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# Manufacturing provinces: Theorizing the encounters between governmental and popular <geographs= in Finland

Jouni Häkli

## Introduction

One of the unifying factors in the heterogeneous >critical geopolitics= approach has been the aspiration to analyze the taken-for-granted constructions on which conventional politics is based. These include, for instance, the imagination of the world as cultural, geo-economic or geopolitical regions, and the conception of global politics as a strategic game played out on a patchwork of distinct territorial units. In seeking alternatives to reality as presented by the dominant players of the global and national politics, the practitioners of critical geopolitics have called into question the very foundation on which relations between states and social groups are forged, political decisions made, hostilities commenced, and treaties negotiated (Dalby 1991: 264-269, Dalby and Ó Tuathail 1996: 452).

In critical geopolitics an integral part of this foundation, the geographical depictions of the world produced by the intellectuals of statecraft, is treated not as a passive mirror of <that which exists@, but rather as a vital constituent of the political world. While activities with the label <geopolitical= are material in the sense that they always are embedded within governmental routines, global economy, and political contestation, it is recognized that they are also discursive, which means that geopolitical phenomena are dependent on, as well as conducive to the production of geographical knowledge, statements and understandings (e.g. Hepple 1992: 136-140, Ó Tuathail 1996: 17-18).

In this connection the term <geograph= has been introduced to underline the persistent, yet context dependent nature of geopolitical imagination (Ó Tuathail 1989). According to Dalby (1993: 440-441) geographs are >particular frequently used descriptions of the world@, which come to structure the ways different social groups and agents formulate their political opinions and conceptions of events in society. Importantly, different kinds of geographs inform different interpretative communities. Thus, there are dominant <geographs=, which structure the institutionally established geopolitical reasoning of the intellectuals of statecraft, but in addition to that, there are <geographs= which circulate and traverse other spheres of social life. The latter can be politically motivated <dissident= or <counter-hegemonic= geographs, or they can be part of the lived geographies of everyday life, and thus characterizable as <popular= or <vernacular= geographs (Dalby 1993: 441, Häkli 1997a).

In this chapter I explore the history of encounters between governmental and popular geographs giving shape to the Finnish provinces [*maakunta*]. The term province derives from the latin word *provincia*, which means conquered territory. Despite this rather militant etymology, in many languages the word province has come to bear the connotations of spontaneity, naturality and organicity. This was the case at least with the French regionalists, as well as with the provincialism of Josiah Royce in the early 20th century America (Rabinow, 1989: 197-199, Entrikin, 1991: 68-71). Therefore, in what follows the term province refers to a region with the organic and spontaneous connotations of the Finnish word *maakunta*.

In focusing at provinces I argue, with Paul Routledge (1996: 509), that political processes at scales other than the global also need to be considered in the critical analysis of geopolitics. Rather than international geopolitical imagination, I set out to analyze a geopolitical discourse connected to a series of reforms of regional administration in Finland, one in which different geographical conceptions of provinces have surfaced. From a governmental point of view the provinces have represented a natural and spontaneous subdivision of the Finnish state's territorial space. However, in popular or vernacular imagination the provinces are rather vague, historically embedded cultural regions with no fixed boundaries nor meaning. Whereas for government the «essence» of provinces lies in the junction of social spontaneity and spatial demarcability, in popular use the provinces have no essence, and the provincial geographs remain open to contestation, contradictions, and contextual readings.

In discussing the distinction between governmental and popular geographs I am not proposing an oppositional relation between these two, as they in fact constantly resort to similar language and images. Governmental agents appeal to popular ideas and identities to gain support, while people routinely express their cultural identity and distinctiveness in starkly territorial terms (Kaplan 1994, Häkli 1997b). Thus, what differentiates governmental and popular geographs can not be directly read out from their linguistic or visual expressions. Rather they should be understood as systems of signification embedded in and differentiated by what institutional and individual agents do, not so much by the particular objects they refer to. In other words, the distinction makes sense as an argument for the contextuality of social life, not as an attempt to account for better or worse access to «real provinces».

To claim that governmental discourse makes very different use of provincial geographs compared to provinces as lived social spatiality is, therefore, really no more than to acknowledge the particular character of institutional social action. While institutional practice seeks to define, demarcate, and accomplish universal and universally applicable provinces, no such urge can systematically be found in the myriad contexts of social life. Outside the administrative pressure for conformity the provinces remain contradictory and contested realities subject to place bound sentiments and regional identities, but also economic interests, place marketing, and parochialism. This is a crucially important assertion in that it begs the question of who wins and who loses when undefined and ephemeral regions are brought into governmental discourse and action which, by necessity, has to arrive at an objective and universal definition of provinces. More specifically, a question arises as to how the practitioners of statecraft are related to the «ordinary people» when the former are engaged in an administration reform which seeks to territorialize the provincial geographs of the latter.

The notion of «deep space» points at the different modalities of social action from which governmental and popular geographs emanate. Neil Smith has referred to deep space as «the relativity of terrestrial space, the space of everyday life in all its scales from the global to the local and the architectural in which ... different layers of life and social landscape are sedimented onto and into each other». He sees deep space as «quintessentially social space; as physical extent fused with social intent» (Smith 1990: 160-161). This is the contextual, and multilayered social space in which the Finnish provinces exist as symbolic landscapes of the social life subject to continual contestation, negotiation, re-reading and re-writing. This is the deep space which in the governmental discourse must be flattened out into a two dimensional plane subject to exact definition and demarcation so as to function as a political space, a platform for regional administration reform.

In what follows I investigate an endeavor to territorialize and contain the geographs pertinent to provinces as lived social spatiality. I wish to explore the distance from governmental to popular geographs -- the gap from territory as a lived space to the territoriality of politico-administrative discourse, which constitutes institutional power vested in knowledge, but also provides a space for resistance to that power. I end my discussion by outlining this occasion for popular resistance to institutional discourses.

### **A genealogy of politico-administrative discourses on territory**

For a critical assessment of the governmental discourse on provinces it is necessary to scrutinize both the complex spatiality through which the knowledge of society is situated and becomes functional in society, and the very idea of region itself. Governmental reports dealing with the administration reform have not functioned merely as devices of technical definition and demarcation of provinces. Such an understanding of knowledge as simply mirroring the society "out there in the real" must be refuted, along with the conception of region as an entity with a social existence independently of its representations.

Instead, attention must be directed to the social and historical processes through which regions have come to have an existence for governmental action, that is, to the processes in which regions have been made visible for government in that particular form which institutional activities require. As my case is from the Finnish society, it is necessary to look at the history of visualization of regional space as it has unfolded in the history of the Finnish state apparatus. It should be noted, however, that the applicability of this approach, or the findings that result, are not restricted to the Finnish context. Very similar lines of development can be found in all modernizing European states, albeit in different configurations depending on the particular political and societal contexts in which the developments have taken place (e.g. Giddens 1985, Dandeker 1990).

When thinking of the modernization of states= governmental practice, one persistent trend has perhaps not caught enough attention: the growing dependency of government on the visualization of society. Yet, it can be argued that it is precisely the capability to visualize the society both as an object of administration and a subject of politics that has made the efficient and rational functioning of the modern state apparatus possible in the first place (Dodds 1993: 364-365, Edney 1993b: 63, Häkli 1994a: 51-52). There are two aspects in the governmental visualization of society which deserve attention, and which also are closely connected to the territorializing discourses on provinces produced over the history of the Finnish state.

Firstly, the production of empirical knowledge of society has not been motivated by mere scientific curiosity, but rather visual devices like statistics and maps have emerged as part of the modern technologies of governmental power (Hacking 1991: 181). The connection between empirical knowledge of society and its use in the centralized organization of governmental activities has set particular requirements to the formal qualities of knowledge. Bruno Latour (1986: 15) has described these requirements with the term "optical consistency", meaning those aspects of knowledge which standardize it and regularize its relation to objects, thus making the combining, scaling, and analytical utilization of different units of knowledge possible (see also Edney 1993b: 63). Not surprisingly, maps and statistics meet these requirements easily. Maps are standardized projections of the social and geographical world, whereas statistics are collected by centrally directed organizations and by means of fixed routines and regulations.

Secondly, from a governmental point of view an optically consistent knowledge holds a particularly important dual quality of being simultaneously *fixed* as a representational form, and *movable* across territory as inscribed on paper (Latour 1986). This makes possible a centralized accumulation of society and space into the archives of government resulting in a technically mediated yet <realistic= enough image of the territory and society. The importance of this 'abstract space' to the scientific rationalization of government can hardly be exaggerated. Through systematic mappings of territory and population governments have been able to catch a synoptic view of the society within their territorial bounds, thus making it subject to scrutiny by 'a single pair of eyes' (Widmalm 1990: 36).

The fact that all European states began to build bases of empirical knowledge had several consequences to the territorialization of governmental practice. On one hand, the enhanced visibility of all corners of the kingdom directly contributed to states= tightening governmental grip over their entire territories. On the other hand, these territories became objects of knowing and analysis like never before. The cartographic and statistical data produced and compiled could be utilized as raw material in analytic operations and theoretical syntheses through which governments sought to make visible social phenomena previously unseen, unknown, and uncontrollable. The statistic surveillance of economic activities is a perfect example of how new, territorially defined, and visible society was constructed by and for policy-making. A concern for the nation=s wealth and the state=s tax revenues brought about <national economy= as an increasingly important field of governmental action and discourse (Latour 1986, Procacci 1991).

The proliferation of empirical knowledge of society in the state=s use also marks a crucial point in the territorialization of the provincial geographers in Finland, a latecomer state on the European political map. The history of the Finnish polity really begins only in 1809, shortly after Sweden=s defeat against Russia in the Napoleonic wars. Ceded to Russia, a collection of 'eastern provinces' of the Swedish kingdom became recognized as a political and economic whole, the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland in the Russian empire (see figures 1 and 2) (Jutikkala 1962, Jussila 1987: 55-56).

The early Finnish state was a consolidating governmental apparatus in which the Swedish influences were clearly visible. Russia had allowed the Finns to retain their old Swedish constitution and administrative systems, but also population statistics and land survey which had been instituted by the state of Sweden (Hjelt 1900, Gustafsson 1933). The latter were the result of large mapping projects launched by the rapidly modernizing Swedish state in the 18th century in order to expand the government of its sparsely populated large territory, covering also the areas that later became Finland.

[Figure 1. omitted]

**Figure 1.** A late 17th century map of Sweden including the eastern provinces, e.g. Finland (original in the Finnish State Archive).

The first large mapping project was the gathering of population statistics. After a few years=probationary period an institution called *Tabellverket* was established in 1749 with the task of making statistical surveys of the kingdom and its population (Hjelt 1900, Kovero 1940). Later renamed the Statistical Central Bureau, the institution was among the most advanced of its time, a fact which reflected Sweden=s position as one of the European great powers. Interests behind the project were unambiguously

politico-administrative, and filled with enthusiasm for the novel ways of knowing the kingdom. The increasing visibility of the society stimulated the minds of politicians and administrators, and encouraged the government to proceed with the effort despite some drawbacks in the early days of statistical survey (Johannisson 1988: 176, see also Porter 1986: 25-27).

The same excitement accompanied another large mapping project which served the state's land reform politics. *Storskifte* ('great partition') was one of the first state-wide programs where geographical imagination furnished with maps played a central role. By means of maps it was possible first to codify the available land and then redistribute it according to the adopted economic, and notably, visual rationale (Pred 1986). The goal was to minimize the number of individual land parcels in favor of larger clusters enabling more labor-effective farming (Kuusi 1933, Kain and Baigent 1992). The project quickly showed the government the utility of maps as tools of administration -- as device with which the kingdom could be subjected to the observing gaze and guiding hands of its governors.

Through these, and many other ambitious projects, the mapping of society and territory grew into an integral part of rational state administration in Sweden, as it did in all modernizing states in Europe (e.g. Giddens 1985: 179-180, Wittrock 1989, Edney 1993a). It also gave a tangible guise to "abstract space", a development where space was systematically inscribed on paper and transferred to the central archives of the government (Häkli 1994b). Mapping gave social space the qualities of being both fixed as a representation and movable across time and space. As David Harvey (1989: 240) has pointed out, the 'compression' of time and space in the 19th century had a vast impact on how world came to be conceived of and lived in. Likewise, the centralized accumulation of time and space revolutionized the ways in which societies were governed (see also Harley 1988, Revel 1991, Ó Tuathail 1994).

The exciting new power of mapping was based on its potential to visualize -- to literally make visible -- phenomena which otherwise could not be observed at all. Furthermore, the new kind of empirical data made possible, and in fact often invited more advanced analysis of the intricacies of the society. In discussing the rise of the art of government in the 17th and 18th centuries Michel Foucault (1991: 93) points at new ways of understanding society and territory as a relational totality: "The things with which ... government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things that are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility etc." An analysis using maps and statistics could associate the prevailing social relations among population with a certain spatial context and geographical area. In this respect the machineries of mapping instituted by the Swedish state also played an important role in the emergence of provinces as governmental geographers in the 19th century Finland (Häkli 1997a).

### **Provinces territorialized**

What did the Finnish provinces come to look like when represented by governmental bodies for governmental purposes? One way to answer this question is to recall the distinction between the abstract space of maps, statistics and archives, and the contextuality of social life. While easily apprehendable when pointing at different modalities of social action, this distinction is by no means a simple one when it comes to popular geographers because they also have their origin in the abstract space -- they reflect a geographical imagination akin to that which informed the new governmental conceptions of society and space. If the governmental approach to provincial space is thoroughly discursive, so is the provincial symbolism as lived

social spatiality (Berdoulay 1989). It is, therefore, the ways of using provincial geographers that accentuate the distinction between governmental discourse and the contexts of deep space, and make explicit the gap between governmental and popular geographers.

As mentioned above, a new regional imagination had grown into the governmental practice in consequence of the novel ways of representing and knowing the society (see also Rabinow 1989: 197-202, Häkli 1997a). However, it was not only within the realm of politics and administration that the will to measure and map the territory changed conceptions of space. Although clearly lagging behind its institutional forerunners, changes were also brought about in the popular imagination of space which was growing in geographical extent, but also was becoming increasingly diversified and contested. A consciousness of provinces was burgeoning among the larger population in the economically, politically and culturally increasingly dynamic society of the late 19th century. Here the rise of regional newspapers and school geography played an important role (Salonen 1974, Paasi 1986). These new mediators of knowledge could more rapidly than before circulate among the >great reading masses= provincial geographers, some of which resulted directly or indirectly from the governmental curiosity and mappings, while others were produced along various cultural activities involved in the <discovery= of the Finnish territory and nation.

Among these cultural activists were the students at the University of Helsinki who, in a manner typical to European universities, were organized into students' unions according to their provincial background, usually the place of birth (Strömberg 1987: 291-293). The students' unions collected ethnographic materials and founded local museums, exhibitions, and archives which contributed to the idea of provinces as historical entities dating back to the period of Swedish rule (figure 2). Thus, the unions effectively socialized the educated elites into the imagination of Finland as consisting of distinct provinces. Among the unions= self-proclaimed tasks was to foster patriotic sentiments, which by the turn of the 20th century were clad not only in romantic ethnology, but increasingly also in overtly nationalistic concerns (Kolbe 1996).

[Figure 2. omitted]

**Figure 2.** A 19th century map of Finland with the historical provinces listed at the bottom (original in the Finnish State Archive).

The educated elites of a young polity aspiring for national self-determination realized that 'Finland' had to be produced as a symbolic landscape in the popular realm to form and support consciousness of a coherent ethnic nation. As the provinces could conveniently be used in representing the stereotypical character and history of different parts of the Finnish territory, the provincial geographers played an important part in the Finnish nation-building process. A sense of national belonging together surpassing, but not suppressing, regional, linguistic, and ethnic identities was strengthened by the geographical imagination of a diverse yet unified nation inhabiting a shared fatherland (Wilson 1976, Paasi 1986, Alapuro 1988). The idea of a larger territorial unity meant that the Swedish-speaking Finns, as well as the Sámi peoples of the Finnish Lapland were just as important elements of Finnishness as were the Finns themselves (Häkli 1997b).

However, it should be noted that the symbolism of provinces which gradually became embedded in various social activities did not come to imply clearly demarcated nor defined regions. On the contrary, a considerable confusion has

prevailed for instance in people's regional identities (Palomäki 1968, Paasi 1996: 212). The historical provinces have stood out as providing and reflecting the most established identity, but even there the particular meanings of provinciality have been highly contested, ranging from economic appropriation of cultural images to enlightened disapproval of regional parochialism. As the discussion below shows, this is the case still today. Regional identities have been profoundly affected by the processes of spatial restructuring, industrialization and urbanization of the Finnish society over the 20th century. New ~~functional~~-provinces have emerged reflecting the mobility within and sense of belonging to areas defined by urban centers (Heikkinen 1986, Rasila 1993).

Tensions in the provincial imagery have intensified particularly in times of economic distress, and in the peripheral areas of eastern and northern Finland, as the evident dependency of regional economies on the larger national and international market has upset the idea of local self-sufficiency. While in some this has provoked regionalistic ideas and actions, for some the economic downturn and restructuring has meant a forced migration to the southwestern Finland, or even abroad. The largest mass migrations have taken place in the early 20th century and in the 1960-s and 70-s stirring up the old regional identities and creating new mixes of people from different parts of the country (Neuvonen 1990: 22-23).

Understandably, in amidst such economic and cultural turmoil the provincial geographs have occupied a consistent but multifaceted place. Sometimes serving as the only lasting connection to ~~roots~~, the provincial identities have become important signposts in the new situations into which urbanized and industrialized ways of life have brought people. However, provinces as lived social spatiality are contextually appropriated and (re)produced, which explains why ephemerality and vagueness have prevailed in the popular symbolisms of provinces. For most ~~ordinary Finns~~-provinces are merely convenient labels with which to categorize experiences of people and places and to structure the social and geographical world. Furthermore, sometimes these provincial stereotypes and identities are resorted to, but sometimes not. There are considerable differences among people in how significant these regional identities are, and their significance varies depending on the particular social situation in which ~~us~~- or ~~others~~- are encountered.

Characteristic to an open ended appropriation, this volatility has not been an option for the governmental action. On the contrary, the government has sought to reduce the tensions and contradictions of lived provinciality by territorializing these cultural spaces, that is, by determining exactly what is the area, function and extent of each province. A concrete endeavor to institutionalize, fix, and contain the contested and tension laden provincial symbolisms, a series of regional administration reforms has produced images of clearly demarcated, exactly located, objectively and unambiguously representable regions parcelling neatly out the continuous and homogeneous space of the Finnish territory.

In the self-understanding of the intellectuals of statecraft -- politicians, high officials of the state, reform committees, political scientists, regional activists etc. -- the territorialization of provinces has often been viewed as a step toward more humane and responsive government. In reality, while this may technically well result from a province based administration, it also marks the confinement of provincial geographs by the governmental rationality. What presents itself as a seamless bringing together of ~~the people~~- and ~~political empowerment~~, is actually a conflation of two very different relationships to provinces: a contested and appropriative social spatiality on one hand, and an detached and territorializing discourse on the other.

The *longue durée* development of governmental power/knowledge structures, the machineries of visualization and territorial imagination, must not be thought of as



a historical curiosity distant from the events at the present day. On the contrary, a territorialization of provincial geographs has explicitly and concretely taken place as a series of regional administration reforms first launched in Finland in the latter half of the 19th century. Since the year 1867 altogether 34 initiatives have been taken up in the highest governing bodies of the state (Pystynen 1993). The most authoritative attempts to accomplish a reform have been made by state appointed committees. Over the period of 125 years as many as eight state committees have delivered their reports proposing a reform, and finally in 1994 more political power and administrative tasks were transferred from the state's district administration to 19 provinces (figure 3).

[Figure 3. omitted]

**Figure 3.** The division of Finland into 19 provinces (source: Committee report 1992).

The committee reports exemplify well the institutional requirements of official discourse. Inherently of and for political power, official discourse lacks the contextual flexibility and contradictory qualities of the 'language games' embedded in other social activities. The strategies of knowing and representation, by which the committee reports have contained and reduced the diversity of provincial symbolisms, have been dictated by the need to territorialize space in a universal and universally applicable guise. The challenge has been to arrive at a legitimate spatial division in amidst conflicting economic, symbolic and political interests vested in provincial symbolisms.

The difficulty of meeting this challenge has been evident in the processes of instituting new administrative regions in the state's established county division. Setting up new administrative units has been arduous, and sometimes the conflicting interests have prohibited governmental decisions from being put into effect (Ylönen 1994). Municipalities have at times not been able to decide what county they belong to, while the government has not always been able to convince itself of the necessity of new administrative regions in the first place. As in the European states at large, the reform of territorial divisions has been a conflict prone area of policy demanding the most sensitive practice of statecraft to succeed.

So as to territorialize provinces in an acceptable manner the governmental discourse has resorted to an evolutionary conception of space. The idea of natural development of provinces has elevated the essence of these regions from the mundane world of human interests up to the transcendental realm of historical telos. As objectively knowable regions of the 'external reality' provinces exist and appear as the same to everyone. It is no surprise, then, that in the textual strategies of committee reports the provinces have been portrayed organistically, as naturalistic outgrowths of history, culture, and human behavior ready to be territorialized and taken in political use (e.g. Committee report 1881, 1923, 1953). The Finnish case illustrates well what elsewhere has been described as the lasting value of organicist ideas to the powers that be (Hepple 1992: 141-146).

The protagonists of the reform have tended to view the process in terms of the victory of people's provinces over the state's administrative rule (e.g. Mennola 1990, Kirkinen 1991, Pystynen 1993). After all, when in 1994 the provinces were finally established as governmental bodies in charge of, for instance, regional policy, the state's control over local matters loosened somewhat. Yet, contrary to this it can be argued that the governmentalization of provinces has not marked the fulfillment of their cultural potential, but rather sealed their territorialization and confinement in two interconnected ways.

First, the governmental discourse on provinces has by necessity been embedded in the abstract space of maps, statistics, and spatial analysis, which have enabled the objectivist representation of territory. Only in terms of this "second reality", allegedly more real than the contestable social space, the committees have been able to define, demarcate, and objectify provinces, and arrive at an official, universally valid regional division (Häkli 1994b: 193). In this sense the state committees have *manufactured* provinces as much as they have re-presented them, and furthermore, have done this in their own exact, definite, and controllable image. Rather than false accounts of a true reality, the governmental geographers have functioned as ideas which make things become real, that is, as geographical imaginations with tangible consequences (Painter 1995: 146).

Second, governmental discourses have followed their own logic grounded in institutional strategies unable to grasp the contexts of lived social spatiality, even when governmental geographers have been conflated with popular ones. This is evident already in the language of the reports produced by provincial authorities. Replete with politico-administrative jargon dealing with "LFM-frames" and "regional gateway-projects", the provincial issues have largely failed to address people other than the politicians, officials, and scientists involved. In other words, instead of bringing about a politico-administrative system of a humane scale and quality, the conflation of governmental and vernacular provinces has handed the provinces to a numerically small group of experts.

Yet, it should be noted that sometimes this conflation and confinement has taken place, but often it has not. The contradictory and contested ways of using provincial geographers constitute numerous blind spots which evade the governmental gaze and its suggestive power to conflate perspectives. These "operational models of popular culture" (de Certeau 1984: 25), taking place in the deep space, may also be the occasion for popular resistance to the encroaching governmental rationality.

### The revenge of the people?

The relations of power/knowledge embedded in geopolitical discourses can be very complicated, particularly when analyzed within a relatively homogeneous cultural environment, such as a particular state. Overt differences in the frames of meaning between institutional actors and various social groups may be subtle, and the forms of resistance almost invisible. Accordingly, it may be difficult to pin down the power relations inherent in discourse, or to account for forms of popular dissidentism towards the official projections of space. In attempting to tackle this problematic, I have found Michel de Certeau's (1984: 24-31) discussion of the "tactics" of resistance particularly helpful: "[t]he actual order of things is precisely what 'popular' tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change any time soon. Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by an ideological discourse, here order is tricked by an art".

Distinguishing between "tactics" as ways of using, manipulating and diverting spaces imposed by the "strategies" of the powerful institutions de Certeau sheds light on an important dimension in the relationship between the intellectuals (of statecraft) and the (ordinary) people, one in which the supposedly repressed are in fact able to resist, albeit in a covert manner, the postulation of power and the imposition of knowledge "proper" by the official thought-and-action. Unlike institutional strategies engaged in the constitution of readable, controllable, fixed spaces, a tactic does not have the options of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a district, visible, and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated action, blow by blow ... [i]n short, a tactic is an art of the weak" (de Certeau 1984: 37).

Importantly, the spaces of tactical resistance are not restricted nor reducible to the spaces of discourse. This is where the notion of deep space becomes significant. Even if we acknowledge the fact that everyday life is discursive just like the practices of statecraft, and that popular geographers can assume a geopolitical meaning like their institutional counterparts, the notion of deep spaces points at the different contexts and ways in which geographers are used in the society at large. In discussing how the practice of everyday life is filled with propitious moments for the weak to turn to their own ends forces alien to them, de Certeau (1984: xix) points out that such an endeavor takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity [to manipulate events] is seized.

Paying attention to the operational models of popular culture helps in understanding that the spaces discursively produced by the political and administrative institutions are not necessarily resisted through an engagement in an overt political discourse (centered around, for instance, economic development, regionalism, or cultural values). The resistance may equally dwell in the countless instances of social, cultural, and economic life, that is, in deep spaces which evade the strategies of geopolitical discourses built upon the machineries of visualization. Still, it should be noted that in the institutionalization of provinces there is no balance of power between tactics and strategies: '[s]trategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces ... whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert [them]' (de Certeau 1984: 30).

Tactics seldom leave traces which could easily be followed, such as committee reports, official documents, memorandums, and so forth. Hence, while the spatial patterns of contemporary provincial identities can be mapped (e.g. Palomäki 1968), the different ways of using provincial geographers among the larger population can not be reached by means of standard questionnaires or Gallup interviews. These little nuances, which easily escape the analyst, are nevertheless very important when it comes to the ways people make use of spatial categories in constructing their identities and rationalizing their actions.

An example of how the contested meanings of provinces have been utilized in popular resistance to the state's institutional discourses is the most recent turn in the Finnish regional administration reform. At the end of 1995 the Finnish government introduced a plan to decrease the number of state's administrative districts [*lääni*] from 12 into mere 5 counties. Although no changes were proposed to the newly instituted provincial government as such, many in North-Karelia were provoked by the ensuing loss of the region's administrative status. The local political and economic elites who mobilized against the reform, raised popular support by resorting to the image of province under threat by the central government. By conflating the concepts of *maakunta* (province) and *lääni* (county), which both refer to the North-Karelian region, yet to totally different governmental systems, the local elites were able to take advantage of a contradictory and contestable spatial imagery. In early 1996 a manifesto signed by 70 000 North-Karelians, roughly half of the adult population, was collected. The signatures were delivered to President Martti Ahtisaari in May 1996 by a group of local notables, including the president of university, the city mayor, and the chief editor of a local newspaper (figure 4) (Karjalainen 8.5.1996).

[Figure 4. omitted]

**Figure 4.** The delivery of signatures as reported in a local newspaper. The headline says: 'No direct support for the struggle from Ahtisaari' (source: Karjalainen 8.5.1996).

Although politically not successful, the movement demonstrates the hidden powers of contradictory and contested popular geographs. In this case popular identities and sentiments were brought into the discourses of the local elites who were fiercely arguing against the changes. The movement itself, of course, was internally tension laden and unevenly structured in terms of power. In criticizing the uses of 'everyman' of 'anyone' in elite discourses, De Certeau (1984: 2) writes as follows: '[b]ut when elitist writing uses the 'vulgar' speaker as a disguise for a metalanguage about itself, it also allows us to see what dislodges it from its privilege and draws it outside of itself: an Other who is no longer God or Muse, but the anonymous'.

There are several ways of interpreting these enigmatic words, but in alignment with the arguments forwarded in this chapter, one could read them as a satirical description of a society fraught with expert discourses. No matter what amount of expertise there is to support an argument, the everyman still has an important task as an 'oracle' whose authorization is recurrently resorted to when claims are made about society, life, politics, or the future. Hence, administrative divisions also can be argued for and against in the name of 'the people', that multi-purpose faceless mass who need not be known, but whose feelings and wishes nonetheless are transparent to the elites. In the movement against the reform there were governors who suddenly wished to be 'near the people', scientists who expressed fear that 'the new larger districts lure people under the bureaucratic power of the state by offering public services', and politicians who wished to 'protect the people's regional identities' (Helsingin Sanomat 8.11.1996, Karjalainen 11.11.1996, Kirkinen 1996).

In all, an important occasion for popular resistance to institutional discourses lies in the contested and contradictory voices of the 'ordinary people', the endless murmur which in fact produces and reproduces regional identities and geographs. Even though lacking means by which to resist the territorialization of the Finnish provinces, they nevertheless dwell in deep spaces replete with blind spots, contradictory definitions, and heterotopic places empowering the everyday tactics of resistance: ways-of-using old, stereotypical, and 'defunct' provincial geographs in a manner which necessarily does not present itself as resistance. However, these very contradictions and tensions also open popular geographs for exploitation and political calculation. Therefore it can be asserted that popular resistance itself is a contradictory process: while people mobilize against the state's governmental discourses, the movements themselves are structured by expert discourses which are involved in the reproduction of social power relations.

## Conclusions

The provincial concept has provided the governmental discourse with a formula representing "in flesh" the ideal conditions for governmental rationality: the alliance of spatial demarcability, organic community and common good. Yet, paradoxically enough, as inscribed into governmental reports the official discourse has projected the Finnish provinces on a geometric, two-dimensional plane, and thus petrified an indeterminate, multi-dimensional symbolism into a visible and definite space of the politico-administrative system. In Pierre Bourdieu's terms this event bears all the characteristics of legitimate symbolic violence: 'the power to constitute and to impose as universal and universally applicable within a given Anation', that is, within the boundaries of a given territory, a common set of coercive norms' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 112).

Importantly, this objectification and universalization of provinces has had consequences reaching far beyond the realm of symbolism, language or imagery. The conflation of institutional and popular geographs discloses a persistent search for

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renewed governmental legitimacy through popular appeal; a spatial platform from which new political action could spring, new institutions be established, new political structures forged, new economic relations built (see also Lefebvre 1991: 275). While a strategic manoeuvre performed on paper, the reform discourse's seams have always been sewn in the corporeal world of social life, people, events, interests and material projects.

The Finnish administration reform is a showing case of the ways in which governmental and popular geographers are conflated in the modern political practice. Needs and meanings which apply in politics and administration are discursively equated with 'everyman's' benefit and spatial imagination. While here approached through the Finnish context and in local circumstances, the case represents a routine procedure in modern geopolitical practice based on the government by and through knowledge.

However, as my intention has been to show, the popular geographers are not all vulnerable in the face of dominant discourses. In the myriad contexts of social life there are silent and scattered occasions for resistance to the official projections of territory. In pointing also at the relations of power within popular movements I have not wished to belittle their significance. Rather my aim has been to show that popular resistance to dominant discourses may just as well reside in the 'noisy' and incoherent street parlance, as in an organized resistance movement.

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