

## Two Cultural Models of Nature in Lithuania.

There is a 'Lithuanian *gamta*' that is conceptually distinct from the 'farming *gamta*.'

In the former, nature is generally talked about and conceived as a biosphere separate from urban areas and located in the countryside which Lithuanians enter in order to get rejuvenated and to find emotional and cognitive balance. Nature is both distinct from humans and yet humans are "inside of it," a "part of it."

From the farming perspective *gamta* is also seen as *žeme* 'soil.'

In both cases nature is a resource that improves the lives of humans, but in the former it improves our spiritual life, our sense of well being and rebalances us; in the second mode, it provides food that we need to live and stay physically fit. It also provides a sense of duty and meaning to the lives of farmers.

In both these modes people are fused to nature, and view nature as a supernatural, or sacred, entity that provides humans with nourishment. People act bad when they neglect or seek to exploit nature's bounty. The relationship is dynamic because both human institutions change and nature changes. Nature changes mostly through its own mechanisms and not as a property of humans, but humans also can affect nature through their negligence and greed. The relationship is usually cast as synthetic.

Humans attempt to fit into nature and see this process as uncertain since nature is both a prankster and changes in ways we cannot predict.

When farmers think of nature—here referring to their relationship to the land as farmers—they have a remarkable sense of connection to this type of labor. There is an affinity that creates what I have labeled a fused identity between the farmer and nature. That is, as a part-whole relationship where both the part (humans) and the whole (nature) are animate and have agency to harm and do good.

'Good' is understood as evident in the notion of balance, harm in the notion of exploitation and negligence. It is easy to refer to this part-whole relationship as one of struggle, because indeed it is dialectic, but it appears that farmers view the relationship more complexly, for they enjoy their work.

It is the very difficulties and intellectual attention needed to be a successful farmer that welds them to their farm and the labor involved. While they do not find 'rest,' they do find 'meaning' and a sense of their own self identity as pragmatic, virtuous, hard-working humans useful to their family and country.

Nature provides a sense of a genuine cultural identity for both modes of 'being:' as a farmer and as a Lithuanian.