

II. REGIONAL IDENTITY UNDER TRANSFORMATION

ABOUT THE NOTION OF IDENTITY

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The notion of identity has been used in many different situations: we have, for example, the notions of national identity, regional identity, professional or vocational identity, personal identity, etc. Identity is an identity of something, and the identity occurs in a concrete environment. The identity consists of natural and cultural properties. Constitution of identity is bridge building between the two kinds of factors. For example, national identity is a construction of natural and cultural factors. The construction is done by human beings. This is a general structure of the notion of identity: identity is human construction.

Keywords: national identity, national language, notion of identity, personal identity, regional identity.

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Introduction

The notion of identity has been used in many, many different situations. We speak about national identity, regional identity, professional or vocational identity, personal identity, etc. However, it is not clear enough what we are speaking about when we speak about identity. What do all these different identities have in common?

The character of an identity is not clear. It is obvious that identity is, in a sense, a human construction. It is something that a human being or a group of human beings construct. For example, national identity is not something that exists as a given factual thing. Even if identity is something given, it is something that supposes construction and, even more importantly, reconstruction. Explicating identity is a process of construction. The explication is a continuous process which has to be done over and over again in order to maintain the identity. The maintaining means not merely preserving the identity but also renewing it. The construction process does not emerge out of nothing, but instead, it has a factual basis. This factual basis – which may be mental, ideological or material – formulates some constraints which support and/or restrict the construction process.

About national identity

The construction of Finnish national identity in the 19th century is a clear example of the construction of a national identity. Hence, the construction process of Finnish

national identity is of importance. It is easy to identify several different factors in the process. Let us mention a few of them: the collection of the national epoch (Lönnroth 1849), the narrative characterization of the national character and the publication of the national song (Runeberg 1848), the publication of a text book about the national environment and national character (Topelius 1875), the philosophical-scientific foundation of the (Finnish) national State (Snellman 1842). In the following, we will briefly consider some aspects of the process.

It is important to recognize that Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–1877), Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) and Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881) started their academic studies in the same year at the University of Helsinki. In fact, this was a curious entailment of several different and independent things. However, it was important that these three men met each other at the University. The University of Helsinki was founded in 1640 (in Turku), and at that time Finland was governed by Sweden. This Swedish time was the first period of the University of Helsinki. The second period of the University of Helsinki started after the Finnish War (1808–1809) after which Finland was governed by Russia. In the beginning of the 19th century the University was located in Turku (the old capital of Finland). After the fire of Turku in 1827, the location of the University changed to Helsinki, the new capital of Finland (since 1812), in 1828. Of course, the change of location of the University of Helsinki had several implications to Finnish national character. Obviously there was a change in the geographical location, but in particular a mental change was especially remarkable. This mental change is connected to the change in the governance of Finland (Haaparanta, Niiniluoto 2003).

Snellman, Runeberg, Lönnrot and Zachris Topelius (1818–1898) were foundational actors in formulating Finnish national identity. They all were active writers. Their publications include both scientific publications and publications for the general audience. The latter can be seen as an occurrence of the idea of Enlightenment. As active university actors, all the writers were very well aware the idea of Enlightenment. Runeberg, Topelius and Snellman worked also as elementary school teachers. Topelius' book was used as a text book in the elementary school for several decades. Lönnrot collected the national epoch working together with ordinary Finnish people. At the same time, he worked as a physician in the Finnish country-side. Thus, they installed the idea of Enlightenment deeply into the Finnish reality (Klinge 1987, 1997, 2004).

From the short characterization above it is possible to recognize some central aspects of the construction of national identity. As one may notice, the construction has a firm, factual base. However, identity is not merely a material issue. In identity, the question is also about how someone (a person, a profession, a nation etc.) thinks about itself. The notion of identity functions like the notion of identification in philosophy of science. The notion of identification stems from economics. The idea behind the notion of identification is to give a systematic method to characterize a given concept in any possible application of the concept (Hintikka 1991; Hintikka, Halonen, Mutanen 2002; Mutanen 2004). To be a proper notion, identity cannot be too flexible – it needs

some kind of realistic basis. The realism referred to here is not any kind of materialism. One aspect of the intended realism can be seen from the work of Runeberg, Lönnrot, Snellman, and Topelius. They had a deep knowledge about general European doctrines and at the same a firm connection to the lives of ordinary people in Finland. In their work they unify these two distinct factors.

In Finland, there had been a long tradition in which Finnish national geography and nature were studied. Swedish researcher Carl von Linné (1707–1778) studied for example Lappish nature. He had several Finnish students who formulated a ground for Finnish national (geographical) identity. Let us mention Per Kalm (1716–1779) and Johan Haartman (1725–1787). Finnish nature and geography were emphasized also in Topelius' text book for elementary schools. Moreover, Topelius, as a professor of history, also considered the history of Finland in his text book (Klinge 1987, 1997, 2004).

In Europe at the same time, nationalism was growing. The French revolution can be seen here as the progenitor of the doctrine. The ideological background of nationalism is in romanticism. The influence of romanticism can be seen very clearly in Runeberg's works (Klinge 2004). It is interesting to note that Snellman as a scientific philosopher had a somewhat different emphasis in his studies. The tension between the emphases of Runeberg and Snellman was known to them and it hence provided fruitful grounds for the development of their ideas (Rein 1899).

In the example above we can see that several different factors need to be present. One factor is the general framework in which the process takes place. This does not mean that the general framework should be homogenous. In fact, there known tensions can even exist within such a general framework. In the example above the general framework consisted of the general nationalistic trends of ideas in Europe. Even if ordinary Finns were not aware of such general trends of ideas, there were several people who systematically used these trends of ideas. For example, Runeberg's works are an excellent example of such a use. Runeberg wrote about the Finnish character using the European literature tradition in a creative way. In contrast to Runeberg, Snellman was a Hegelian philosopher who emphasized the role of science in his work (Rein 1899).

To construct national identity, the trends of ideas need to be anchored in people's everyday lives. In the example this anchoring was done by teaching (in elementary schools and in the university) and by more general popular education. This implements the idea of Enlightenment. The idea of Enlightenment is just to help people to use and to trust their own intellect. A person should grow up – to become an intellectual adult. Finnish ordinary people were quite a good audience for such an idea. At that time general elementary education was developing especially education for girls. For example, Snellman started an elementary school for girls in Kuopio and Fredrica Wetterhoff (1844–1905) established a craftworks (needlework and weaving) school for girls in Hämeenlinna (Kouri *et al.* 1960).

Of course, the change in the governance of Finland is an essential factor in the development of Finnish national identity. Being released from the governance of

Sweden was important for Finnish identity. Part of the identity of Finnish people is that they are not Swedish. The governance by Russia, of course, has deep implications for Finnish national identity. In a sense this underlays the difference between Sweden and Swedish identity.

Language and identity

Language can be seen as a tool for communication. In this sense, someone may think language would be something external to communication. We just communicate by using a language. In this sense, the choice of language is just a practical matter. So, there is no deeper reason to prefer one language over other languages. Even if the choice would be only a matter of practice, the choice is not simple as all the relevant actors should have good language skills. However, this simplified tool characterization of language is not plausible. To arrive at a more precise picture let us look at the following quote: “Where Luther led, others quickly followed, opening the colossal religious propaganda war that raged across Europe for the next century. In this titanic “battle for men’s minds”, Protestantism was always fundamentally on the offensive, precisely because it knew how to make use of expanding vernacular print-making created by capitalism, while Counter-Reformation defended the citadel of Latin” (Anderson 1991: 40).

In the battle for people’s minds the use of the vernacular language is a good strategy. The official language of governance is somehow strange for ordinary people. However, as the example of Finnish national identity and the example of Luther show, to renew understanding and to renew identity, it is not good enough to just bring in a new language for the people. One has to replace the notions of the old language with new notions. This supposes that the renewer knows how the old language works and how it could be replaced. It is in this sense that we emphasized the role of Enlightenment: it renews the understanding of the people (Niiniluoto 1999; Mutanen 2009; Klinge 2004).

National language plays a central role in national identity. The grammar for the Finnish language was developed by Mikael Agricola (1510–1557). The foundations for this work were set by the translation of the Bible into Finnish. In addition, Agricola wrote the first published books in Finnish. In fact, the works of Agricola were so foundational that the first renewer of the Finnish language after Agricola was Lönnrot. In fact Runeberg, Snellman and Topelius wrote mostly in Swedish, which is the other official national language of Finland. We will not discuss more about the question of language in the 19th century. However, the question was partly of practical importance: Enlightenment supposes the education of ordinary people. The only way to do this is to use the language of the people. Partly, this was a question of the appropriate identity (Finnish or Swedish speaking identity) (Klinge 1987).

Language is not merely a tool for communication. Language is part and parcel of the identity of an individual and of a nation. In European nationalism, the national language was an essential factor. For example, in Finland the publication of the

national epoch in Finnish had a deep influence on national identity. Finnish became a written language, and it took its place among other European languages (Klinge 1987, 2004).

Language as a tool for communication connects people with each other. When we have a common language we can understand each other. Understanding is neither mere communication nor direct grasping of the mind of the communicator. Understanding is a kind of translation: etymologically “understanding” means standing between differences. Understanding has a mediating role. However, it is not clear what understanding mediates: between what is it standing? Does it mediate the (inner) thoughts of the communicators or the (deep) meanings of the communicators’ wordings? (Heiskanen 2006; Mutanen 2009).

Personal identity

According to Aristotle, the human being is a political animal. That is, the proper being of a human being is to be a member of some community or state. Besides this idea of a membership in a community, Plato and Aristotle explicated carefully the old idea of human nature (*physis*). In antiquity, the very thinking was, in a sense, naturalistic. However, in antiquity the notion of naturalism had quite a different meaning than it has nowadays. Nowadays, the notion of naturalism refers to the rejection of everything supernatural. In contrast to this, in antiquity the notion of naturalism also included some ideal. The nature of a human being included both the actual existence of a human being and the ideal existence of a human being – what a human ought to be. The latter aspect provides a, or rather the, final goal for the human being. According to Werner Jaeger, the notion of *paideia* includes the idea of human education, which includes the development of the human being towards the goal (Wright 1961; Jaeger 1986).

The explication of the nature of a human being opened up a gulf between the ideal existence of a human being and the actual existence of a human being in a state. To be a human being is not to be a citizen of a state or of a town, as he or she is also an individual. There is a tension between the notions of citizenship or of community and the notion of individuality. The identity must build up knowing the tension (Hellsten 1997). However, it must be emphasized that the explication of the tension to an individual took place over the long course of history. The final explication of the tension was done step by step by liberalism. John Locke (1632–1704) was one central philosopher in early liberalism (Copleston 1985).

Locke emphasized the role of work in building the identity of an individual. By doing work, an individual built a bridge between his or her mental reality and physical reality. Work interconnects the individual and nature or the environment directly and a social connection follows indirectly. It is very important to note that both Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) and Karl Marx (1818–1883) also emphasized the role of work for identity. Hegel developed the role of work in the identity building of an

individual further in the dialectic between a master and a slave in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977). Later Marx emphasized the social aspects of work.

According to Hegel, a master is a master only if there is some slave. So, the identity of the master depends on the slave. That is, the master has an identity only depending on someone else. However, the identity of the slave is actualized in his or her material work. The work that the slave does actualizes the identity of the slave. The proper identity is not identity as a slave but as a craftsman. So, there is tension between the identity and the actual being of the slave as a slave. The work explicates the tension, but at the same time it is an expression of the proper identity of the slave. The explication of the tension makes it possible to recognize the tension between the slavery (actual being) and the individual identity (ideal being). In this sense, the slave is in a better position than the master: the master does not recognize the tension in his identity (Hegel 1977).

Structure of identity building

The notion of identity is an extremely central one. Identity helps us relate to things within our environment. Who am I? Who are we? The answers suppose identity in one sense or another. There is a proper need for identity. However, this does not imply that there should be a kind of thing called identity. The notion of identity is subsumed into several different types of objects. For example, what do personal identity and national identity have in common? To get a better grasp of the problem, let us consider the structure of the identity building a little by considering the examples above.

We have been discussing the construction of identity. Construction – especially human construction – is a very difficult notion. Obviously, if something is constructed by humans, it will become dependent on the humans somehow. What does this dependence on humans mean? Sometimes the dependence on humans seems to imply something destructive: an entity which is a human construction is not a real thing. In so called social constructivism, sometimes, such extreme opinions occur (see Berger, Luckmann 1967; Burr 1995; Hacking 1999).

The meaning of the notions of construction and reality are not easy to grasp in radical constructivism. It is clear and obvious that human knowledge, scientific theories, human literary results, human societies, paper machines, sofas etc. are human constructions. For example, in science researchers are factually looking for knowledge. The scientific knowledge is the result of such factual human work. It is obvious that the result of such human work is dependent on humans. However, it does not follow that the object of research would be dependent on humans (Niiniluoto 1984, 1999).

Let us consider, for example, a paper machine. It is a huge material object. Obviously in nature there are no paper machines if humans (or someone else) do not build them. However, paper machines are real, material objects. If a paper worker uses these machines as intended we get paper. So, as paper machines these function only within a certain division of work. You can read the text you are right now reading

because the paper on which the text is printed is made by a paper machine. All this depends on humans, but at the same, paper machines are real things with real properties. Without such natural properties, any division of work would not result in actual paper. So, the fact that something depends on humans does not make the thing non-real. Moreover, there are several different kinds of things that depend on humans. Some of them, like paper machines, are material artefacts and some of them are, let us say, mental or cultural artefacts. Thoughts are examples of the latter. Of course, the separation between the material and the mental (or ideal) is not an easy task to do. For example, literature is something mental (artwork) but at the same books are also material artefacts (Popper 1972; Hacking 1999).

Identity is the identity of something: there has to be something whose identity that identity is. When something occurs within some environment, it has some (natural and cultural) properties. For example, the identity of a nation can be understood within the framework of nations, or the identity of a profession can be understood within the framework of professions. Sometimes the framework is ambiguous, or it may change from time to time. The identity needs to have some basis which is both factual and ideal or conceptual. The conceptualization is never uniquely determined (Hintikka 2007; Mutanen 2007).

For example, a philosopher within a philosophical community has different characters than within other community. In a philosophical community, the philosopher may be identified as an analytic philosopher; and in school his identity may be that of a philosophy teacher. The identity gives the genus (philosopher/teacher) and the differentiating characteristic (analytic/philosophy): the analytic philosopher is a philosopher and the philosophy teacher is a teacher. Usually, the identity is given by emphasizing only some aspects of the identity (I as a humanist; I as a security worker). In this case it is not clear how the identity is intended. “Me as a humanist” in contra-distinction to the engineers or “Me as a humanist” as we all are. The first gives a characteristic that differentiates the agent from the community (“me as a philosopher” is not a specialist of technology but of the humanities), the second gives a characteristic that unifies the community (“me as a philosopher” is also a humanist). These characteristics that differentiate or unify are not evaluative but descriptive. Sure, they can be used as evaluative: me as a humanist in contradistinction to (bad or technocratic) engineers. This connotation needs not to be included. “Me as a humanist” come from a different background than the engineers. So, this is just a descriptive characterization that helps communication (Niiniluoto 1999).

We can speak about a positive or negative identity depending on whether the genus or the differentiating characteristics are emphasized in the identity, respectively. If one emphasizes superiority over other groups/individuals in the community, we can speak about cynical identity.

The structure of identity building is bridge building between two different kinds of factors. The bridge building is more or less concrete work – human construction. In Hegel’s dialectic of the master and the slave, it is just the concrete, material work of the slave which does the job. However, this is a more general structure. In national

identity language has a mediating role. Language has a practical task in communication. However, as we noticed, language is not a mere tool for communication. It is a medium in which the identity will be expressed.

Regional identity

We have emphasized that an identity is something constructed, and reconstructed. However, at the same time this implies that identity is something that can be lost or may be changed. However, it is not easy task to change or to lose it. National identity has a role in the reality in which nations have a central role. If the reality will change, then the role of national identity becomes problematic. In the European Union (EU) the role of nations is not a clear one. How can one formulate the identity of a citizen of the EU? What kinds of consequences does globalization have on identities (Mutanen 2009)? This problematization opens up the notion of national identity in a new way. What kind of national identity should we have: what kind of identities play a relevant role? How to build a global or transnational framework for “supra-national” identity? This problematization opens a path to new kinds of identities (see Beck 1992).

Nowadays, we talk about the postmodern era (Lyotard 1984). Postmodernism has implications for our understanding of personal identity. Personal identity is not a real thing but something flexible and shifting. In fact, there is no such thing as personal identity (see discussion in Giddens 1991). It seems that in postmodernism identity is regarded as a permanent, tangible entity. This implies that changes appear as threats for identity. The threat is, a little bit misleadingly, identified as a phenomenon of post-modern era. Maybe we should look for new bases and new frameworks to build identities in this new situation and allow the identity to be, as it has been, flexible and changing, but at the same orientating.

If personal identity and national identity are more or less problematic, then we need some other identities or, let us say, meta-narratives (Mutanen 2009). If globalization includes something true, then we have to try to develop something which is larger than national identity; a kind of global identity or EU identity. But at the same we have to develop something that is more local than national identity. The notion of region has been developed for this intention. Unfortunately, global identity and regional identity are still waiting for further development (see Mutanen 2009).

The construction of identity is actual work in which we have something known and recognized. The construction takes place on top of this recognized basis. Regional identity is not based on some well formulated basis. However, nowadays the role of nations is not as clear as it has been for two hundred years. The roles of the United Nations and the EU are developing. However, no-one knows the direction of the development. It is not easy to base the building of identity on hopes and dreams. Before we have more concrete knowledge about this development, we have to just try to build different kinds of identities hoping that this work will direct the further development in a good direction. The discussion about neoliberalism is an example in which such a new identity problem is considered (see Patomäki 2007; Mutanen 2009).

Closing words

The notion of identity interconnects several different kinds of factors into a single wholeness. This implies that the (semantic) structure of the notion is very complex. Moreover, several different kinds of things are subsumed under the notion. This means that the notion of identity is extremely complex. Because of the complexity the use of the notion is very difficult. To keep our notions understandable we have to specify the situation in which we use the notion of identity very carefully; as we can see from the example of Finnish national identity above.

The scope of the notion of the identity is very wide. This does not imply that the scope has no limits at all. In fact, each enlargement of the scope of the notion needs a study of its own, as we can see from the examples of regional and global identity above.

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APIE TAPATYBĖS SĄVOKĄ

Arto Mutanen

Santrauka

Tapatybės sąvoka vartojama daugeliu skirtingų atvejų. Pavyzdžiui, turime tautinės tapatybės, regioninės tapatybės, profesinės tapatybės ar asmeninės tapatybės sąvokas. Tapatybė – tai ko nors tapatybė; ji susiformuoja konkrečioje aplinkoje. Tapatybė susidaro iš natūralių ir kultūrinių ypatumų. Tapatybės steigtis yra tiltas tarp dviejų rūšių veiksnių. Tarkime, tautinė tapatybė yra minėtų natūralių ir kultūrinių veiksnių konstruktas. Tapatybes konstruoja patys žmonės. Bendroji tapatybės sąvokos struktūra yra tokia: tapatybė – tai žmogiškasis konstruktas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: tautinė tapatybė, nacionalinė kalba, tapatybės sąvoka, asmeninė tapatybė, regioninė tapatybė.

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