Finland Online

Some Reflections on Constructing National Identity in a Talk Show

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The constraints of Finnishness and national identity have been widely discussed during the last couple of years. It has been asked, how have the conceptions of what is Finnish changed and why. A global line of development, under which the roles of nation states and nationalities become more and more problematic, has been suggested alongside explanations that draw from internal developments.

The number of changes Finland has gone through during the last decade is by no means modest. When thinking of foreign policy and international relations, we can see a dramatic change caused by the end of the Cold War and the decision to join the European Union. In the current situation, Finland is defined as 'western' more strongly than ever before, but at the same time the cultural and political meaning of the West has diminished or has at least become more equivocal and vague. Finland as a nation has also lost some of its authority to pan-European institutions (see, e.g. Alasuutari & Ruuska 1998, Kiander & Vartia 1998).

The internal changes are even more drastic. Finland lived through a severe economic crisis in the 90s. The unemployment rate went from 3,5% up to 20% in three years – a shocking development for a nation with uniform values and strong protestant ethics. In addition to (and because of) the depression, there has been considerable re-organization going on: fields, that have traditionally been controlled by the state have been de-nationalized and the line of activities still governed by the state have acquired new ways of functioning via the business world, rather than through the previous government channels.

Mirrored against these kinds of developments, the discussion about transforming Finnishness seems relevant: it is interesting to know what kinds of contents Finland as a nation and Finnishness as a national identity are given. Different thoughts and ideas are exchanged at an intensive pace, which according to Heinonen (1997, 215) can be seen as a sign of the rise of a new hegemonic project, in which Finnishness and national and cultural identities are both questioned and reconstructed.

Amongst scholars interested in such issues, it has been questioned whether it is possible to study national community, when the community does not exist at least in a physical sense. Benedict Anderson (1983, 15) offered the concept of imagined community – i.e. political community, that is imagined as 'both inherently limited and sovereign' – for analysis that would tackle the tension between individual and society, or the social community and democracy. Anu Kantola (1998, 49-50) claims that, in modern societies, media is probably the most influential point of contact between people, and therefore studying its stories from the viewpoint of community might be a way to grasp the nature of this imagined community. Kantola goes further by studying the role and nature of television in Finland and how it contributes to building the national identity. In her analysis, she shows how television has been a national, state-derived project, that has succeeded in gathering massive audiences around programs featuring strong national spirits (ibid., 50-64).

It is no exaggeration to say that, the modern media plays a dual role in the development of the national identity by offering its audiences selections

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emphasizing existing social and cultural norms and values, for the processes of symbolic consumption and on the other hand it introduces its own values to be reflected upon. It points out issues, creates common realities and topics of conversation. In doing so it creates sensations of 'us' and 'them' – that is, imagined communities (see Anderson 1983, 16). It is then worthwhile to ask questions like what the media's role is in constructing a national 'us'? What kinds of means does a specific genre – a talk show in this case – have for that? How are the means utilized? Who are brought in to the studio and what are they to say? And, at last, how are the tales about Finnishness interpreted by their audience?

Identity Politics – Who are We and How are We Formed?

Cultural identities are phenomena, that cannot be reduced solely to language, nationality, religion or ethnicity. They could rather be described as sensations of belonging to something or being aware of something; in practical terms, cultural identities are formed in the ways we locate ourselves in our social world. In order to grasp both the richness of detail and the structural elements of cultural identities, I will follow Preston's (1996, 1997) line of argument and inspect them in terms of three categories: *locale, network* and *memory*. By locale I refer to the sphere of everyday life (both the locality and the routine activities), by network to the various ways people lodge themselves within dispersed groups in larger communities. The idea of memory, finally, is used to refer to the ways of collective understandings – thus it is a matter of order and legitimacy.

This article focuses on studying the values and ideas behind cultural transformations. A key idea is then the existence of ideological communities, which are meaningful in everyday life. In a post-industrialized and post-modern society, these communities are (partly) formed by and within the mediated publicity, which creates collective representations, common realities and topics of conversation.

Collective representations represent national memory by containing actions, pictures, interpretations and emotions from the past, and it is with these elements, that we tend to associate new issues and developments (Moscovici 1981, 181, also Anderson 1983). In that way collective representations can be described as ways of knowing, being and living – they define what is normal and ordinary. The historical nature of collective representations makes them difficult to resist: they guide the way we give meanings to social practices as 'readily existing patterns'. Therefore, they integrate strongly with our everyday life.

Collective representations have a lot to do with what is often called 'common sense'. Common sense could be defined as an interpretative framework of the social world that derives from everyday practices, and is therefore contextual and flexible. In Gramsci's thinking, tradition and/or popular interpretative frameworks are sources of 'common sense', but not quite the thing itself. Common sense is filled with new material (e.g., the historical phases of the nation and the people, with single happenings, with popularized scientific 'truths' and philosophies) all the time; thus it is never complete nor fully logical (Gramsci 1979, 34). With this commonsense framework, people are able to produce opinions and position themselves within society: to practice common sense means to associate oneself with different kinds of (imagined) communities.

Gramsci connected common sense to questions of power and consent. He argued that common sense varies not only in time and culture but also within different layers of society – it is an essential part of the power mechanisms of any society. It can hinder alterations in social practices even aggressively – extreme examples of such could be the racist movements developed all over Europe in the 90s. Gramsci did not mean, though, that a person's or group's 'common sense' could be drawn strictly from one's historical and social position. People's conceptions of the social world are always disjointed and episodic by nature: people belong simultaneously to multiple groups and their discourses. Secondly, hegemonic discourses cultivate common sense, they take it inside a particular discourse or form of thinking (see also Kunelius 1996, 207 – 211). In this manner, common sense is a matter of power – it can be harnessed into a discourse.

The concept of discourse connects the idea of common sense with questions of national identity. Identities are carried in language, and constructed and renewed in social practices. They are complex, fluid, subtle and ever contested. They do not reside in given symbols, but in ways people organize their experience into social practices, and give symbolic meanings and values to some matters: they are discursive by nature. Thus it is specially interesting to look at discourses defining identity issues when the conditions to which a set of cultural identities have been attached (and thus becoming cultural symbols) changing. An analysis of language use is necessary to be able to reproduce the concept of cultural identity and its impact on defining one's place within a society. Focusing on the media's texts and language

use does not mean identities would only be a matter of language – there is always a danger when focusing upon one aspect of social process that the rest of the process becomes reduced to that aspect alone – but the ever-shifting and ubiquitous phenomenon of language is conducive to one aspect of analysis.

Media content and common sense are intimately intertwined. Media relies on common sense, but at the same time media content is a paradigmatic example of a machinery that reproduces common sense. Media symbolizes our belief in the possibility of seeing things from a common perspective (Kunelius 1996, 204 – 205). The argument that the media is one of the creators of common sense and cultural identity gains importance in the present situation. The media is linked to the functioning and legitimacy of the political system and there is ongoing discussion on the role of the media in modern western democracies (see, e.g., Rosen 1996, Fallows 1997). As politics have become more and more medialized, public life presented by the media is an increasingly important field for democracy. creating an open arena for discussion and debate. In addition, media texts make good research material for studying common sense on a large scale, since common sense is articulated and actualized in communicative situations and the media (i.e., national television) addresses (in theory, at least) all Finns.

Risto Kunelius has been inspecting news texts to find out 'the moment where the discourse of journalism and the common sense of the audiences are articulated together' (1996, 212). In this article, I will take it a step further and look at the contradictions and negotiations in a particular media discourse about a controversial and emotionally charged issue initiated partly by it's audience. To substantiate my claim of the close connection between media texts, common sense and cultural identity better, I will briefly consider what it is to be 'Finnish' before beginning my analysis.

The Past Before Us

Constructing national identity is a two-way street in the sense that it is a process of both turning many into one (focusing on similarity and smoothing internal differences) and a process of distinguishing one from all others. 'National' is constructed in various (social) practices. All nations are assured of their own unparalleled and special nature, but the artifacts and practices from which distinctive features are chosen is quite limited, and, at the end, national sagas and storylines have a lot in common (Keränen 1998, 8).

When Finland was negotiating membership in the EU, the possibility of different kinds of threats to Finnishness and Finnish culture were often brought up. This is interesting, for finding special qualities in Finnishness is a new phenomenon. Traditionally, Finnishness has been defined as an unsophisticated, provincial and by no means desirable trait (e.g., Apo 1998). In the 90s the discourse has changed: What is to be considered Finnish has been under constant negotiation by political elites and social/cultural theorists. Lately, there has been a considerable number of studies in the 'essence of Finnishness', and the similarity of different people's conceptions of what is Finnish has been noted. It does not mean that what are considered to be 'good Finnish' characteristics would not vary, but that there is a strong mutual understanding between different groups of people and their cultural codes: 'good life' in Finland has been defined as uniform life.

This is seen, for example, in the recent writings in 'letters to the editors' in the newspapers: lifestyles of ethnic minorities, and even more the moral obligation of respecting them, have been questioned and criticized. Individualism has never been that popular in Finland. The powerful ties between state, citizenship and uniform cultural codes can be seen as a risk, for 'a mature and functional democracy should be built on a spontaneous and autonomic citizen's society' (Wuori 1993, 32).

Finnish civil society was strongly bound with the state from the beginning – the social structure of the nation was built in such a way that there were almost no other dominant relations than that of the state bureaucracy. Therefore, it was easy to put officials and municipalities to work building a uniform national ideology. For example, the public school system was one of the most powerful vehicle through which the people were taught about their cultural character. A Finnish historian, Pauli Kettunen, argues, that the strong uniform culture in Finland arose from the fact that citizen's needs and problems have been defined as a responsibility of the state (1987, 242). This has furthered both the development of centrist state and the continuation of a state-centered political life while the welfare state was under construction. In addition, Finns have been quoted as being a rare example of people who identify themselves mostly with nation and state, instead of special regions or localities (Knuuttila 1998).

The second essential element that could be described as rural or agrarian Finnishness, is drawn from the Fennoman idea of 'sacred land'. The rustic

way of life and the idea of economically independent, self-reliant and stubborn yeoman have been the key elements in defining ideal Finnishness. Urbanization could not really break the ideal: even Finnish towns are small and countryside-like, and the population from the few ‘cities’ constantly travels to the country for weekends and even the shortest holidays.

The peripheral element is seen in two ways: firstly, we have grown to think of Finland as being a distant borderline between east and west. Secondly, Finland is inhabited in a way that emphasizes the center – periphery relations. Matti Wuori (1993, 15) describes Finland as a ‘scarcely populated province with one little town and a couple of smaller villages’. Heinonen (1997, 48) says that both the processes of urbanization and industrialization were conducted with no master plan: the little towns and factories were placed here and there, which allowed the people to maintain their close relationship with nature despite these processes. The problem of peripheral identity is its constant struggle to gain appreciation in the eyes of the center: the final evaluation comes always from the outside (Kivikuru 1996, 13). Within both the state and the international community, those with peripheral identities appear contradictory, and stiff and slow in their reactions, for they are hindered by their feelings of distanced otherness.

The third essential element in the collective representation of Finnishness is the strong focus on work. Lack of jobs is one of the most painful problems in Finnish society in the 90’s: How can a society build on a strong work ethics not be able to provide work for its members? Jari Heinonen connects the core elements of what is considered ‘Finnish’, and writes that people fostered in a work-centered and uniform peasant society easily adapted the discipline demanded in an industrial paid-work environment. He goes far enough to claim that agricultural and protestant workaholism are different sides of the same coin, and that together they form a sort of cult of hard work, in the framework of which people produce their survival strategies (1997, 52). In addition to this, work has been associated with citizenship and civil society: the ones working construct the ‘us’ of civil society, and those who are not – or ‘them’ – are positioned outside of it.

The idea of a uniform cultural code is at stake from the perspectives of new international and global circumstances, which bring conceptions of the good life as well as from the point of view of the postmodern fragmentation of cultural codes and the growing importance of regional and local institutions. Cultural identities are in a process of individualization and the traditional codes organizing living and interaction are now facing competition from the demands of new technology, consumerism, globalization and medialization. But postindustrial society offers a basis for both the continuity of traditional cultural values and production of new identities: in order to survive in the globalizing world we have to be able to construct local, national and transnational identities, based not only on national values, but also on any similarities of experiences, tastes, ideas and professions. Even the emotional binds are not as strong though in postmodern ‘imagined communities’ as in the modernist project constructing the nation state, I assume, that national characteristics of identity formation and cultural codes will survive. They might even become more meaningful in turbulent and risk-filled circumstances.

Whose Finnish? Online Discussion’s Challenge to Mainstream Definitions

In January 1999 the Finnish national broadcasting company, YLE, presented a special edition of a current affairs’ program *Ajankohtainen kakkonen*[1] . The two hour debate was publicized to ‘cut deep into what is Finnish and Finnishness in the current environment of globalization, internalization and other changes nation states are to face in the post modern era’. The discussion participants were politicians, experts and representatives of the ‘ordinary people’. There was also a group of unemployed people following the discussion via television and conducting their ‘alternative’ debate; every once in a while they were brought on air to comment on the main discussion.

Gramsci (1972) argues, that the ‘national’ must in some way forge links with the positive strands of popular culture, and so integrate the official discourses with the commonsense discourses of the people. I wish to describe the media discourse on Finnishness and analyze the way commonsense elements are brought on air. The methodological framework of the study uses an application of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis can be viewed as an attempt to trace systematic relations between texts, discursive practices and wider sociocultural practices. It focuses on language use, and believes that in doing so it is possible to create analytical, theoretical and practical connections between text and context. Discourse analysis as a paradigm is not the clearest or most established one, at least by it’s definitions of concept – most of the key concepts

have been defined differently in different studies. Even the word *discourse* has been used both with the meaning of 'all language use' and with the meaning of 'a specific pattern of language use or representation' (Fairclough 1989. 1992, 1995). Therefore the whole approach could be defined more respectively as a loose theoretical and methodological framework than an established methodology. The approach allows variation in terms of research material, concept definition and research setting. In this text, I will settle for defining media discourse and connecting it with the concept of common sense.

I am interested in language use in the media from the viewpoint of citizen's ability to find relevant material for his/her identity work. For this purpose, studying the online discussion gives the researcher unique possibilities to spot tiny patterns of language use in that media discourse that raise people's willingness to disagree, negotiate or comment and therefore are not of common sense to the audience.

Making sense of media texts necessarily involves linking episodes to existing interpretative frameworks. Individual texts are tied to broader issues in complex ways. In seeking to make sense of the social world, both the media and the public employ simplifying frames as hooks to capture pieces of the abundant flow of information – this is where we get to the concept of discourse.

By discourse, I refer to particular language use and its relation to the institution it came from or was (re)produced within (see, e.g., Foucault 1972). Discourse is social, historical and practical, and even though it cannot be reduced to text it is accessible through text. It does not refer to individuals, but to the way institutions control the ways individuals use signs and symbols: the institution articulates and negotiates the perspective from which signifying processes are put in practice. Media is, in this sense an institution: it produces its own discourse.

Media discourse could be defined *as a site where other discourses meet and challenge each other in defining various aspects of social reality* (see also Kunelius 1996, 89–91, 126). Media discourse opens a short cut to cultural phenomena, at least in the sense that there is an unquestionable likelihood or correspondence between 'culture' and journalism's ways of constructing and representing it (Heikkilä 1998, 91). When not looking at one single text or genre, it could be said that media discourse itself is the central practice in which modern societies make sense of themselves. For example, Ekecranz and Olsson's historical analysis shows that the values and symbols which media elicits are in fact values of outside institutions and actors (Ekecranz & Olsson 1994). Media discourse functions largely on the material provided by other institutions of the society – for example, on discourses of politics or economy, and, of course, the discourse of everyday life. Media – in this case the talk show – brings the discursive action of different interest groups onto the stage. Therefore, media should not see itself as merely reflecting the culture it originates from but should actively evaluate both the culture and its own role in constructing it.

When it comes to reconstructing Finnishness, it was interesting to see which discourses the media relied on. The guests were chosen from a wide scope: amongst others, there were members of parliament, ministers, shopstewards from two industries, a professor, a researcher, an artist, three grass root activists and a director of a mid-size company. The talk show made a visible effort to connect its own discussions to the conceptions of the citizens. The show was initiated by a segment filmed in market places and malls, where ordinary people were asked what they considered to be Finnish and which of these features were indispensable? The answers to the first question were quite similar to those presented in the previous chapter: Finnishness was about independence, landscape, traditions and hard work. 'National property', the flag, basic welfare services and state corporations should not be sold. Online discussion was opened the day before the actual show with the same questions, and even if the participation was not that active until the TV show had started, same sort of comments were to be found on the net.

The discussion was conducted following different kinds of topics: it was about indisputable globalization and the question of whether there should be 'Finnish' capital, and how to keep it Finnish? Hosts framed the discussion by two sets of questions:

We've lost the Finnish mark, state corporations are being de-nationalized and 'blue and white' capital is quickly leaving the country. What is going to happen to Finns? Will the restless foreign money only visit here to escape again, or will it bring us welfare?

Are Nokia, Merita-Nordbanken and Pohjola still Finnish enterprises and if they are, how have we managed to keep them so? Is Finnishness an asset ina globalizing world? And can we slow down globalization?

From the point of view of Foucaultian discourse analysis, it is clear that both the framing of the discussion and the range of discussants draws from

economic discourse. By the *discourse of economy,* I refer to language use that reflects the preoccupation with profit and loss, and the wider values of the culture of capitalism. The discourse functions on conditions set by the capitalistic market economy and arguments from within the economic frame tend to be technical in their language. The frame fits well with media's propensity to cover news issues from the standpoint of the official sources.

Finnishness analyzed from within an economic framework was about competitiveness, efficiency and profitability. When the framework was utilized by the experts and politicians, it was abstract and ritualistic. Arguments within the discourse were constructed as self-evident and clear. There seemed to be options and developments that would indisputably follow if decisions were carried out accordingly.

When the 'ordinary people' on the show, or the unemployed 'sideshow' argued from an economic frame, they tended to 'give it a human a face' by naming people or specific situations from ordinary everyday life. While the experts applied the frame to emphasize the abstract and technical aspects of economy, the ordinary people (both on the show and online) tend to obtain moral lessons about greedy human behavior out of it.

The *political discourse* was brought on the scene in the form of professional politicians: i.e., members of parliament and ministers. By the political discourse I refer to talk that emphasizes conflict between facts, interpretations, policies, etc. This is where politics and the media intertwine: political discourse, as well as mainstream journalistic tradition, emphasize telling 'both sides' of the story, even though the same strategy is pursued for different purposes.

The difference between argument within the discourse of economy and political discourse was that, while 'economy talk' explained and stated, the political talk focused on values, norms and morals and constructing 'us'. There were many 'facts' and 'developments' arguing in the economy talk, but people as actors or agents were either nonexistent or functioning at the mercy of economic laws or market forces. Political talk could 'borrow' arguments from the economic talk, and even present them as 'realities', but it also emphasized that *we* should make the best possible decisions within the given circumstances.

There was also a difference in the strategies of making an argument seem 'factual'. Within the discourse of economy, reasoning was often based on an irrevocable course of events or circumstances that would only allow one rational option for action. When arguing from within the political framework, the factual reasoning was more often drawn from history: circumstances were not seen as equally dominant, and historical comparisons were made in order to show how the 'impossible' can turn out to be possible, and even rational in the long run.

It has been suggested that certain terms and concepts come to function as 'arguments' instead of mere words in public discussions (e.g. Kettunen 1997 and Pantzar 1990). For example, concepts like market forces or international competitiveness have been used to justify various political and moral decisions. There seemed to be two terms in the talk show, that became both the causes and the reasons for many arguments: globalization and market forces. Globalization could be used even in situations like: 'You have just globalized a small industry' or 'if we do not *do* globalization in my field, all the preconditions for healthy competition will vanish'. Globalization was seen as the circumstance within which policies and decisions were made as well as the objective or target of the same policy.

When it comes to 'market forces', it was only the experts of the talk show that could ground arguments just referring to the concept. The unemployed people in the 'sideshow' and the online audience tended to question the possibility of explaining reality by claiming market forces. They again brought the discussion to the level of everyday practices by stating, that 'there are no market forces outside 'us' and our solutions – it is the people that constitutes the market force.

Lastly, the variety of different grass root frameworks was addressed: the 'ordinary people' and their discourses were represented by environmental and human rights activists and the side-discussion of the unemployed. Naming this discourse, that draws not from a legitimate institution but from a wide range of everyday practices and experiences, is problematic, at least when theorizing discourse in the Foucaultian manner. Crigler & al. (1992) suggest the concept 'humanistic frame' to categorize expressions and logics that draw from everyday experience. This frame brings out the concerns of effects on 'ordinary people', 'us' or 'them'. Since the logics of everyday practice cannot be reduced to effects and concerns alone, I argue that the concept of common sense seems suitable (but also too wide and not analytical enough) for representing the voice of the ordinary people. Common sense (like media discourse) is a metalevel discourse that 'translates' other discourses and puts them in perspective from the point of view of everyday experi-

ence. On the other hand, it also has its own logic and hierarchies, its own ways of knowing and organizing the lifeworld. In the data, it was often both connected with and contradicted by the discussion within economic frame.

The commonsense discourse sought its rationale from different logics than the other two forms of knowledge. Within it, Finnishness was connected with more traditional and practical issues: i.e., Finnish language, hard work, solidarity, independence and workmanship and some kind of certainty or permanence. Globalization, both economic and political was described as an irresponsible project: nobody had practical experience of its consequences, one could not be sure of the motives for decision-making ('it is easier to make intolerable decisions, when the outcomes are not too [geographically] near you'). The demands ordinary people would face from globalization were too vague. People in the 'sideshow' described themselves as skilled workmen, but that since globalization would need people with more 'professional' skills, it was not for people like 'them'.

A strong emphasis on separating 'us' and 'them' on the grounds of everyday experience could be found from the online commentaries. It seemed to be 'clear' to most of the online discussants, that the people in the studio (even the ones representing 'ordinary people') did not know what 'real life' was all about. Also, the media criticism was diverted towards the false representation of everyday life in the form of, e.g., questioning the choice of discussants and the questions posed to the discussants.

If discourses have so much to do with institutions, one might ask, why is it then relevant to study their variation? The answer, to my knowledge, lies in the nature of media discourse itself. As already noted, media discourse brings discourses from other institutions together and makes commonsense interpretations based on them. In doing so, it must set the discourses it quotes in (hierarchical) order – it must prefer some discourses over others. Looking at the way different institutional discourses vary within a media text, it is possible to reconstruct some of the power relations of the society. When it comes to questions of power and the elite, the media tends to have a double role. It is part of the inside power elite and, on the other hand, it is part of the masses it 'represents' (see Kunelius 1996, 187, also Mancini 1993). This double role creates dual alliances – journalists are on the side of the people they represent, and this usually happens explicitly, but at the same time they are allied to their sources of information and their interpretations.

Media discourse and common sense are strongly related to each other. When investigating communication between institutions and people, there is always a moment where the institution wishes to place a part of the social world in the explanatory framework of it's own discourse. In order to make people take notice, the discourse will have to pay attention to the processes of common sense logic and the practices to everyday life (see Kunelius 1996, 208). This is done in the media, within the media discourse.

Kunelius suggests that today's media is a complicated intersection of at least three things: 1) the more or less systematized discourses of various institutions performing in the news (in this case, economy and politics) 2) the voices of the medium in question, or the media in general 3) the common sense of the readers (1996, 209). The study of the online discussion was fascinating in one aspect. Even though the talk show as a genre has invited 'ordinary people' to be more or less active participants in its discussions, the online is something new, throughout the talk show, the hosts, experts and the studio audience all have the home audience in their minds (see also Livingstone & Lunt 1994, 55). An online discussion that is monitored by the hosts of the show brings in a new element. By studying it, it is possible to look at how the 'common sense' the institutional discourses represented on the show is negotiated from the point of view of the 'imagined community'.

Talk show is said to be one of the most influential forms of talk within contemporary broadcasting (Tolson 1991, 178). It is a genre loosely based upon a set of protocols of television interview, but it simultaneously transgresses those protocols and produces an interesting mix of forms of talk designed to be informative and entertaining. Tolson calls talk show speech 'chat' – studio talk that recognizes rules and conventions of interview, but instead of following them, it flirts with them by bringing aspects of the 'private' and 'personal' alongside the 'public' and 'general' issues. (ibid., 180-183). It is said that television and, specially talk show, has a role to play in constructing a space rather that providing one (Livingstone & Lunt 1994, 32). It seems that the possibility of an online discussion also works as providing a space, and the active response shows that there are people willing to participate in such a space.

Locale, Network and Memory – About Media' s Role

At every period of time, there have been certain discursive entities that are meaningful to everyday life and, as such, these discursive entities have community-binding forces. The media exchanges material with our social worlds at various levels and enables identity work at personal, local, national or even global levels. Thus, the sphere of media comprises meanings that resonate all three aspects of identities. We can perhaps understand identity only if we grasp its specificity, complexity and contingency. To be able to do this, I have chosen to refer to concepts of locale, network and memory. These three concepts are differently constructed in different discourses, and because of media discourse's common sense element, the construction is worth studying. To be commonsensical, all three aspects have to be touched somehow, at least in the long run.

Media discourse constructs different aspects by bringing different actors on stage. Since the locale by definition (see Preston 1996, 1997) refers to everyday life and it's familiar elements or as, Preston (1997, 44) puts it, to the 'depth of experience', it is not easy for all genres of media discourse to reconstruct it plausibly. Therefore the media tends to do it either by using cliché-like common beliefs or by representing ordinary life as such. In this talk show both means were utilized, but still the online discussion was often motivated by the studio discussants' 'wrong' conceptions of everyday life[2]. The talk show (and, to my understanding, news and current affairs genres of national media in general) does not succeed in portraying the elements of locale as well (again, thinking of common sense) as in portraying the elements of network and memory.

The element of network, in its turn, refers to the spread of everyday experience – to the domestic sphere, the sphere of working life, an array of other formal institutional spheres and the media, which is at the same time present in, and distant from, everyday life. The spread of relationships that have to do with questions of cultural identity is wide and complex, and the media has a double role in it. On one hand, it is part of the network realm as such, and, on the other hand, it represents (other) elements of it in its discourse. The latter is dealt with 'mapping' it for us so that we can participate in imagined communities within the media realm. When thinking of media content, it is possible to see it's identity potential as when it comes to the concept of network. For example, the consumer-oriented material in the media ties identities with given polito-economical structures of a society and the news and current affairs programs tie identities to cultural (and political) structures and understandings (Preston 1997, 45–46) by creating common realities and topics of conversation.

It is clear that the sets of relationships upon which identities are constructed are not only lodged in time, but also have extension over time: they persist and decay. This is where the concepts of identity and memory become interwoven. We can remember in different ways: private memory is idiosyncratic and makes material for biographies whereas history is constructed from sets of ideas that are affirmed within groups of people and finally acknowledged by a collectivity, and it is not that uncommon to sense a tension between 'private' memory or community tradition and the more generalized demands of mass culture. By memory I do not only refer to the past and things already known, but also to ways of knowing that are naturalized (see Foucault 1972, 15, 215 – 216). Knowledge, like discourse, is historical: what is worth knowing, the subjects and methods of knowledge, and how truth or knowledge is represented, vary in time. Memory then, means the ways history, knowledge and truth are organized within a discourse. Media discourse, at its turn, seeks to organize different institutional discourses into the framework of 'common sense'. In the media, the 'memory'-aspects of discourses constructing a specific theme are put together in a way that is meant to make sense to the audience: media discourse connects the levels of locale and/or network to the more epistemological and profound level of memory to produce common sense interpretations of a specific theme. The means for doing this vary for different genres of media discourse: in journalism, different institutional discourses must be organized at a textual level, but in a talk show, it is possible to let representatives of different institutions do the organizing alongside the edited material and host's comments, interruptions and turn-taking control.

To become a part of an imagined or mediated community, one needs to share the community's collective representations and memories. Collective ways of producing meanings are born in social practices, and, in today's mediated society, it is the media discourse, which turns other institutional discourses into texts provided with more or less common sense understandings. Concepts of common sense and identity overlap in many respects, but it is still of importance to separate them. They refer both to the sphere of everyday experience and reasoning,

and they are both historical, spatial and political by definition. Still, the concept of identity grasps a more individual, private level, or in Preston's words, the depth and spread of experience. Thus, my presumption is that identity is more useful when studying audiences, and common sense when studying texts. I would argue that, *because* of the overlap, discourse analysis could utilize the concept of identity and specifically it's aspects of locale, network and memory to analytically refer to the different means available to media discourse in reproducing common sense.

This is why both of the concepts must be explored. I look at the media as an ideological apparatus (re)producing social relations and power structures *within media discourse* (see, e.g., Hall 1992, 176-179). Power means, then, doing things, creating space for certain forms of understandings or actions and omitting others. And, in the online discussion, viewers' comments referred either to the media's conceptions of everyday life (locale aspect) or to conceptions of truth, morals and values (memory aspect), that is, to elements where they saw themselves or the truths and values they represent being wrongfully treated. From the point of view of the viewers, the common sense produced by the various discourses within the talk show included wrong kinds of 'us' and 'them'.

I am interested in the language use in the media from the viewpoint of citizen's ability to find relevant material for his/her identity work. For this purpose, studying the online discussion gave unique possibilities for spotting patterns of language use in media discourse that raise people's willingness to disagree, negotiate or comment and therefore are not 'of common sense' to the audience.

Within media discourse, it is possible to construct 'national memory': time as a factor disappears as such, and a tale in which the past, present and future are intertwined with each other emerges. In political discourse, the citizenry is often seen as universal, ageless category. Civil rights are seen as a universal norm (Keränen 1998, 157-158). Citizenship is, however, always bound to place, time and social norms. Its content has changed – citizenry does no longer mean only the set of rights (e.g., to vote) but also a set of more social rights, like wellbeing, housing, education etc. Citizenry has reached a more material form, and its limits are regulated within time and space. As well as the construction of Finland as a nation, Finnishness as cultural identity is a process that is going on both in media discourses and everyday practices.

Notes

1. *Ajankohtainen kakkonen* is broadcast prime time once a week. One show covers four to five stories and the subjects vary from politics to popular culture. It has been on air since 1969 and attracts approximately 700 000 viewers per show, which makes it one of the most popular current affairs programs in Finland. Special editions are called 'Theme evenings' and through them the program tackles current, problematic social issues. Discussions have been lively: all kinds of interests and viewpoints have been stated and the virtual online discussion accompanying each theme evening has been quite active, and frequently quoted and noted on the talk show itself. The online is also open to people's suggestions for theme topics, so there is a discussion going on even when the show is not on.
2. Other genres in the media, for example light entertainment like soap operas can succeed much better in tying identities to common sense conceptions of everyday life (Preston 1997, 47, also Livingstone & Lunt 1994).

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