makers' expediency, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16(3): 397-407.
- Nicholson, Beryl, (1995), Domestic production and the market: where status and contract meet, *Sociology* 29(2): 221-239.
- Norges Handelskalender. *Adressebok for handel. håndverk og skipsfart*, (1974), 96th year, 49th edition, Oslo: S.M. Bryde.
- Petersen, William, (1969), *Population*, 2nd edition, New York: Macmillan.
- Reed, Mick, (1986), Nineteenth-century rural England: A case for 'Peasant Studies', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 14(1): 78-89.
- Ryder, Norman, B., (1965), The cohort as a concept in social change, *American Sociological Review* 30(6): 843-861.
- Sejersted, Francis, (1992), A theory of economic and technological development in Norway in the nineteenth century, *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 50(1): 40-75.
- Simmel, Georg, (1895), The problem of sociology, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 6: 412-423.
- SSB, (Statistisk sentralbyrå), (1956), *Folketellingen 1. desember 1950*, vol. 3, NOS XI 221. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1959), *Folketellingen 1. desember 1950*, vol. 4, NOS XI 323, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1962a), *Jordbruksteljinga 20. juni 1959*, vol. 3, NOS XII 79. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1962b), *Fiskeritelling 1960*, vol. I, NOS XII 85. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1962c), *Stortingsvalget 1961*, NOS XII 68, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1964), *Folketellingen 1. november 1960*, vol. 3, NOS XII 129, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1965), *Stortingsvalget 1965*, vol. I, NOS A134, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1969), *Sysselsatte lønnstakere etter bosted og arbeidssted 31. mars 1968*, NOS A284; Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1971a), *Arbeidsmarkedstatistikk 1970*, NOS A399, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1971b), *Jordbruksteljinga 20. juni 1969*, vol. I, NOS A413, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1973a), *Folke- og bolig telling 1 november 1970*. 1941 *Skjervøy*, Statistiske kommunehefter, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1973b), *Folke- og bolig telling 1. november 1970*. 1942 *Nordreisa*, Statistiske kommunehefter, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1973c), *Folke- og bolig telling 1. november 1970*. 1943 *Kvænangen*, Statistiske kommunehefter, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1973d), *Fiskeritellingen 1. oktober 1971*, vol. I, NOS A559, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1974), *Statistisk Fylkeshefte 1973*. *Troms*, NOS A642, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1975), *Folke- og bolig telling 1. november 1970*, vol. 2, NOS A693. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Personal histories and social restructuring

- SSB, (1977), *Statistisk Fylkeshefte 1977. Troms, NOS A850*, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1978), *Historisk Statistikk 1978, NOS XII 291*, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, (1983), *Statistisk Fylkeshefte 1983 Troms, NOS B359*, Oslo - Kongsvinger: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, undated a, *Folketellingen 1. november 1960. Skjervøy 1941*, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, undated b, *Folketellingen 1. november 1960. Nordreisa 1942*, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, undated c, *Folketellingen 1. november 1960. Kvenangen 1943*, Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- SSB, unpublished, *Fiskeritelling 1960*, manuscript table. Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- Thernstrom, Stephan, (1964), *Poverty and Progress. Social mobility in a nineteenth century city*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Thompson, E.P., (1976), The grid of inheritance: a comment, in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (ed.), *Family and inheritance. Rural society in Western Europe 1200-1800*, pp. 328-360, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thorsen, Liv, Emma, (1993), *Det fleksible kjønn. Mentalitetsendringer i tre generasjoner bondekvinne 1920--1982*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Vassenden, Kare, (1987), *Folke- og boligtellingsene 1960, 1970 og 1980. Dokumentasjon av de sammenlignbare filene*, Rapport 87/2, Oslo-Kongsvinger: Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- Walby, Sylvia, (1991), Labour markets and industrial structures in women's working lives, in Shirley Dex (ed.), *Life and work history analyses: qualitative and quantitative developments*, pp. 167-186, Sociological Review Monograph 37, London: Routledge.
- White, Harrison C., (1970), *Chains of opportunity. System models of mobility in organizations*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Wylie, Laurence (1963), Demographic change in Roussillon, in Julian Pitt-Rivers (ed.), *Mediterranean countrymen*, Paris: Mouton: 215-236.