

Unit I 37: Cultural identity and hybridization tendencies

1. Summary

Starting from the personal, individual identity, it is shown that external influences and their processing strongly influence the identity core. Identity is constantly developed and changed. Every person performs a permanent "identity work" by adapting to changing situations. From the point of view of the environment, identity presents itself primarily as a criterion of assignment and exclusion. Either I belong to a group or I don't. It is not uncommon to try to counteract the loss of the "familiar" or of "home" by emphasizing collective aspects of identity. But this does not necessarily require backward-looking identity content - forward-looking, reinforced aspects of collective identity, for example in the sense of a social vision, also achieve the same goal.

2. Aspects of identity

Identity can be understood in very different ways. Every identity has two sides: An individual, personal side and a collective, group, ethnic, national and religious side.

2.1 On the concept of identity from the perspective of the individual

Gerhard Droesser (2009:145) places personal identity in close connection with personal autonomy: "The concept of identity is articulated in the field of meaning of 'autonomous personality'. 'Autonomy' is supposed to mean that a 'subject' holds itself responsible for its actions and that it is accepted and claimed by other 'subjects' as capable of acting and being accountable. ... Personality always develops 'holistically', as a structural project. It develops and experiences itself in the particular way of its worldview" (Droesser 2009:145).

Identity has a lot to do with trust: With trust in the group and in oneself. According to Hagenbüchle (2005:37), trust involves "three central aspects that only together make up the whole of the term: (1) self-trust, (2) trust in others, and (3) trust in political and constitutional institutions. When any one of these three elements is absent or severely

impaired, trust in the full sense of the word as basic mutual confidence can no longer be achieved..."

Anthony Wallace (2003:181) pointed out that a cultural crisis or personal shock can lead to a greater or lesser loss of identity, often associated with a period of depression and serious behavioral changes. This crisis can only be overcome with a renewed identification with a cultural system. According to Wallace (2003:164), an individual's identification with his or her culture can be interrupted in many ways. Usually, this is followed by a period of regression to infantile, early behavior. Strategies to deal with everyday situations that were successful before the crisis turn out to be more and more unsuccessful.

But what does personal identity actually mean? Anthony Wallace (2003:285) defined identity as follows: „By an identity we mean any image, or set of images, either conscious or unconscious, which individuals have of themselves. An image, in this sense may be recognized introspectively as an internal ‘visual’ or ‘verbal’ representation”.

Wallace (2003:286) distinguished four aspects of identity: feared identity, real identity, claimed identity, and ideal (idealized) identity.

Droesser (2009:149-152) distinguished an inner horizon and an outer horizon of personal identity. The inner horizon includes earlier, more or less intensively processed experiences: "As objects of self-interpretation, the 'landscapes' of inner experiences show up once; stepping back from the outside world, the permanent I is alone with them and has to cope with them alone. How one acted, how one was treated, what happened to us, what we let happen, leaves traces. The traces are signs of the constellations of meaning that have slipped from memory: individual words, fragments of images, remnants of feelings. They are the barbs that can pull conscious remembering down, below the surface, when the occasion is favorable" (Droesser 2009:149).

In addition to the inner horizon, each individual also possesses a reference to the social other, to the socio-cultural environment. Droesser calls this the outer horizon. The individual is constantly confronted with other living people, not only in his actions, but also in his

thinking and feeling. The individual "encounters the Other in real contexts and communications, in social and culturally general spaces" (Droesser 2009:151).

This means that each individual must continuously align his inner horizon and his outer horizon. This ability has been called "balancing identity" by the German sociologist Lothar Krappmann (1978). In a process that is never complete, each individual continuously updates aspects of his identity, presenting himself in such a way that he can be perceived and located by the environment. At the same time, he continuously works into his biography reactions of the environment to the aspects of identity he presents. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (2012:25) has suggested distinguishing between "identity" and "belonging." This is because the concept of identity leads to a dichotomous perception of the social world in terms of "in-group" and "out-group," whereas belonging "tends to express its situational, flexible, and multiple character" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2012:25). Whatever one may call the phenomenon, what is important is how flexible it is understood to be.

Seen in this light, identity is a process that is never completed. Or as Droesser/Lutz/Sautermeister (2009:299) paraphrase it: "'Identity' is thus a term for the fluid description with which an author seeks to grasp his self and what he makes his thing. Reflecting subject, reflected thing, their mediation in representation change in the events of life, which cannot be grasped as a whole, but in which each reflecting subject nevertheless has to contribute what is his freely and responsibly."

2.2 Collective Identity

Socio-cultural identity can be understood as an always provisional, i.e. constantly changing, product of social interactions. Or, in other words, every socio-cultural code continuously produces and influences the identity of the people who relate their actions to it, who thus regard this socio-cultural code as a reference code.

Werner Rammert (2001:11) defined collective identities as "the historical result of bonding practices, semantics, and institutional regimes in which a sense of we toward others is formed and consolidated, often unwittingly, through ritualized actions and schematized interpretations. They grow out of the collective interaction of competing groups in which self-images are interacted with ascriptions of others and institutionalized labeling."

The philosopher Alex Sutter (2004) distinguishes two conceptions of collective identity: "Two ways of talking about collective identities can be distinguished. The **first kind** assumes that it is possible to objectively grasp the identity of a particular collective by identifying the **essential characteristics** of the group. The approaches that share this presupposition are called '**essentialist**' (from essence = being, suchness). The **second type** starts from the social psychological fact that individuals identify with certain **group memberships**. If the **identification** with a certain group occurs more frequently, one speaks of the formation of a collective identity. The latter is understood as a social-psychological phenomenon in the context of social demarcation processes. Because 'collective identity' in this sense is **not something given but something made, such approaches are called 'constructivist'**. Instead of 'essentialist' and 'constructivist' approaches, one could also speak of **objectivist** and **intersubjective** approaches, because in the first case one is convinced that there is something like an **objectively tangible group identity** on the basis of a self-existence of the group, while in the second case 'group identity' exists only by means of the consciousness of the actors involved, so to speak, as a **collective fiction** (in this sense Benedict Anderson has characterized the nation as an "imaginary community"). Of course, the existence of groups is also reckoned with in the second approach. However, they are not regarded as objective phenomena like trees or cars, but as **intersubjective phenomena**, less comparable to the individual than to a legal category like property, which is also based on intersubjective recognition and which is also disputed in detail. Although these are unattractive terms anyway, in the following I use mainly the opposing expressions 'essentialist vs. intersubjective' for reasons of linguistic aesthetics. This means the same as 'essentialist vs. constructivist'" (Sutter 2004). Sutter thus contrasts an "objectivist" concept of identity, oriented toward the empirical properties of a group, with a concept of identity oriented toward "imagined properties."

According to Sutter, the objectivist concept of identity prevails in politics and in the public sphere. whereas in the social sciences, an identity concept oriented toward "imagined characteristics" has rather prevailed, but only since about the mid-1990s. Sutter (2004) speaks of a paradigm shift that not coincidentally coincides with the period of "ethnic" wars and massacres in the territory of former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and other states in Africa. "The paradigm shift should be understood as an attempt to distance oneself from a ... fatal terminology and to learn to understand how it is possible at all to mobilize such tremendous destructive energies with such seemingly harmless ideas" (Sutter 2004). In this sense, then, real processes of ethnicization have had an impact on conceptualization.

Werner Rammert (2001:12) sees collective identities as the collective work of the people involved: Collective identities are not planned, but "grow out of conflicts and compromises." They emerge in multistage processes: First as experimental action, then as a process of negotiation between different actors, and finally in the form of institutionalization. The central question of collective identity is: Who are we?

In recent times, there have been repeated, more or less deliberate, backward-looking identity constructions. A classic example is that of the former constituent republics of Yugoslavia: During the Bosnian War and the Kosovo War, there was a kind of redefinition of national identity, especially among emigrants: Until well into the 1990s, immigrants from the former Yugoslav republics still referred to themselves as "Yugoslavs," even though the Yugoslav state had long since collapsed. In the course of time, we repeatedly found in interviews that those affected now suddenly referred to Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia or Kosova as their homeland and as their country of origin. In response to corresponding questions, they told us: "I inevitably had to redefine myself".

Many so-called national identities are based on a national myth, often constructed after the fact: For example, the story of Wilhelm Tell's rebellion against Gessler is essentially an invention of the Swiss bourgeoisie of the 19th century. The same applies to the much-cited Rütli oath of the three original Swiss cantons. The Amselfeld myth in Serbia also served for such a kind of retrospective identity construction.

According to Hermann Pius Siller (1999:19), man finds "his concrete, historical shape, his identity in the culture of his group, his society." In the recent past, the cultural places that help people to find identity have become more and more numerous, but also more and more diverse. Our society today is characterized by a pervasive diversity or heterogeneity. This means that identity-creating places, events, or rituals have become increasingly partial, diverse, and relative. Our society is - according to Siller (1999:19) - characterized by accelerated socio-cultural change, by cultural "hegemonies" and by cultural "voids".

Thus we are faced with the problem that the construction (and deconstruction!) of identities is always also a question of power: decisions are made about belonging to and exclusion from a group, ways of life are prescribed (or outlawed), and aspects of identity are instrumentalized politically. Mahmoud Bassiouni (2012:184) has rightly pointed out - with regard to Islam - that discourses of identity are always power-dependent discourses that emerge from a particular relationship of domination. These identity discourses serve "the purpose ... for the dominant group to confirm the position of its own identity (identity preservation), and [provide] the dominated group with a framework ... to determine its own identity" (Bassiouni 2012:184). In this process, according to Bassiouni 2012:184, "the roles of the discourse participants and their self-understanding...are already predetermined by the discourse structure."

According to Siller, what is most serious, in addition to conflicts with hegemonic cultures and in addition to the change between cultures that develop and change rapidly, are "cultural holes into which people can fall when they come into living spaces that are hardly shaped culturally anymore" (Siller 1999:21). In such life situations, there are no longer any communities that provide orientation, and further opportunities and future perspectives are lost.

Case study

"The rural exodus and the move to the slums and barrios of urban agglomerations (São Paulo, Lima, Nairobi, Manila) mostly mean the loss of affiliations to family, village community and tribe, the loss of social relationships, of language skills, of traditional life orientations, of action orientations and moral concepts. Because people do not find what they were promised in the media in the new living spaces, a cultural hole is created. Cultural substitutes have to be created. Street children organize themselves and their lives, but without a temporal perspective."

Source: Siller 1999:21.

In the process, rural exodus, urbanization, labor migration, flight movements, mass tourism, Western standards of life and culture mediated by the media lead to an "abrupt cultural change, loss of culture and confrontation with other cultural worlds that seem to offer more" (Siller 1999:23).

2.2.1 Collective identities as a means of demarcation

Collective identities are products of political processes. They are neither natural nor static (cf. Aronoff 2008:255). Collective identities are constantly renegotiated within certain boundaries and are continuously changing.

Identity processes are always about drawing boundaries between "us" and "the others." Philipp Prin (2001:53) showed this very nicely in the identity-creating travel activities of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century:

"The art of bourgeois travel was not simply to get from one place to another, but to combine movement with a particular gaze. This gaze allowed travelers to locate their selves within the modern boundaries of space and time. Accordingly, their travels were not so much departures into or escapes from modernity, but a constant engagement with modernity. Although they did not always travel for their education, recreation, or pleasure, they were able to transform almost any kind of travel into a 'school of vision' Thus even business trips could lead out of the 'dark dungeon' of everyday life and the 'walling in' of the familiar. But what comes after crossing the border, whether understood as departure or escape? A freer, happier, different world, promises bourgeois travel. A disciplined, backward-looking, unreal world, laments some critics."

Source: Prin 2001:53.

Collective identity processes create not only spatial boundaries, but also temporal ones. Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix (2001:236) illustrated this with a small anecdote: "The French Prime Minister Jospin made a plea for the Europeanization of youth in Potsdam in 1999. After the lecture, a young French woman who had been living in Berlin for ten years asked how it could be possible, in view of Jospin's plea for 'overcoming national egoisms,' that her application for a position as language attaché in the diplomatic service had been rejected by the French Foreign Ministry on the grounds that she could not represent France because she had spent too much time in Germany. That sounded like a fairy tale, replied a dismayed prime minister - and asked the prevented diplomat for a cross-border Europe for a clarifying "tête-à-tête at the exit".

The fact that everyone belongs to a multitude of groups and thus also possesses very different identity components and fragments also leads to the fact that one can speak of "multiple identities" (cf. Spickard 2013), which focus on one or another group affiliation depending on the situation. It stands to reason that this can lead to conflicts of various kinds: These can be inner-psychic conflicts ("who am I?"), affiliations to different groups ("does he/she belong to us or to the others?"), or even about applicable rules and socio-cultural codes.

But even small-scale boundaries can sometimes come into clinch with outdated notions of identity:

Case study: Identity of origin

A few years ago, I was invited by the integration officer of a neighboring canton to submit an offer as a scientific companion in the development of a cantonal integration model - i.e. for the coexistence of the foreign and Swiss population. My offer was considered valid and my qualifications very good. However, I was not awarded the contract by the responsible head of office, with the unofficial reason that there was too much resentment in her canton against people from my canton of residence and that she did not know how to justify my appeal. Thereupon I asked her how she then imagined an integration of people from different countries, if she could not even employ a specialist from the neighboring canton of the same country. The absurdity of the situation did not seem to strike the head of the office.

Identity formation and development always has a strategic aspect, that is, a goal or intention.

Collective identities become important whenever they are threatened or appear to be threatened (Aronoff 2008:255). In such situations, myths about common origins are often invoked or even reconstructed. In contrast to the common view that cultural identity must always be backward-looking, progressive identity aspects or content can also lead to a strengthened sense of we, to more solidarity, and to a deepened cultural identity. Although in recent years cultural identity has been instrumentalized primarily by bourgeois-national forces, each social movement has created its own form of cultural or collective identity. For example, intercultural movements, active migration groups such as the "secondos" or creative youth movements can also lead to entirely new identities and socio-cultural self-understandings.

2.3 Hybridization tendencies

Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink has rightly pointed out that interculturality does not only show itself in the form of intercultural processes, but in the form of mixing and hybridization processes - also called métissage, creolization, syncretism and crossover (cf. Nederveen 2009:55) - between different socio-cultural contexts. Expressions of such tendencies are, for example:

Results of cultural hybridization processes:

- "- phenomena of language mixing, as represented by the creole languages of the Caribbean, composed of French, English, Spanish and African elements in the creole languages of the Caribbean;
- Forms of cultural mixing or cultural syncretism, for example in the clothing (Afro-look), architecture (Spanish-Moorish style), or music (reggae);
- Processes of creative integration of elements of foreign cultures, which can be seen in numerous cultural fields, such as in literature (reception of foreign cultural works, such as the reception of Shakespeare in France and Germany) in theater (e.g., the creative integration of elements of Asian dance theater) or in the visual arts (e.g., influence of African art on the avant-gardes of modernity, such as Pablo Picasso)."

Source: Lüsebrink 2008:14.

Cultural hybridization processes were first described under the term "métissage," which was used to describe colonial merging processes in the Portuguese linguistic and cultural area. In

contrast to German colonialism, which was based on the idea of strict racial and cultural segregation, the concept of colonial cultural mixing was advocated as a unifying national ideology, especially in the French colonial empire, but also in the former Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking colonies of South America that had become independent (cf. Lüsebrink 2008: 14/15). It should be borne in mind, however, that such hybridization processes were usually not balanced but one-sided, i.e. they were accompanied by an overemphasis on colonial cultural aspects and a simultaneous devaluation and suppression of indigenous cultural content. To this day, in many Latin American countries, indigenous people and mestizos are less respected than the white population groups, most of whom represent the upper class.

Conversely, the idea of cultural mixing has also been presented as a cultural resource. For example, Bolívar Echeverría, a professor of philosophy at the Universidad Nacional de México UNAM, developed his own concept of integration, which he called *mestizaje cultural*, meaning cultural mixing (see Gandler 2001). Echeverría's surprising basic thesis is that the southern countries of the Americas (Latin America) are more modern than societies in the United States or Europe. While "pre-modern societies" defended their "cultural purity," modern societies were characterized by their openness to other social entities. But because the countries of Europe and North America close themselves off to immigration from the South, they act - according to Echeverría - pre-modern. In contrast, countries like Mexico or Brazil, which officially promote a policy of ethnic mixing, are more modern because they promote "*mestizaje cultural*" (cultural mixing). Although Echeverría must be countered that, structurally speaking, this cultural mixing takes place in most Latin American countries more on paper than socio-demographically, the line of thought is nevertheless interesting. It suggests that cultural mixing tends to open up new resources in social, economic and sociopolitical terms, while isolation tends to have the opposite effect. See also ► Unit I 32: "Integration and Participation.

According to Hagenbüchle (2005:89), "Since Salman Rushdie introduced mongrelization as a critical concept in literature and Homi K. Bhabha elaborated it theoretically in the concept of hybridity, the idea of a socio-cultural mix has become a guiding paradigm in the postmodern and postcolonial discussion, even the ideal of socio-cultural coexistence. What Bhabha has in

mind is a 'third space', a kind of neutral territory between the collision-prone parties on this side and on the other side of a cultural border of whatever nature. Bhabha understands the contemporary human being as a "border crosser between cultures".

In today's globalized world, hybridization processes occur almost continuously. On the one hand, this means that cultural elements and fragments are merged with components of other cultures - and often an innovative, new culture or socioculture emerges from this. On the other hand, hybridization processes lead to fear: fear of losing one's own culture that one has brought with one, fear of the new, fear and uncertainty about the future: previously valid rules - or socio-cultural codes - are suspended, new ones emerge. One kind of reaction by insecure people are nationalistic, racist and fundamentalist tendencies: This involves pretending or attempting to counter losses of identity by recalling "national," "religious" or "native" values. But because these traditional ideas, values and norms originate from a time that has little to do with today's situation, something like a gap is opening up. It is not uncommon for populists or extremists to try to close this gap, i.e. the increasing divergence between today's heterogeneous and intercultural situation on the one hand and the mostly one-dimensional and unchanging values and norms propagated by nationalists or "religionists" on the other, through violence, terrorism or appropriation. That this can never work should be clear.

2.4 Identity and ethics

Amin Maalouf (2000:13), in his essay "Murderous Identities," sought "to understand what drives so many people today to commit crimes in the name of their religiously, ethnically, nationally, or otherwise determined identities." In doing so, Maalouf (2000:31) criticizes the "notion that reduces identity to a single affiliation, driving people into partisan, sectarian, intolerant, imperious, sometimes suicidal attitudes, and not infrequently turning them into murderers or followers of murderers." In contrast, Maalouf argues that it is not desirable to have an identity that is fixed for all time with compartmentalization against all others: "As soon as, on the other hand, one understands one's identity as the sum of diverse affiliations, some of which are linked to the history of a people and others are not, some of which are linked to a religious tradition and others are not, as soon as one recognizes in oneself, in

one's ancestry, one's biography diverse components, diverse mixtures, diverse intersections, subliminal and contradictory influences, a changed relationship to others as well as to one's own 'tribe' emerges."

This means that one-dimensional, fixed and unquestionable assignments and determinations to a certain group - and only to it - can in no way express the complexity of human existence. As we know, the actualization of identity happens situationally, differently and always related to the momentary socio-cultural context. This ability to activate aspects of one's multi-layered identity at different times and places is a crucial component of being human. It is also, at the same time, an enormous achievement of individuals.

Conversely, an individual who ties his identity one-dimensionally and rigidly to some group, worldview, or socio-cultural code cuts himself off from countless other possibilities of his human existence. In addition, it is much more quickly ready to act against other people, to use violence against them or to appropriate them. Therefore, any enlightened state and democratic society would have to be interested in enabling its members to adopt and express a large number of situational and partial aspects of identity.

Maalouf (2000:143) therefore advocates the concept of a diverse, multi-layered identity with individual, social and national aspects: "It must be ensured that no one feels excluded from the common civilization whose birth we are witnessing, that everyone can find in it his own language and his own symbols of his culture, that everyone can still identify at least a little with what is new in the world that surrounds him tomorrow, instead of seeking refuge in an idealized past."

3. Control Questions

1. Name the most important aspects of personal or individual identity.
2. What is meant by the term "balancing identity"?
3. Why is identity always movement?
4. What are the two basic understandings of collective identity according to Sutter?

5. In what way do identities create boundaries?
6. Explain the importance of identity strategies.
7. What is meant by hybrid identities?
8. Why are one-dimensional, fixed identities ethically problematic?

4. Links

Identität: Definition 1

<http://www.stangl.eu/psychologie/definition/Identitaet.shtml>

Identität: Definition 2

<http://lexikon.stangl.eu/522/identitaet/>

Über Multikulturalität im Unterschied zu Multikulturalismus: Kulturelle Identität

Text von Rupert Scholz, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_14303-544-1-30.pdf?080822122936

Eidgenössische Kommission für Migrationsfragen EKM: Identität

<http://www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/de/home/identitaet---zusammenhalt/identitaet.html>

Kulturelle Identität und Jugendkultur Hintergrundthema

http://www.kinofenster.de/filmeundthemen/ausgaben/kf0704/kulturelle_identitaet_und_jugendkultur/

Eigene Identität finden und verwirklichen

<http://www.humanistische-aktion.de/identi.htm>

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