

‘Mobilities, Knowledges, Politics’

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Long-Distance Family

Draft – not for quotation

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First English-written draft of the research plan:

LONG-DISTANCE FAMILY

We all born in a family. The family is the platform for the journey to the "rest of the life" and it is also a corner-stone for one's identity. Family ties bind us to the social groups, whether they are political, ethnic or religious groups and society as a whole. Through these relations and meaning-making we get understanding who we are and what the world is like.

Some times individuals break their family ties themselves, but also larger societal changes may deeply change our closest relations. One of the most important social factors that has changed the functions of the family-life is migration.

Migration after the Second World War – case Lapland

In Finland the population has centralised to the cities of Southern and Western Finland in two phases. In the so called "the Great Move" in the late 1960s and early 1970s especially young people from Northern and Eastern Finland moved to the cities in South and also to Sweden. For example in Lapland people still tell, what it felt like: "It was like people were leaving to the war: trains full of people, leaving their home-areas and relatives, without exactly knowing what was waiting for them."

From Lapland, which is the northernmost county in Finland, left thousands of young people because of the lack of the job opportunities. For example in two years, in 1969 the net migration was 8445 people and in 1970 it was 7668, which was really much in the county where was living about 200 000 people. The reason for "the Great Move" was that the baby-boom generation, born after the war, was starting their job career, small-scale farming was not able to give living for all of them and also other job opportunities were poor because the industry and public services were not developed in those days.

Since the early 1970s the net migration has been quite balanced, but usually negative in most of the years. The next migration movement began in the 1990s after the economic depression. Finland rose from the depression mainly because of the success in information technology (Nokia) and the production was situated in the southern areas and in the Oulu-region. Hence, net migration in Lapland has been negative since 1995, the population in the county is getting older and the future prospects especially in the Lappish country side are quite pessimistic. Those who have left Lapland are often young people, under 35 years, and leaving because of the job opportunities to the Oulu-region and to the Helsinki-region.

Migration has restructured Finnish social structure and the effects of the migration have been studied in several statistical research. Less attention has been paid to that how individuals have experienced their moving away from the home-area and how it has changed their family relations, socialization, identity and attitude to life and society as a whole.

This research aims to study how migration has changed the functions of the family, socialization and identities of the members of the families. The main questions are:

- How the migration has changed the *family's interaction*, when the family-members are living their every-day lives in long distance; dispersed around Finland (and Sweden).
- What is the *meaning of the family* for it's members in the situation, where family is dispersed within thousands of kilometres around Finland (and in Sweden, where part of the Laplanders moved in the Great Move).

Social capital, socialization and identity as the theoretical back-ground

Social capital is understood in this research as a capital, which consists of social relations and networks, which are defined by trust and reciprocity – or lack of them. Social capital, reciprocal relations where positive emotions like love and trust are shared, is fundamental for the well-being of an individual. (Sinkkonen-Tolppi 2002.) Concept of social capital leads to ask basic questions: what does the family mean to it's members and how has the interaction in the family changed because of the migration. How and when family-members are in touch and meet? Is the family where to turn to in the big moments of life, whether they are positive or negative? Who are the mediators, who tell the family-news and keep other members of the family up to date? What kind of relationships there are, for example between grandmother living in the small village in Eastern Lapland and grandchild born in the Swedish city? What kinds of roles different members of the family have when the family is living in long-distance?

Identity on the individual level refers to the personality and on the other hand to the different roles that the individual has in social realtions and society. Person's identity is on the one hand given: you are born in a certain family, in a certain place and also at the certain time – and these are the basic things that you can not choose or change. (Liebkind 1988, 66-67.) Also Berger and Luckmann point out that every one of us is born in a certain historical and social context, which is given. When significant others bring up a child they also socialize him/her to the society. The early years in the childhood are important when learning what the world is like, where to belong and how to be a member of the different kinds of groups and human society as a whole. (Berger & Luckmann 1994, 149-150.) As Berger and Kellner say it: "The private sphere includes a variety of social relationships. Among these, however, the relationships of the family occupy a central position and, in fact, serve as a focus for most of the other relationships (such as those with friends, neighbors, fellow members of religious and other voluntary associations)." (Berger & Kellner 1977, 181.)

On the other hand, identity is constantly constructed during the life-time: all the choices and for example memberships in different kinds of groups are the ways in which an individual changes his/her identity to the desired direction. (Liebkind 1988, 66-67.) Berger and Luckmann use the concept of secondary socialization for the process, where primarily socialized individual is searching his/her place in the objective social world. In some situations individual may search for a new identity so strongly that he/she has to go through a strong process of change by throwing all the decisive cornerstones away and learning a totally new way of constructing the reality: understanding him-/herself and the life and world with the help of new significant others. (Berger & Luckmann 1994, 177-179.)

Concept of identity leads to ask, what is the meaning of the family (and the given factors) in socialization during the life-time. For example, is there a contradiction between primary socialization in the childhood and secondary socialization in the adult days. Do, for example, the members of the baby-boom generations born in Lapland, but lived for example in Sweden for decades, define themselves as Laplanders or as Swedish? Or – has the family lost it's meaning as a platform of primary socialization and identity in these days, when children are getting a much wider understanding of the world already in the early years because of watching the TV and using the internet? Are the members of the family in these days more free to “decide” themselves, who they are and want to be?

Narrative analyses as the method of the research

Narrative analysis stresses the point that people's way of knowing and understanding themselves and their life is mostly put in the words – at least the way of sharing the emotions, experiences and knowledge happens usually by words. The world is understood by meanings, which people actively create, and the stories are the ways of telling, what the world is like and who am I (in my opinion). Hence, a construction of the identity and the family (and own place in it) has a narrative nature: “Every individual requires the ongoing validation of his world, including crucially the validation of his identity and place in this world, by those who are his truly significant others. [...] In this sense, it is proper to view the individual's relationship with his significant others as an ongoing conversation.” (Berger & Kellner 1977, 180.)

There are several stories about migration – and I want to hear some of them. The fact is that I have to “accept” that usually people want to tell stories that make sense: it was reasonable that children left to Sweden or that I moved to Sweden, etc. This is the problem, which I have to take account.

Families – three generations originally from Eastern Lapland

As my data I have chosen families from the Eastern Lapland, where the migration movement has been even more profound phenomena than in the Lapland as general. I have tried to find such families that their stories will describe the typical path of the life in Lapland after the Second World War.

The first generation is a couple, who have experienced the war in their adult life, built their home and small farm right after the war. Usually in Lapland, this generation has had 6-8 children, who are born year by year after the war.

The second generation grew up in the years of reconstruction after the war, have had their basic education and got adult in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Hence they belong to the Great Move –generation who moved for the work and better standard of living to the Southern Finland or Sweden.

The third generation is born in the 1970s and 1980s; they live in the Southern Finland or Sweden and for them Lapland is – I suppose – more or less a place for holiday, where grandmother and –father live and what is the theme of the stories of mother/father, when they are telling about their childhood.

I don't want to study only those who have left, because there has been also those, who have stayed at their home regions. What do you think a youngest sister, whose older brothers and sisters all left to Sweden? And what do you think those young adults, who have grown up in Eastern Lapland and left their home in the second migration movement in the end of 1990s. This gives me also an opportunity to compare, how the migration in the late 1960s and late 1990s differ: are the motives – and emotions and dreams – the same?

The state of the research

I have made two group-interviews: first with the first generation couple. Nine of their ten children left to Sweden in the years of the Great Move. Some of the children have returned back to Finland, but none to their home farm. In the interview situation was also their son, living in Sweden, and his wife, both of them were commenting the answers of grandmother and –father. In the second group-interview I met a couple from the second generation: they had left to Sweden in the late 1960s. They returned back to Lapland some years ago, but most of their children decided to stay in Sweden. The husband has written a book, *Vieras leipä – En Finne lgen!* about their life in the Sweden. You will hear about these two families, when we meet.

I was planning to do the research by interviewing only one family, but now I have changed my plans. I feel ethically problematic with that idea: usually there are sorrows, frustrations, disputes, black-sheeps, gossips etc. in the families – and maybe people do not understand that I am doing a book about them. I do not want to use their openness. Hence I will do interviews in three generations and try to find from the individual stories something that is common and shared: the story about migration – about leaving and staying, about dreams and reality - which is culturally common in Lapland.

I will do interviews during the summer-time and the research report will be written in next winter.

Literature

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