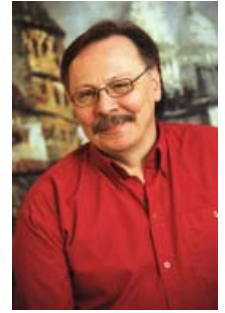


Migration, small municipalities and the transition in the forms of social capital



Esko Ovaska

Summary

A robust migration changes the local social structure and there is some evidence that migration might have an influence on social capital as well. The implications of using an analysis based on social capital are significant, especially in Finland, following the adoption of a new regional policy in the 1990's, which emphasises the role of regional growth centres as promoters of economy and welfare in the entire county. In this article, PhD Esko Ovaska examines migration to the countryside and its consequences to the services and local social systems in small municipali-

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ties, and the relationships between migration and changes in the social capital.

Introduction

During the 1990's, a new regional development policy was adopted in Finland. Regional development policy was earlier based on direct state subsidies for municipalities. According to the new policy, in addition to the direct support of municipalities, the state has concentrated more and more on promoting the development of specific growth centres and regional centres formed and influenced by the biggest cities. The aim of this policy has been the hope that the regional centres would accelerate business and entrepreneurship, and through these create wealth in the region and welfare for the citizens, not only of the biggest centres but of the municipalities in the surrounding countryside as well.

The policy described above has promoted a robust nation-wide migration during the 1990's. The dominant feature in Finland's recent regional development has been the concentration of both economic activity and population into the biggest cities. Till the beginning of the new millennium, all

the biggest Finnish cities and most important province centres were the target of an inflow of population while according to some estimations about the extent of migration (cf. Hanell et al. 2002), up to 90 % of Finnish territory suffered from the outflow of population.

Migration has been very selective; most of the people likely to move have been young adults. This has had disastrous consequences especially in out-migration areas. Broadly speaking Finland has become split into flourishing areas and stagnating areas; the successful areas are located in Southern and Western Finland, whereas the stagnating areas are located in Eastern and Northern Finland. Since the depression of the early 1990's till the end of the millennium, the areas with the largest concentration of economic activity and people, and the municipalities in their very vicinity, have benefited the most from economic growth.

The municipalities with strong outflow of population suffer financial problems in funding services because the demand has not decreased but the tax income has. As a consequence, especially small municipalities in the periphery have significant problems in or-

ganising different welfare services, including those that municipalities have to provide according to Finnish legislation. However, migration has caused problems not only in municipalities with outflow of population; in municipalities with inflow the balance of demand and supply of services has been difficult to maintain.

The development described above has been the topic of several studies conducted and published at the turn of the millennium (cf. *Sosiaalibarometrit 1997–2002*, *Kahtiajakautuva Suomi* -project by Stakes, see Kainulainen et al. 2001; Heikkilä et al. 2002). According to these reports, regionally unequal development has taken place and the welfare of the population has been affected all according to the kind of municipality and the part of the country they live in. Social problems have become regionally differentiated.

Briefly stated, there are three kinds of municipalities: in city areas, the growth centres are an engine for economic activity and the material standard of living has increased rapidly after the recession in the beginning of the 1990's. Simultaneously, these areas suffer from psychosocial problems and different phenomena of asocial behaviour. In the peripheral municipalities, lower level of material welfare and even poverty, combined with higher than the average level of psychosocial problems, has increased. According to the research mentioned above, the municipalities in the suburban area, or on the outskirts or in the very vicinity of the biggest cities, seem to achieve an idyll where inhabitants are reasonably well off and

satisfied with their neighbourhood. Big growth centres seem to increase the wealth and welfare only of a narrow area, reaching only into the very nearby-situated municipalities. The activating influence of the economy and welfare doesn't carry all the way into the outlying or distant countryside.

Changing settings of Finnish welfare in the 1990's

In this respect there have been simultaneous changes in public welfare policy as well. According to Julkunen (2001, 231–232), after the recession means testing has increased in social policy at the expense of eligibility little by little and the "erosion (of universalism) takes place even though there is not much of discussion about it" (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000, 178). The change in regional policy and the approval of unequal development between different parts of Finland has challenged the universalism in welfare service production. Eventually the strong migration and the regional polarisation have conditioned the very basic principles of welfare state.

The development has been drastic. During the expansive era of Finnish welfare state the guiding principle has been regionally equal development and universalism in service production. Municipalities have had an executive role in implementing the welfare services for citizens. However, in the 1990's new ideas reached Finnish public sector thinking, which have meant changes in producing local social and health services as well.

This re-evaluation of service production can be seen as part of the public sector reform, which had taken place in Finland as well as in several Western countries during the 1990's (see Harrinvirta 2000, 103–110). In Finland the new thinking (New Public Management or New Public reform; cf. Lane 1993, 143–159) has produced some criticism of administration and outcries for the simplification and rationalisation of administration. The criticism externalised on the basis of New Public Reform legitimised and justified the rollback demands of the state (cf. Julkunen 2001, 97) in order to decrease the state involvement in economy and society, increase space for market relations, stop the growth of the public sector and make the administration more effective. The aspects brought out especially during the recession in the beginning of the 1990's were ideologically distinctly right wing and conservative and they put the faultfinding elements of the welfare state under discussion.

The relationship between the state and municipalities has been strongly defined by the centralised power. The tasks of the state have been to create settings and welfare aims which the municipalities have fulfilled with the help of the state. The state has been responsible for the constitutional rights but instrumentally municipalities have implemented these rights. According to the principles of municipal autonomy all the costs of the statutory service production based on the Finnish legislation should be the financial responsibility of the state, as it has mostly been till the renewal of the

legislation of the state subsidies during 1993–1997. Thus between 1960 and 1990 the grip of the centralised power on municipalities became very strong because of the formal regulation by the state.

However, in the 1990's along with the strong grip of the central power and the more and more decreasing regulation, the local differentiation and unequal local development became more acceptable. The formal regulation of the state and the local deregulation have specialised during 1990' and the beginning of the new millennium in social policy so that in the income support the strong guidance and definition from the state is more present but the welfare service production has been entrusted to municipalities. (Heikkilä 1997, 26–30).

The social policy defined, formulated and financed by the central power has been crucial especially for the small municipalities. Since there is a large number of small local authorities in Finland, the very basic idea of universalism in Nordic welfare state thinking has been very important in ensuring the availability of services for all citizens irrespective of which part of the country they might live in. Small municipalities most likely would not have been able to create sufficient welfare service production without the strong and detailed norm guidance and planning, and the state subsidy practice, which ordered municipalities to build service structure and an exact follow-up procedure. For example in the 1950's, i.e. before the expansive era of the welfare state, the development of services was not an important issue in munic-

ipalities. The focus of local policy was in keeping the tax rate as low as possible (c.f. Rönkkö 2000, 196). The state obliged and encouraged municipalities to produce services according to the Nordic welfare state thinking.

Small municipalities and production of welfare services

The regional equality in access to services has been guaranteed by the dependable relationship between the state and the municipalities. This dependability had a basis in the legislation as well. In the so-called VALTAVA-law of 1983 (SVOL, 18§) the principles of the financial responsibilities between municipalities and the state were defined quite precisely: the share of the state was 44%. However, in the amendment of the state subsidy legislation in 1993 and 1996–1997 predefined shares of the state and municipalities were abandoned. Consequently, at the end of the 1990's the share of the state in funding services through the subsidies has decreased from 44 % to a little more than 20 % (c.f. Tuori 2001; Helin & Oulasvirta 2000).

Consequently, the municipalities have resorted more and more often to differently produced services. They have enabled private firms and enterprises to participate in public service production by increasing competition, there have been experiments of using vouchers to increase the freedom of choice among citizens, new technology has been utilised and e-services have increased. Furthermore services have been priva-

tised and the so-called orderer-producer model has become more and more popular (c.f. Parjanne 2002, 2). However, changes, which would justify speaking about the collapse or rollback of welfare state, haven't taken place. In fact the welfare state and its services provided the income, during the recession of the 1990's and after that, for unemployed people especially. Actually good public services have been high in people's preferences and rollback of services has encountered strong opposition among citizens (Blomberg and Kroll 1999, 76; Julkunen 2001, 231–232).

The trends described above can be seen in the municipalities of Southwest Finland as well. According to my findings (see Ovaska 2003, 147–152) the transition from publicly produced services to more market oriented or services produced in the third sector can be found most clearly in the biggest cities, where services produced as the municipality's own activity have decreased and the services bought from the market or from the third sector have increased. In the year 2000 the capital of the area (Turku) produced already almost 10 per cent of the local social and health services by buying them from outside of the public sector. The share has almost doubled since 1994.

In small municipalities the transition has been remarkably smaller. Small municipalities have concentrated more on making their economy more efficient. This can be seen as continence in their own service production and service production through federations of municipalities. However, the share of

services bought from the market or from the third sector has scarcely increased. Swedish-speaking municipalities differ from the other small municipalities: they have concentrated on improving bilateral co-operation with the nearby municipalities without getting organised as a federation of municipalities.

Services in the small municipalities have deteriorated at least to some extent during the last decade. This has happened due to the adopted policy, which has emphasised the savings policy and the continence of public expenditure. The amendments in the state subsidy legislation in 1993 and 1996–1997 didn't increase the differences between municipalities on the whole. However, in small municipalities the influence was drastic because the costs of the statutory services take a relatively bigger share of the tax income in small municipalities than in bigger local administrations. Thus, after the renewal of the state subsidy legislation, changes in the responsibilities of municipalities and the state in funding the services have mostly influenced the economy of small municipalities in Southwest Finland.

If we look at the structure of services in these tiniest local administrations, we can say that it has not been categorically ineffective or very expensive. As a matter of fact, according to my research these small communities flourish in the comparison of services in different sized municipalities. In comparison, the costs of the service structure in the small municipalities with an in-flow of population actually don't differ from mu-

nicipalities with a population of 15 000–30 000, which are generally regarded as the most effective and economical in service production. The biggest city in the area (Turku) produced the most expensive services. However, Swedish-speaking municipalities included in the research differ from other local administrations in that they are very expensive service producers, but the explanation, at least partly, is that all the municipalities included are situated in the archipelago with special cost-increasing characteristics.

In all the municipalities included in the research, the basic services were quite well organised and available for the inhabitants. Especially in the care of the elderly, the services were more individually organised and versatile. Thus the service structure in small municipalities takes the needs of the customers more into account. The basic services in rural areas compensate partly the need for special services, which seem to be more difficult to organise in these sparsely inhabited regions.

The small municipalities with an in-flow of population, especially on the outskirts of the regional centres, compete for inhabitants with the cities by providing actually better and higher quality services. These municipalities are quite well off and the local communities can be described as idylls with few social problems, a reasonable standard of living and good quality of life among the inhabitants. At the same time, small municipalities with a strong out-flow of population, and especially municipalities situated in the periphery, have encountered serious problems in or-

ganising services and are facing increasing psychosocial problems and even poverty among the inhabitants (cf. Heikkilä et al. 2001; see also Kainulainen et al. 2002).

Embracing the policy, which emphasises subsidies to the regional centres, in hope of the positive influence of the development spreading out all over the region, has increased the strain of rural municipalities. Depopulation is a very difficult problem to solve, and in this the development of local services might have a very limited role. It has been said (Voipio 2002, 2) that nothing else but the creation of new job opportunities and new possibilities of income could reverse the depopulation. Good extensive local services can slow down the development a little but the out-flow of population to regional centres and cities can't be stopped only by developing the local services.

Migration and changing social capital

Robert Putnam has contended (1995, 2000) that there is a general declining tendency of social capital in America and in the Western world as well. His arguments have caused vivid discussions both in USA and in Europe (see e.g. van Deth et al. 1999). Depending on how social capital is defined and how it is measured, there are results speaking for and against Putnam's findings. In Finland, studies done in this respect are few. Generally speaking, so far there is no evidence of declining social capital. For example, membership in societies, which is gen-

erally regarded as a measure of social capital, has not declined (Sisiäinen 2000). According also to Kaj Ilmonen (2002), during the 1990's the trust in institutions and the staff producing local welfare services has not decreased.

The link between migration and social capital has not been investigated very much. Last autumn one report (Virtanen 2003a) was published, where changes in social capital (or to be precise, values among movers) during the migration process were studied. According to Vesa Virtanen (2003b, 14) the values of people who are likely to move do not differ very much. In addition, the values among movers and the original population are very similar as well, even though there are some differences (see Virtanen 2003, 80–83). Consequently, according to Virtanen social capital stays and it seems that migration does not reduce or increase social capital locally.

However, in my thesis (Ovaska 2003) there was a remarkable difference in social capital between municipalities with outflow of population and municipalities with strong inflow. Social capital was measured as a sum variable consisting of the number of people in the social network, trust in people, confidence in systems, reciprocity and participation. The explanation for the different results may be how social capital is defined and measured.

Generally speaking, a robust inflow of population seems to lead to a cultural and social division of people at least in small municipalities. The new inhabitants socialize between themselves, or their so-

cial network depends quite often on kinship or friendship relations before their migration. Contacts with the original population are rare or the movers are a bit careful with them. This gap between the original population and the movers seems to be quite permanent or at least change very slowly. The social network among movers differed significantly from the network among the original population even after 20 years living in the municipality. In the background there are cultural differences concerning the city and the rural way of life, and the differences between the role structure in cities and in the country (see e.g. Frankenberg 1994, 16–21; cf. also Holmila 2000; Ovaska 2001, 198–200).

In fact, migration to the countryside has been regarded as a part of the urbanisation process, and it has been described with the concept of periurbanisation (see Väinölä 1997, 77–81; Kumpulainen 1993, 29; Vuori 1991, 90–91). Accordingly, the urbanisation process produces a new type of inhabitant who differs from the traditional population. In a way, the new inhabitants combine the good aspects of life in the country and city living. They get the clean and beautiful country surroundings but avoid the oppressive social control by keeping themselves outside of the local bonds and attaching their social network outside of their neighbourhood. However, violence, hectic pace, insecurity, crowds of people, crimes etc. relate only to the (working) time in the city, they are not any part of the idyll in the countryside (cf. Heikkilä et al. 2002). Wage earning seems to be the basis that cultural

homogeneity is built on, and which unifies the new inhabitants and city environments.

In my thesis I stick to Putnam's important distinction. According to Putnam (2000, 22) there are two dimensions to social capital: bridging or inclusive and bonding or exclusive social capital. The roots of the distinction can be found in Granovetter's theory about weak and strong ties (1973) and it can be regarded as one of the most elementary parts in social capital theory. Human beings need contact with others but they also need the backing or solidarity of their neighbourhood. In fact social capital can be understood as a "good" proportion of bridging (openness) and bonding (solidarity). Neither one of these should be too prominent. Bridging might lead to extreme individualism and bonding to a negative (or even perverse) social capital, where all the efforts of development from outside the community can be rejected.

According to the results in my thesis, municipalities differ from each other in bridging and bonding according to social embracement. The idea goes back to Durkheim. He analysed suicides according to how a person has adopted the collective consciousness and common values, and on the other hand how deeply he or she is anchored in the economic exchange. Durkheim's basic idea was that if these basic ways of embracement are not in balance, suicides increase. (Durkheim 1985; Töttö 1996b, 190–204.)

Being a member of and coping in a community is built accordingly on two ways of embracement, societal or communal. Communal em-

bracement (or bonding) is based on common values and, in a way, on the logic of gift (see Douglas 1999; Mauss 1999) while societal embracement (or bridging) has to do with money, social benefits, services or some other economic or cultural exchange. In communal embracement the community guarantees trust using the logic of gift: i.e. getting a gift leads to commitment to give a return gift. If the community is not committed to the logic of gift, it leads to shame and humiliation, which decrease the trust furthermore.

Social capital seems to be bound to the logic of gift. When a community "works well" members adopt forms of collective consciousness and the trust increases. Thus social capital produces a sort of independent coping, part of which is trust in possible future assistance. In my research, the inhabitants of Swedish-speaking municipalities were found to score higher on the measures of positive social capital (bridging) and lower on the measures of negative social capital ("amoral familism" or bonding) than the inhabitants of Finnish-speaking municipalities. However, Finnish-speaking municipalities differed from each other according to the extent of migration. Both high inward and high outward migration lowered social capital. Social capital appears to work so that when a community is stable and functioning effectively, trust between people increases and this in turn produces good coping and low reliance on state services. Social capital produces trust in support and confidence in the availability of services in the future. This is illustrated by the findings in the

Swedish municipalities in particular, where inhabitants say they get and give less help, but also that they need less help. The study found that internal migration leads to decreasing positive social capital (bridging) in areas into which people move, and increasing negative social capital ("amoral familism" or bonding) in the areas from which people move.

Conclusions and further research

The study described above had some limitations. The data (n=2852) was gathered from the tiniest municipalities (population under 2500) in Southwest Finland. Thus the results cannot be generalised to municipalities of all sizes in all parts of Finland. However, the study gave a good inkling concerning the consequences of the regional development policy adopted in the 1990's by the Finnish government. According to the outcomes of the adopted policy based on strong support of regional centres at the expense of support of municipalities, the development can lead to a decline in social capital or to a transition in the forms of social capital.

Consequently, the adopted regional policy can be challenged. The aim of the policy is that regional growth centres are to accelerate business and entrepreneurship, and through these create wealth in the region and welfare for the citizens, not only of the biggest centres but of the municipalities in the surrounding countryside as well. However, if social capital is declining as a result of

the strong in-flow of population, according to the general theory of social capital, outcomes of the policy might be in contradiction to its objective. Declining social capital might even counteract good administration, entrepreneurship, innovation and democracy.

In further studies, the objective should be the comparison of migration and social capital between different municipalities and areas in Finland as well as internationally. At the beginning of this year, a new research programme was launched by the Academy of Finland. The scientific challenge in the research programme on Social Capital and Networks of Trust (SoCa) is to try to explain and understand how and where social capital is created. A second challenge is to explore the impacts of social capital upon economic development, the capacity for change in the labour market as well as the implementation of political reform.

The aim of the multidisciplinary programme is to strengthen the theoretical and methodological foundations of research, to increase interaction among researchers and to promote international contacts in this field. The programme will be carried out during the years 2004–2007.

Social Capital and the Logic of Collective Action –programme in the Department of Social Policy at University of Turku was approved into the programme. The aim of the programme is to study how social (policy) institutions create different forms of social capital, establish and fortify intra-group solidarity / different forms of social capital and how this is related to the

building up of social policy and, more importantly, to the possibilities to reform the welfare state. The comparative study will be carried out at the regional (municipal) and country level.

The programme consists of six research projects including a study with the working title Migration and the Transition in the Forms of Social Capital. In this project the research subject is to study changes in social capital due to migration. The basic distinction will be made between bridging and bonding, and the issue studied will be whether there is any kind of transition between these two, and what kinds of consequences it seems to have on welfare service production and solidarity in different parts of Finland. Especially the connection between changes in social capital and the adoption of a new emphasis in regional development policy will be investigated. The analysis will be put in a larger context by comparing results between different European countries.

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