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In Memoriam

Against 'Identity': Exploring Alternative Approaches to the Study of the Politics of Local Culture

Ingo W. Schröder

This chapter argues against the soft understanding of identity as an analytical concept currently prevailing in the social sciences. It would be much more useful to focus attention to the social contexts under which folk understandings of identity become reified as a resource of identity politics. Concepts such as hegemony (Gramsci), social space and habitus (Bourdieu) are suggested as the most promising approaches to the study of such processes.

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Inspiration for this chapter has come from two sources. The first is the comprehensive criticism of the usefulness of ''identity'' as an analytical concept voiced by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). They argue that the view on identity prevailing in contemporary social-scientific approaches has, by understanding identities as multiple, constructed, and fluid, ''softened'' the concept to such an extent that it has become all but useless as an analytical tool. "If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 1). At the same time, social scientists are ill prepared to address essentialist proclamations of identity that are a key resource in the vernacular idiom of identity politics. Brubaker and Cooper point out that ''identity'', like many other key terms in the social sciences, is at once a folk concept, that is, a category of social and political practice, and a category of social analysis. They explain:

> As a category of practice, it is used by 'lay' actors in some (not all!) everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others. It is also used by political

> entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) 'identical' with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 4–5).

Whereas such folk understandings of identity are relatively easy to describe, social scientists have burdened the analytical concept of ''identity'' with an amazing load of often contradictory meanings. Brubaker and Cooper identify at least five: (1) a non-instrumental mode of social action (as opposed to ''interest''), (2) fundamental sameness among members of a group, (3) a core aspect of ''selfhood'', (4) a product of social action that highlights ''groupness'' and solidarity, and (5) an evanescent product of multiple discourses, characteristic of the fragmented nature of the contemporary self (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 6–8). Especially the last-mentioned conception of identity has become so commonplace nowadays that in almost all studies the term is "routinely packaged with standard qualifiers indicating that identity is multiple, unstable, in flux, contingent, fragmented, constructed, negotiated, and so on" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 11). Such clichés indicate an understanding of identity that has become so nebulous that is almost devoid of analytical purchase. Brubaker and Cooper's answer to this dilemma is abandoning ''identity'' as a comprehensive analytical term and breaking it down into three clusters of concepts: ''identification'' as processual action, ''self-understanding'' as an expression of situated practical sense, and ''groupness'' as the sense of belonging to a distinctive group (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 14–21).

The second inspiration came from Gerald Sider's call for remaking Marxist anthropology. To Sider, the political economy of identity (which he calls ''locality'' or ''local culture'') provides contemporary anthropology with its most important challenge:

> We need to change our frame of reference from working in a locality or in several localities, to examine more closely the production of locality itself. This should include the production of local cultures, both in the hinterlands and in the heartlands, for the production of local cultures is completely integral to the production of local inequalities. The characteristic feature in the organization of local inequalities is that these inequalities are used to support both local and non-local elites, both local and non-local processes of appropriation, and this conjunction of local and non-local brings incompatible needs and interests into one inescapable embrace (Sider 2007: 12–13).

Identities (or local cultures) are thus seen as products of political processes that articulate competing interests struggling over the definition of the content of that identity. Such processes are generally called reification, and Brubaker and Cooper also argue that the investigation of the intellectual background

and practical social mechanisms through which reification occurs should be in the focus of social-scientific study:

> We should seek to explain the processes and mechanisms through which what has been called the 'political fiction' of the 'nation' – or of the 'ethnic group,' 'race,' or other putative 'identity' – can crystallize, at certain moments, as a powerful, compelling reality. But we should avoid unintentionally reproducing or reinforcing such reification by uncritically adopting categories of practice as categories of analysis (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 5).

In the following I will argue that many of the problems with the analytical category of ''identity'' can be overcome by introducing concepts such as hegemony (Gramsci) or social space and habitus (Bourdieu) into the analysis of the politics of collective identification.

The Phenomenology of Collective Identification Politics

Before discussing these analytical perspectives, I summarize briefly the most important features of collective identification that have been stressed by anthropologists. It is widely acknowledged that identities are prone to change across time and context, but their flexibility is constrained by socio-historic conditions. Ethnic identity, which is the type of identity most thoroughly scrutinized by anthropologists, illustrates some of the key problems that have haunted many anthropological engagements with identity. The preoccupation with groups as clearly defined entities with observable boundaries, on the one hand, and with culture as the stuff identity is made of, on the other, have led to the uncritical reification of the notions of group and culture and to a strong emphasis on just the emics of self-identification. However, there are no groups without categorization from outside, and there is no culture that is not the product of social relationships and objective political-economic reality. If taken seriously, these caveats impose definite limitations on the plasticity of identities and caution against ''soft'' notions of random bricolage. On the other hand, claims of identity's fixity and solidity are advanced by ethnic spokespersons on the basis of political folk understandings of identity that stress the timelessness of an ethnic or national cultural heritage. Last but not least, anthropological studies have shown that identities must necessarily be understood as historical processes. Any purely synchronic study of identity must fall short of grasping its development through time and for this reason will not be able to properly explain many of its contemporary aspects.

The reproduction of identity operates within three social frameworks: (1) the local, everyday life world, where identities are reproduced without critical reflection, through quotidian practices and long-term social relations. (2) The

state, where the hegemonic impact of models of a ''national identity'' impinges upon everyday forms of identification. Identity discourses in public space are monopolized by ''official'' representations of a dominant vision of identity that privatizes what it cannot incorporate. Such hegemonic interpretations of a national identity aim to create a sense of fraternity both within the limits of a state's territory and across the trajectory of a national time (see studies by Alonso 1995; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Guss 2000; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Nugent 1993). (3) Anti-state forms of identity, articulated in the framework of social movements or by ethnic minorities resisting incorporation. Such forms of identity are constructed reflexively and strategically by certain local elites and identity entrepreneurs and are packed in a discourse of self-assertion, autonomy, rights, etc. against the claims of the state or the mainstream society (see Bernstein 2005; Edelman 2001; Hendry 2005; Niezen 2003; Pratt 2003).

At the level of practical politics, collective identification uses the main strategies of institutionalization, performance, and narrative (cf. Jenkins 1996). Institutionalization means the creation of established patterns of social practice, in particular organizations, which integrate individuals into a collective structure. Performance refers to the visible embodiment of a collective identity in a ritualized manner before the eyes of the public. Such performances are scripted by a complex of regular social norms that create identity as a reality through time. Finally, narratives construct a meaningful world through the configuration of social relations and events in a coherent story. Many anthropologists see the positing of a meaningful past as the most salient type of narrative (cf. Friedman 1992). Such practices and stories provide the material for folk understandings of identity as an exclusive set of cultural markers that set the group sharing them apart from the rest of the world.

These three frameworks represent a fundamental dichotomy in the understanding of identity as a category of practice, namely, between experience and politics. On the one hand, there is the local life world shaped by long-term social relationships and notions of belonging, where identity is experienced as a natural extension of the past into the present. On the other hand, there is the field of politics, where identity is employed as a resource by the state, from above, or from below, by local communities or social movements, in order to support claims of an essentially political and economic nature. In practice, this distinction tends to become blurred by the constant interpenetration of the local and the supra-local (national, global), with the more powerful outside forces of state and market at work to erode the security of local social relationships.

Alternative Concepts for the Analysis of Identity Politics

Rather than applying the loaded, polysemantic, and fluid term of ''identity'' to the analysis of reified and politicized understandings of local culture, I suggest to look to Gramscian and Bourdieuan concepts of social analysis.

1. Hegemony

The well-known concept of hegemony is an element of Antonio Gramsci's theorization of subaltern culture and consciousness as the product of power inequalities (cf. Gramsci 1971; see also Crehan 2002; Kurtz 1996; Morton 2007; Sassoon 1988). Hegemony emerges out of a variety of actions and ideas rooted in class experiences and historically accumulated understandings. Gramsci has produced neither a neat definition nor a coherent theory of hegemony. In his writings it can encompass all kinds of power relations from direct coercion to willing consent. Thus it structures a world of inequality in which subaltern people are unable "to produce coherent accounts of the world they live in that have the potential to challenge the existing hegemonic accounts (which by definition see the world from the perspective of the dominant) in any effective way" (Crehan 2002: 104). The subalterns' own view of the world is fragmentary, incoherent, and contradictory. It is expressed in what Gramsci calls ''folklore'' – an oppositional culture to the ''official'' view of the world or, in a less structured fashion, the ''common sense'' of the subaltern. This subaltern worldview is produced through the lived experience of subordination. It may evolve into counterhegemonic discourses over time, but more likely the subaltern tend to absorb uncritically an existing – that is, hegemonic – conception of the world.

In contemporary social science notions of hegemony have mostly been adopted via the somewhat streamlined, ''cultural'' understanding of the concept by the British Marxist literary scholar Raymond Williams. He identifies hegemony more or less with culture, which saturates all aspects of everyday life

> to such a depth that the pressure and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. ... It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives (Williams 1977: 110).

It was Williams who introduced the explicit equation of hegemony and tradition, as ''the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits'' (Williams 1977: 115). He thus echoes many anthropological readings of tradition as the construction of a viable past through identity politics in the present by particular groups of social actors.

The most convincing application of the Gramscian concept of hegemony to anthropological topics has been undertaken by Marxist anthropologists like Donald V. Kurtz, Gerald Sider, and Gavin Smith. Sider considers hegemony as ''the dominance of one particular class in the domain of culture… expressed in, and through, the specific institutions of "civil society": churches, schools, newspapers, public buildings and spaces, systems of status symbols, and so forth'' (Sider 2003: 208). He continues:

> Hegemony, as I define the term, is that aspect of culture that, usually in the face of struggle – or simply noncompliance – most directly seeks to unify work and appropriation and to extend appropriation beyond work into neighborhood, family, forms of consumption – in sum, into daily life (Sider 2003: 210).

It operates through a combination of political, economic, and cultural pressures. Like Williams, Smith urges to pay special attention to the ''mastering of history'' as a crucial element of hegemony (Smith 2004: 217).

Hegemony operates between the public and the private, between formal culture created by a state-orchestrated cultural politics aimed to organize consent in order to facilitate a political project and popular culture which the potential to provide the basis for effective collective action against the uneven distribution of power resources. "Programs of rule which rely on various formal institutions for the propagation of a broad cultural framework facilitating rule are met in the multiple sites at which people apply practical sense to immediate projects, there to be pragmatically reworked" (Smith 2004: 224). Sider's and Smith's use of the concept of hegemony thus aims to reveal the specific dialectic between ''economic'' practices and social constructs of ''culture'' and ''civil society'' at a particular historical moment. Moreover, Smith has called for a methodological program for ethnography that takes into account both the terrain of what comes to be taken for granted, i.e., the reception of the hegemonic process, and the terrain of the active production of identifiable hegemonic fields (Smith 1999: 243).

From the viewpoint of hegemony, forms of identity can be understood as the effects of state-level or global politics of identification through strategies of domination and local ''common-sense'' efforts to maintain a local culture. This is succinctly expressed in another quote from Smith, when he urges to "comprehend social domination in terms of the interconnection between the determining characteristics of capitalist social relations through history on the one hand and the willed practice of agents seeking control over history on the other" (Smith 1999: 238).

2. Social Space

The second promising approach to studying identity politics while circumventing a reified notion of identity can be found in the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu. In Bourdieu's conception, the social world can be represented as a space of positions, such that every actor's position can be defined in terms of the volume and composition of capital they possess (cf. Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1985; Bourdieu 1991; Swartz 1997). Based on this premise, Bourdieu develops his theory of identity:

> On the basis of knowledge of the space of positions, one can separate out *classes*, in the logical sense of the word, i.e., sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar dispositions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances. This 'class on paper' has the *theoretical* existence that is that of theories: insofar as it is the product of an explanatory classification, entirely similar to those of zoologists and botanists, it makes it possible to *explain* and predict the practices and properties of the things classified – including their group-forming practices. It is not really a class, an *actual* class, in the sense of a group, a group mobilized for struggle; at most, it might be called a *probable class*, inasmuch as it is a set of agents that will present fewer hindrances to efforts at mobilization that any other set of agents (Bourdieu 1985: 725; emphasis in the original).

Such ''classes on paper'' need to be mobilized into ''classes in reality'' through symbolic and political labor that produces a ''common sense'' of the group and gives it a common identity (Bourdieu 1985: 742).

Classes find expression in status distinctions which are legitimized through a powerful ideology of individual quality, thus letting the difference in status go misrecognized. Crucial constituent factors of class, aside from qualities such as residence, gender, age, and ethnicity, are the volume and structure of various forms of capital. In Bourdieu's concept of capital, this consists not only of economic resources, but encompasses also cultural, social, and symbolic forms. In a historical trajectory, class structure becomes internalized and is reproduced as class habitus. The competition over valued forms of capital and, even more important, over the legitimate vision of the social world and the definition of what is legitimate capital is the outcome of class actors' efforts to maintain or improve their position in the social order.

In Bourdieu's concept of class, then, symbolic systems assume crucial importance as instruments of domination by providing concepts of distinction, hierarchy, and legitimacy. They are cultural and political at the same time. The exercise of power always requires an element of ''symbolic violence'' (in

Bourdieu's words), some form of justification or ideology, which Bourdieu describes as ''the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing economic and political power in disguised, taken-for-granted forms'' (Swartz 1997: 89).

In Bourdieuan terms, identity is framed by the concepts of ''habitus'' and ''collusio''. The individual's habitus is the principle that determines subjective influence on what particular tastes, dispositions, and needs one has and how the individual perceives of, uses, and responds to symbols of identification and engages in social action. Moreover, the habitus determines what forms of capital the individual deems worthy of pursuit. While the habitus is the property of individuals, it is structured by the accumulated historical experience of situated social practice and therefore highly likely to exhibit similar characteristics as that of other members of the same social status group. This kind of collective habitus is called ''collusio'' by Bourdieu. He defines collusio as

> an immediate agreement in ways of judging and acting which does not presuppose either the communication of consciousness, still less a contractual decision, [which] is the basis of practical mutual understanding, the paradigm of which might be the one established between members of the same team, or, despite the antagonism, all the players engaged in a game (Bourdieu 2000: 145).

Thus Bourdieu sees social action as prestructured by the agents' habitus and collusio, on the one hand, and power relations, both institutional and personal, on the other. These unfold within social fields and at the same time structure them along the lines of conflicts of interests and the struggle over various forms of capital.

Capitalism as a Global Hegemonic Framework of Identification

I briefly return to Sider's statement quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Sider stresses that by impinging upon local contexts, global capitalism nowadays produces an ever-increasing threat to the satisfactory reproduction of local social relations. Ironically, this happens at a time when ideologies of locality are articulated with ever-rising intensity in a wide variety of forms of identity politics. In Sider's view, anthropology should focus its attention on exactly this "increasing difficulty of social reproduction in localities, in regions, and in nations: the increasingly intensive production of locality and the simultaneous failure of this productive process" (Sider 2007: 13). It is therefore indispensable to any conceptualization of identity to address this characteristic of the contemporary world. The role of identity under conditions of ''millennial capitalism'' has most eloquently been analyzed by Jean and John Comaroff

(Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). They argue that late-modern processes of flexible accumulation, transnational flows of capital, and the emergence of consumption as a privileged site for the construction of self- and collective identities have served to undermine traditional ties of individuals to society and to wider social categories such as class.

Neoliberalism aspires, in its ideology and practice, to intensify the abstractions inherent in capitalism itself: to separate labor power from its human context, to replace society with the market, to build a universe out of aggregated transactions. While it can never fully succeed, its advance over the ''long'' twentieth century has profoundly altered, if unevenly in space and time, the phenomenology of being in the world. Formative experiences – like the nature of work and the reproduction of self, culture, and community – have shifted. Once-legible processes – the workings of power, the distribution of wealth, the meaning of politics and national belonging – have become opaque, even spectral. The contours of ''society'' blur, its organic solidarity disperses. Out of its shadows emerges a more radically individuated sense of personhood, of a subject built up of traits set against a universal backdrop of likeness and difference. In its place, to invert the old Durkheimian telos, arise collectivities erected on a form of mechanical solidarity in which *me* is generalized into *we* (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 14–15, emphasis in the original).

In neoliberal late modernity identities come to be fashioned as yet another lifestyle choice. They are measured by the capacity to consume; and politics in the traditional sense are being increasingly replaced by identity politics, issues of individual or group entitlement (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 16). Long-standing, classical political identities like the nation-state are more and more being eroded and rendered irrelevant by the impact of global market forces. They are at the same time appearing more similar than ever before on the surface, and more diverse than ever at the level of actual, day-to-day politics. Imagining both the nation and lower-scale identities relies increasingly on new forms of identity politics, which focus on the magic of performance and discourse, often in the realm of the legal rather than the social. When collective identity assumes an important role under these conditions, it is not as an expression of historic emotional attachment to people, places, or values, but rather as a resource for commodification or political deployment in the marketplace of politically-charged imaginaries.

Yet there are also studies which show that counterhegemonic identification still exists in certain local contexts despite the onslaught of global capitalism. In a recent article, E. Paul Durrenberger and Dimitra Doukas (Durrenberger and Doukas 2008) show the persistence of an alternative collective ideology among

local working-class people in New York State and Pennsylvania. According to their findings, a historic work-centered ideology, the ''gospel of work'', has continued to define people's local identity in opposition to the corporate ''gospel of wealth'' that dominates as a master narrative of social and individual values across the United States. This case illustrates a situation where local identification, as expressed in an identity politics of collective values based on the daily-life realities of a subordinate group, can indeed resist incorporation by hegemonic forces. As stressed by Sider, we are thus reminded that identity politics and the culture they generate must be examined as a long-term historical articulation of local social relationships vis-à-vis supra-local (state-level, global) interests that seek to impose their power of defining social relations.

Refocusing the Role of Culture in Identity Politics

No discussion of identity concepts can ignore the key role played by culture in folk understandings of identity. Culture assumes crucial importance as both the master narrative of collective identification and the most powerful currency in the marketplace of identity-specific entitlements. While culture is obviously a social construct, it is not the product of limitless invention, but always reflects to a certain extent concrete social relations and experiences of history. In other words, late-modern identities reflect an intriguing dialectic of essence and cultural construction at various levels that needs to be unraveled in ethnographic investigation.

One important example is the role played by ''traditional culture'' for the identity of societies engaged in projects of nation-building. In the context of identity politics culture, in particular what is considered as ''traditional culture,'' is invoked as a key resource in the competitive field of state recognition. While identity politics come into play everywhere that organized minority groups are making claims against the state, the issue has been mostly studied by anthropologists with regard to ethnic minorities. In these contexts, identity politics thus not only serve to sustain an indigenous community's cultural – and possibly, political – autonomy vis-à-vis the state, but they also highlight political and economic inequalities within these indigenous communities (cf. Keesing 1996). In other words, identity narratives are not politically neutral, but tend to privilege the privileged, those who are responsible for representing them to the wider world, even more, that is, to lend cultural legitimacy to the dominant position of political elites. From a critical political-economic perspective, such conditions have been described as ''neotribal capitalism'' (cf. Rata 2000; Schröder 2002). As studies from Native North America have shown, the deployment of culture in indigenous communities' collective identity projects

do indeed serve the whole community to some extent, but they also establish sharp fault lines between ''culture'' and ''lived reality'' on the one hand and, on the other, between those who are reaping increasing benefits from the situation and those who are facing increasing hardship and impoverishment (see, e.g., Dombrowski 2001; Sider 2003). While deployed in an idiom of tradition and cultural heritage preservation, essentialist narratives of cultural identity thus promote social conditions that are often radically different from those of the historic culture they claim to represent. In a fashion very similar to that used in nation-building projects ''from below'', actually-existing nation-states produce a national identity by creating a national history, based on narratives of a shared culture. Such national histories appropriate and transform vernacular histories by making them universal and by silencing all elements that do not lend themselves to nationalization (cf. Alonso 1994; Llobera 2004; Trouillot 1995).

Throughout all such processes of society-making, culture as the ''stuff'' identity is made of is also remade and reinterpreted along the lines of political interests. As noted above, it was especially Bourdieu who established a theoretical link between societal domination and symbolic systems which legitimate social inequality by encouraging the dominated to accept the status quo as rooted in culture, built upon shared narratives of history and descent. Yet even in the context of other types of identity such as class, culture appears to be created in response to changes in social relations. In his study of the development of a middle class in contemporary Nepal, Mark Liechty notes:

> It is the middle class's extraordinarily complex culture – with its myriad forms of competing cultural capital, its ambiguous and anxiety-inducing relationship with the capitalist market, its intricate systems of dissimulation (whereby it hides its class privilege in everyday practice) – along with its increasingly dominant role in cultural process worldwide, that makes it an important and timely subject of anthropological inquiry (Liechty 2002: 10–11).

While middle class identity is inextricably linked with the political-economic context of global capitalism, which provides universal blueprints of new kinds of narratives and practices, it is also a project built upon the mediation of such external models through historic culture and social relations. ''Class is real, but its reality is something that never exists outside of its continuous production and reproduction in cultural practice'', Liechty stresses (Liechty 2002: 255).

Conclusion

In this contribution I have set out to sketch possible approaches to the study of folk understandings of identity that avoid both the use of the unclear

and polysemantic analytical concept of ''identity'' and the pitfalls of replicating the reified notions of identity as the emic expression of cultural uniqueness advanced by identity politics. By making use of the social theories of Gramsci and Bourdieu, it is possible to comprehend identity not as the manifestation of a local culture, but just the opposite, culture as a product of shifting political projects of collective identification. Such projects are sustained by agents who occupy specific positions in the geography of global social space. Their efforts to define that position on their own terms through a symbolic politics of identity clash regularly with hegemonic visions of the social world. Through shared ''folklore'' (Gramsci) or by virtue of habitus and collusion (Bourdieu), local social relationships may be able to some extent to withstand the efforts to completely incorporate them into the structure of a hegemonic political economy, but only in rare cases do they succeed in sustaining vestiges of a truly counterhegemonic ideology.

With regard to the issue of identity, this means that the narratives of identity politics more often reflect hegemonic ideas of identity construction than the actual, ''objective'' (in Bourdieuan terms) social relations that have generated them. By simply taking people's claims based upon their folk understanding of identity at face value without at the same time studying the social relations behind such statements deprives social-scientific investigations of much of their scientific value. As I have outlined in more detailed elsewhere (Schröder 2008), the most obvious illustration of this problem is the disappearance of ''class;' as a widely used concept in the analysis of collective identification. In the contemporary world ideas of cultural, ethnic, and national identity are strongly favored over that of class on every level – in the hegemonic discourse of states and markets, in the identification narratives of local actors and, last but not least, in the analytical discourse of the social sciences. This appears rather paradoxical, because at the same time the impact of neoliberal capitalism and conservative politics has led to an unprecedented increase in social inequality and class polarization all over the world. Yet nowadays it has become increasingly difficult for class interests and identities to be articulated as such. Neoliberal regimes of political dominance and discursive hegemony have been highly successful in creating an image of capitalism without class by preventing the 'classes on paper' from representing their shared interest in the economic, political, and legal arenas. These class interests are obliterated in public discourse through the hegemonic propagation of more powerful images of ''cultural,'' ''ethnic'', or ''national'' identity. Rather than merely echoing such constructions of the social world, social scientists should feel compelled to challenge simplistic assumptions of the replacement of class by more particularistic forms of identification from a ''social-realist'' perspective that "emphasize[s] the realness of history over its constructedness" (Smith 1999: 15).

In other words, social scientists should focus their attention on the historical contexts that produce narratives of identity and engender the social relationships at the base of processes of collective identification, rather than take emic reifications of identity for granted or treat identity as an almost ephemeral matter of taste detached from the constraints of social relationship in the real world. The way the concept of ''identity'' has been employed by social scientists in the recent decades of booming identity claims across the globe and all walks of life has paid much too little attention to the social facts and processes behind the narratives.

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Prieš „tapatybę": ieškant alternatyvių būdų tyrinėti vietos kultūros politiką

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Santrauka

Šio straipsnio įkvėpimo šaltiniai buvo du. Pirmasis ir svarbiausias – tai išsami Brubakerio ir Cooperio pateikta „tapatybės" kaip analitinės sąvokos naudingumo kritika. Šie autoriai teigia, jog šiuo metu dėl socialiniuose moksluose dominuojančios tapatybės sąvokos, kai tapatybės suvokiamos kaip daugialypės, sukonstruotos ir nestabilios, sąvoka susilpnėjo tiek, kad kaip analitinis įrankis ji tapo bevertė. Kartu socialiniai mokslininkai yra nepasirengę atremti esencialistinių deklaracijų, grindžiamų paprastų žmonių tapatybės samprata, kuri yra pagrindinis tapatybės politikos šaltinis. Kitas tekstas, paskatinęs parašyti šį straipsnį, yra G. Siderio kvietimas atkreipti antropologijos dėmesį į vietos kultūros gamybos procesą šiuolaikiniame pasaulyje, kuris, jo manymu, padėtų

atskleisti vietinės nelygybės atsiradimą. Žvelgiant iš šių perspektyvų, tapatybės gali būti suvokiamos kaip politinių kovų dėl vietos kultūros apibrėžimo išraiška.

Antroje straipsnio dalyje pristatomi du alternatyvūs būdai tyrinėti tapatybę kaip politinį konstruktą. Pirmasis – tai Gramsci pateikta hegemonijos sąvoka, apibūdinanti tokią galios santykių išraišką, kai marginalizuoti žmonės neturi galimybės susikurti nuoseklios pasaulėžiūros, galinčios mesti iššūkį dominuojančio elito naratyvui. Pastaruoju metu šią sąvoką savo darbuose vartojo tokie marksistiniai antropologai kaip G. Sideris ir G. Smithas, tyrinėdami valstybės ir globalaus dominavimo politikos įtaką vietos lygmens pastangoms išlaikyti vietos kultūrą. Antrasis būdas – tai Bourdieu socialinės erdvės sąvoka: grupė veikėjų, atsidūrusių panašiose sąlygose, suformuoja „popierines klases“, kurioms, norint įgyti bendrą grupės tapatybės sampratą, būtinas politinis įdirbis. Praktikoje tokia panaši socialinė padėtis suformuoja bendrą *habitus* ir veikimą išvien, per kurį sukuriamas bendras (vienodas) atsakas į tapatinimosi simbolius ir bendras socialinis veiksmas.

Paskutinėje straipsnio dalyje atkreipiamas dėmesys į kultūros vaidmenį tapatybės politikoje. Kultūra yra pagrindinis tapatybės konstravimo strategijų elementas įvairiuose lygmenyse – tiek valstybės, tiek tautinių mažumų, tiek klasių, todėl svarbu suvokti, jog kultūra nėra tapatybės pagrindas, bet socialinis konstruktas, suformuotas konkrečių interesų ir socialinių pozicijų kolektyvinio tapatinimosi procese. Dėl šios priežasties socialiniai mokslininkai turėtų sutelkti dėmesį į istorinius kontekstus, kurie nulemia socialinius santykius ir sukuria su jais susijusius tapatybės naratyvus, o ne perimti esminius tapatybės sudaiktinimus jų nekvestionuodami arba vertinti tapatybę kaip trumpalaikį skonio reikalą, nesusijusį su socialinio gyvenimo apribojimais realiame pasaulyje.

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