



Identity Spaces

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Abstract. Social space and identity are specifically connected. The formation of identity as a process of identification can be closely related to the space where it takes place. However, it leads to the creation of symbolic spaces instead of always adopting established ones. Identity spaces as well as the places for change or resistance are spaces creating alternate social orderings. In this essay, I intend to focus on continuities and departures related to the space involving the formation of identity. On the other hand, space identity and its community buildings, its organizational role and level will be presented through the examination of a youth subculture.

Keywords: identity, place, individualization, young people.

Introduction

Identity is not only achieved through identification with groups of individuals who share a common outlook, but also through recognizable performative repertoires that are expressive and embodied. Ritual processes, such as rites of passage pilgrimages, through which new identities are created, stress the importance of the spatiality of performance in the process of identity formation, and can be taken as a model for contemporary expressive identities. In the case of small-scale societies that much of the anthropological literature is originally set out to describe, rituals involving transgressions can take place without endangering the order of these societies, because the low level of social differentiation means that such transgressions, when organized through rites of passage in distinctly demarcated liminal zones, serve to reproduce the daily life of those societies, rather than endanger it. Such spaces, “heterotopia” as Foucault (1986) calls them, serve the purpose of providing a distinctive place in which social structures are challenged by the communities of intensely affective forms of sociality in order that the structure of rules, norms and accepted social identities may be renewed and reproduced.

The integration of identity is more than the identificatory performance of childhood. Identity is the increasing conviction about the evidence of the

individual's self-identity corresponding with the identity and continuity he suggests (Erikson 1997, 37). Thus the formation of identity can be considered as a long interiorizing process (Buda 1986, 140; Kelemen 1981, 106; Mérei 1989, 248). Through the interiorizing process, the personality is exposed to different conflicts and imbalance that should be interpreted and processed by the individual so that he/she can develop. Consequently, the development of individuals go through three important phases full of contradictions: the level of personalization, the level of socialization, respectively, the level of individualization (Kelemen 1981, 110). All three phases are vital in the age of adolescence when, besides the learning of gender roles and the realization of community expectations, inner control more and more prevails. The values of the individual are closely related to his/her orientation as well as the sphere of interests and the motivation system choosing role models and lifestyles in accordance with them. The process of self-identification is called the crisis of identity when through an experimental period the testing of different gender roles, behaviour types, ideologies and orientations are approved by the society (Atkinson 1995, 376).

Self-identity should be based on self-esteem that is formed and developed through a long learning process affected by expectations of parents, school and workplace as well as age groups (Mérei 1989, 228). The rewarding value of how to live up to the expectations influences the choice of the individual in case of conflicts, and young people tend to comply with the expectations of the age groups (McCandless 1976, 145–176). The values of age groups play an important role in the formation of the ideology of young people, truly reflected by their means of identification and cultural consumption (Vidra 2006, 29–30).

The role of the environment

The *Image of the City* (Lynch 1960) was a source of inspiration for behavioural geographers throughout the 1960s and 1970s. They picked up on the 'mental maps' which Lynch's researches had solicited from the residents of three North American cities. Although Lynch admitted that his interviewees were hardly representative, geographers were excited by the idea that the environment was acted on, not in terms of its physical reality, but in terms of the mental pictures that people had built up of that environment. People did not live in the city as such, but inside the mental picture that they had built up of the city. Lynch uses a wealth of information, derived essentially from anthropology and psychology to describe the tremendous adaptability of human beings to their environments, but also their ability to give meaning to those environments and to change them. Lynch describes also the ways in which different people survive in extremely hostile or disorientating environments (e.g., deserts, jungles, ice fields, etc.), and

even in such conditions they are able to shape these environments. The evidence demonstrates, he argues, that there is a two-way process between the observer and the observed in building 'the image' of the environment (Lynch 1960, 4–53).

While there is no direct link between any physical environment and the systems of thought that people used to get around and make use of (urban) space, Lynch suggests that there are common features: first, these systems of orientation are both emotional and practical, they make people feel safe and enable their survival; second, they are generalized, coherent and selective; and third, they relate to the body – not just in term of what is seen, heard and felt, but also in terms of body needs.

The development of social and personal identity can be considered as a much complex, multidimensional process. Place identity consists of a lot of emotions, cognitions and bonds of belonging connected to the place where the person lives. This cognitive structure allows the person to recognize the properties of environments, and helps the perception of environmental stability and environmental safety. People may describe and determine themselves on the basis of their belonging to different places, and this way it becomes a component of our personal identity (Casakin and Bernardo 2012, 36).

Identity means being able to identify a feature (i.e. identity means the object's difference from other objects), while structure means the object's spatial relationship or pattern in relation to others. Meanwhile, the object has meaning for the observer, whether this meaning is practical or emotional. Despite Lynch's avowed and repeated aim of building cities for enjoyment, he retreats from analyzing the meaning of the basic elements of the cityscape, concentrating instead on identity (difference) and structure (spatial relationships) (Pile 1996, 220).

Self, expressive identities

The cultural relativity of concepts of the self is by now widely recognized among sociologists. Beyond this, however, there are different theories about just what concept of personhood is indeed characteristic to different eras and/or cultures. And when we move to theories about precisely what the 'contemporary' or 'western' (or, alternatively, the 'modern' or 'postmodern') sense of self/identity essentially comprises, it starts getting highly controversial (Mackay 1993, 98). One such theory envisages non-western and non-industrial cultures as essentially holistic or collective, contrasting with the rational and individualistic concept of the self in the modern industrial West, a view enunciated by Mauss among many others. This has long been an influential model. It is, however, now under challenge. First, it is held to invoke outdated evolutionary and ethnocentric views of human history (a criticism I would strongly endorse). In addition, there

is the argument that some concept of individual personhood is in fact found very widely rather than confined to the West (Carrithers, Collins and Lukes 1985, Cohen 1994). An alternative, partly overlapping, theory has proposed that there is a particular sense of fragmentation of the self in western countries in the 1990s. The suggestion is that people are nowadays especially concerned to make and remake identities, which are more fleeting, fragile and perhaps illusory because of the fragmentation of contemporary ideas and institutions. Some theorists, notably Giddens (1991), develop this further. Giddens builds on his view of ‘late modernity’ as characterized by risk, uncertainty and rupture, to suggest that a parallel characteristic is the development of the self as a ‘reflexive project’ with revisable narratives of self-identity, as individuals negotiate their lifestyles among a diversity of individual options: a self-identity has to be created and more or less continually reordered against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions.

Expressive identities are not only associated with the formalistic issues of the minority rights of activists or others that they wish to represent, but with the idea of the Other as a symbol of identification around which their own identities are expressed. First nation peoples, oppressed minorities and ethnic groups, those which cannot have a voice—such as animals or parts of the natural world that are subject to the uncaring instrumentalist practices of industry, science and agribusiness—are all a source of identification through which these identities are expressed (Hetherington 1998, 71).

Talking about “identity” is as common as it is ambiguous. Based on social theories, identity can be grouped under three categories: human, social, and personal. Human identity means the way people see themselves and others. Personal identity can be said to be the one particular view of people that differentiates one person from the in-group of another (Gudykunst and Kim 1997), while social identity refers to the common (shared) views about in-groups (Udrea and Corbu 2011, 67).

Nowadays, within the process of constant change and reconfiguration of the political, economic and socio-cultural surrounding, the search for national and transnational identity has intensified. People within the states of Europe are challenged by a growing need to legitimize and redefine their identity as well as their position. Therefore, the academic debate on identity (in general) and on European identity (in particular) have become a topical subject for researchers in different fields. Researchers consider identity as a process subject to change, constructed and renegotiated in interactions when individuals try to emphasize the various layers of their identity at a time, choosing and oscillating between their multiple identifications. The existence of the Other allows humanity to be divided into at least two groups: one that represents the norm, the rule, and whose identity is valued, and another, defined by its faults, discriminated and

devalued. Consequently, other-ness and we-ness are two inseparable sides of the same aspect. The Other only exists in relation to the Self, and vice versa (Udrea 2011, 1–2).

Identity and cultural transformation

Identity formation occurs within communities, but in the late twentieth century the factors that shape identities increasingly transcend the boundaries of locale. As researchers use the term, identity refers to a person's sense of inclusion in (or exclusion from) a range of social roles and ways of being, both 'real' (those derived from lived experience) and 'imagined' (those encountered in realms beyond the everyday: tales, religious epics, mass media, etc.). As a person's frame of reference expands beyond the boundaries of his/her own lived experience, via such avenues as education, travel and consumption of mass media, categories of being multiply into a plethora of 'possible lives' desirable and abhorrent, attainable and out of reach (Liechty 1995, 166). Rather than seeing identity as a 'thing' I prefer a model in which a person may have many identities encompassing many ways of being, within and between which there is no necessary consistency or logic. Identities may be claimed or ascribed and hence can change depending on the extent of an individual's authority in any given social context. Identities may be lived or imagined; while some identities are daily manifested in such things as labour and gender roles, other identities may never be actualized, yet exist in the imagination as potentialities or desired ways of being. Identity formations are never stable; they constantly change as people move through life cycles or through cultural landscapes in which they encounter (and must learn to function in) institutions and social relations based on a variety of social values and epistemic frames. Identity formation is a process and identity formations are always 'in the making' as subjects move through time and space (Pearce 1996, 7).

The self is a phenomenon of the human mind based on reflexive actions, stemming from a person's interactions with others. The self consists of two components: the "I" and the "me" (Mead 1934). The "I" (or subject) is the dynamic and spontaneous aspect of the self that constitutes the individual as knower and actor. The "me" (or object) is all the learned perspectives. Identities based on role relationships are the most central in the theories that stress internalization of identity meaning into the self-structure. Role-identity can be defined as a social position a person holds in a larger social structure. Identities can be based on perceived membership in a socially meaningful category (e.g., Arab or American) or on actual membership in a bounded, interconnected social group (Owens, Robinson, Smith-Lovin 2010, 479–480).

Individualization

The idea behind the hypothesis of individualization of lifestyles is that traditional socio-economic factors increasingly lose their significance in the choice of lifestyle: the choice becomes ever more personal. Fornas has attempted here as much as possible to base his discussion on lifestyles rather than on socio-economic factors, in order to give this hypothesis a chance. However, his analysis is limited by the fact that it covers a short period of time: the empirical material he has utilized extends from 1986 to 1991. In relation to the sorts of enormous changes addressed by the individualization thesis, this is doubtless unsatisfactory, but also difficult to do anything about. The analysis he offers can at least provide a certain amount of knowledge about the situation at present. Looking at the material from 1991, it is clear that the traditional structures live on. The probability that a young person from the working class will become a regular theatregoer is much lower than it is for someone from the cultural middle class. However, it should be recalled that the existing connections are not stronger than the fact that the differences within the respective classes are greater than the similarities. The various lifestyle orientations must be considered open: youth with similar orientations do not all come from the same backgrounds. The structures are in no way determining (Fornas and Bolin 1995, 138). If we add the material from 1986, one anticipates changes during this five-year period. Wholly in line with the individualization hypothesis, one expects the traditional socio-economic factors' significance in the choice of lifestyle to have weakened. However, the changes are not particularly great. The greatest difference is that the relationship to TV among the less and highly educated and among the working class and cultural middle class seems to be more similar. The distaste of the well-educated for more vulgar entertainment is no longer so total. These tendencies are not entirely clear; other studies have pointed in another direction. But the tendency does not in itself seem wholly unreasonable in the light of, among other things, changes in what TV has on offer. Thus, the hypothesis about augmented individualization during recent years is not strongly supported by the empirical material. The prerequisites for choosing lifestyles are still quite structured. If the possibilities for movements in social space and in the lifestyle field are increasing, then they are doing so relatively slowly. All this, of course, does not mean that the hypothesis is wrong, but Fornas' analysis suggests that it cannot be taken as read. Are there no changes in the lifestyle field? It may be so that young people still choose their lifestyles in accord with what other young people with corresponding positions in the social space do. But it is interesting that leisure seems increasingly heterogeneous. Young people have diverse leisure styles, and differences in style increase with age (Fornas and Bolin 1995, 138-139).

Young people tend to have more leisure time in all societies than adults, which is a key for the structuring of their later life course transitions. Many

researchers considered the expansion of youth leisure time activities as a positive development. Early studies connected different leisure activities to the social background, while others documented how young women occupy the space at home listening to music and reading, while males tend to spend more time away from home. Young people have occupied more and more of the public places by their leisure time activities, however, the number of young people choosing home-based free-time activities, such as watching TV or surfing Internet, is on the increase (Cieslik and Simpson 2013, 61–63). Media have held a considerable and growing place in the social environment of industrial society in recent decades (Arnett 1995; Dubow, Huessmann and Greenwood, 2006), creating a new world of social communications that transcends traditional boundaries of time and space, creating new paths for social relations, affecting lifestyles, socialization, and communication processes and the construction of identity itself.

The formation of the Self is a central part of the socialization process. Identity implies both resonance and difference; it is the result of a process which allows the individual to feel part of a social group and be recognized, and, at the same time, to understand themselves as someone unique.

Studies focus on identity formation in young people across multiple media contexts, in general, and on the influence of digital contexts on youth identity construction, in particular. These analyses explore the way in which the Internet is a place for youth and adolescents searching for their identity and the impact of interpersonal relationships and digital media use on adolescents' Self (Pattaro 2015, 308).

Youth and adolescents are engaged in complex processes of identity work to locate themselves in social worlds that are predominantly defined by school, family and peers. It is clear, however, that this process is not just about the experience in the sphere of everyday life, but also involves the interaction with new media.

Group identities: the generation of the shopping malls

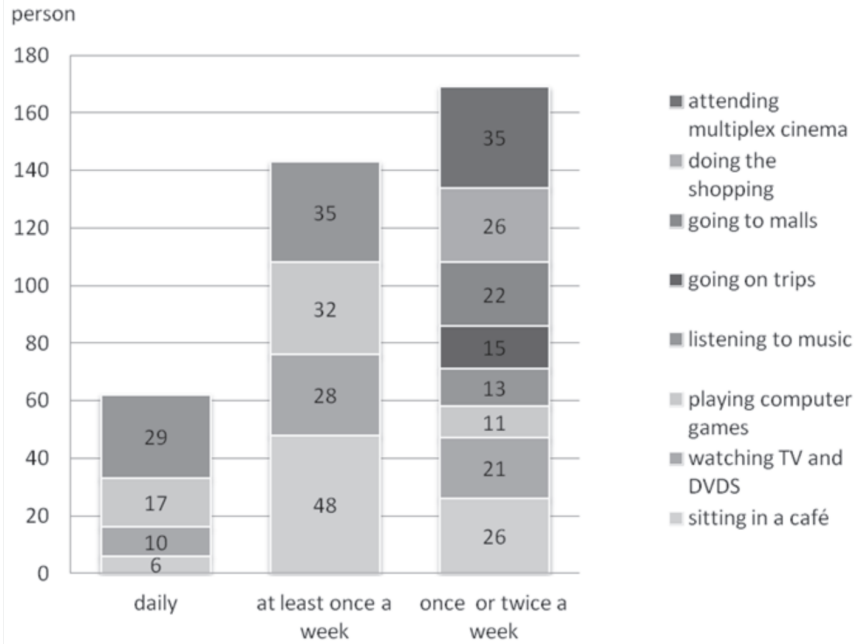
The identity forming, community organizing influence of local and public spaces is evident, especially amongst the youth. The peer group spaces definitely influence the adolescent identity formation during everyday life. In the context of our empirical research, the aim of the questionnaire survey was mainly to explore if in the life of those questioned the shopping mall appears as a leisure-recreational-social-cultural place, and if so, how they can be described. Furthermore, we wondered which factors of the background variables (family, leisure, media, pocket-money, friends, living space, demographics, etc.) influence significantly the plaza-use assumed by us. We take the Budapest secondary school students

as the basic multitude for the sample; the total sample consisted of 289 persons. Our investigations show that the socializing, identification function of shopping centers—as places for leisure activities—is built on value-cores produced as a result of primary socialization playing a role in the socialization of youth as a secondary factor. In accordance with this correlation system, the “success” of primary socialization determines value, norm and model mediation of secondary socialization. The value world of plazas, being a manipulative and cherishing illusion, is only risky for youth if a stable value basis is not developed in them in the course of former socialization by means of which they can differentiate the reality from fiction and the true value from that which doesn’t even exist. On the other hand, if the routes of former socialization “functioned” well, young people are “capable of creating reality in this dream-like world” and excellently enjoy themselves within it. Consequently, establishments contribute to the socialization of youth when using plazas “in this kind of way of rational character.” These establishments have the most obvious socializing function in the process of becoming consumers. Youth can be socialized by plazas to spend the leisure time intelligently and fully, connecting with each other (“everything in one place” principle), which can be implemented in a safe, pleasant, cultural environment. We assume, that if the plaza-use is involved in the leisure culture of youth so consciously, its socializing role will continue to influence also the leisure of the adulthood. On the other hand, centers have specified behaviour rules, shopping malls are not just places for coming together, but they are used and practiced in specific ways. Thus, youth are aware of the fact that spending leisure time in malls, is also one of the forms of social activities and its formal framework is determined by specific social behaviour models. Therefore, the dimension of socialization appears on the level of social skills. Youth can acquire social behaviour forms (courting, making contacts, etc), trying to play different roles (Vidra 2006).

According to our research, most adolescents enjoy listening to music (29 persons), playing on computers (17 persons), watching TV/DVDs (10 persons) or just “sitting in a café” (6 persons) in the company of friends as daily activities (Graph 1.).

About 48 persons out of the interviewees sit in a café at least once a week with friends, while 35 persons listen to music, 32 persons play computer games, and 28 persons watch movies. It is obvious that adolescents hardly ever attend classical music concerts or theatre plays, and other forms of consuming “deep culture” are less typical among them (museums/exhibitions/cinemas). Mall attendance is equally valued in the case of those visiting shopping centers once a week and in the case of those who are doing so more times a week. Leisure time activities performed once or twice per month reflected figures according to presumption/expectations. It is obvious, however, that activities related to shopping malls

are the most favoured ones (multiplex cinema: 35 persons; sitting in a café: 26 persons; doing the shopping: 26 persons), but the mere activity of “plaza-going” is also quite popular (22 persons).



Graph 1. *Time proportion of leisure time activities performed in the company of friends*

“The WestEnd is quite a good place to be, both in terms of its architecture and its appearance. It’s modern and really nice. I think WestEnd fits in with its environment. I can’t explain it. There is a wider space, a wider latitude and I can feel more free. After all, the sun can shine into the fourth floor, the inner space is bigger and you can walk longer there.”

“I mostly go to Duna Plaza. It is the closest mall to go, anyway. I don’t really like travelling, so it is the most comfortable for me to go there. That’s why I chose it.”

These figures are followed by the data on other free time activities: watching TV/DVDs (21 persons), going on trips (15 persons), listening to music (13 persons), and playing computer games (11 persons). As stated above, classical music concerts, cinemas, museums, or exhibitions are rarely visited by young people (Vidra 2006, 83).

Conclusion

Identity is also about spatiality. In part, this means that identity involves the identification with particular places, whether local or national. It also means that certain spaces act as sites for the performance of identity. I am interested in both of these. Through the creation of spaces as special, safe, comfortable, useful or violent environments, young people constructed, confirmed and changed aspects of their identity. These places simultaneously offered young people resources for constructing identities.

The socializing functions of the shopping malls can be perceived as *environmental factors* which strongly influence the staying of youth in shopping centers. The mall is a trendy place and has some environmental elements which are in accordance with the lifestyle of youth; on the other hand, it provides an excellent venue for socialization. Experiences of “I like being here” and “I like this place” arising in them considerably depend on the complex entirety of these factors. The main results of the research on the environmental factors of shopping centers were that they proved the emotional “excitement” and this then influenced positively the length of time spent there. People spend more time in shopping malls when they perceive this environment as a pleasant, interesting, exciting place (Wakefield and Baker 1998). For the youth it is important that the place to be spectacular, exciting, colourful; it should be rich in information and should allow the easy and fast information processing. Once they like this place, they will spend good and pleasant time there. Thus, one of the most important tasks of the managers of shopping centers is to initiate studies and surveys in order to identify those environmental factors which have an influence on experiencing this place pleasantly. As young people spend quite a lot of time in these centers, sellers have to take their active attendance into account. When planning establishments, the demand of this age-group should be taken into consideration, and their design should be done to be exciting and attractive for young people (Taylor and Cosenza 2002). “Place-theories” in the field of anthropology, communication studies and architecture are important viewpoints for connecting places to human activities. Such theories show that interactions, meanings, memories and identifications are formed during the course of place use. Although malls create an artificial world that often seems to be sterile, in the view of the youth they unambiguously become important places. They play a role in the formation and mediation of identity, and are functioning as sites for social interactions.

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