Cultural diversity in Finland

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Raento, Pauliina & Kai Husso (2001). Cultural diversity in Finland. *Fennia* 180: 1–2, pp. 151–164. Helsinki. ISSN 0015-0010.

The image of Finland as a culturally and ethnically homogeneous nation is erroneous. The country's 'old minorities' include the Swedish-speakers, the indigenous Sami, and the Romani. Several smaller ethno-cultural and religious groups have resided in Finland since the nineteenth century. Increasing immigration is now further diversifying Finland. Many of the old and new minorities have clearly-defined regional hearths, as do many distinctive segments of the majority culture. This article provides an overview of Finland's three largest minorities, religions, foodways, the new immigration, and the recent English-language sources available on these topics. The discussion emphasizes the new understanding of the country's ethno-cultural make-up and political, legal, and social challenges that have followed the recent change.

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Introduction

The Finns have been taught to think of Finland as a culturally homogeneous nation. There are, however, several ethnic and cultural minorities within the boundaries of the Finnish state. These groups consist of numerically fewer members than the majority population, are not in a dominant position in society, have distinctive linguistic, ethnic, or religious characteristics, and wish to maintain this distinctiveness. Many of these groups have clearly-defined regional hearths, as do several distinctive forms of the majority culture.

The status of Finland's 'old minorities' has not been uniform. The Swedish-speaking Finns are a 'strong minority' with a clearly-defined institutional status and considerable weight in the economy, politics, and culture. The Romani, the Sami, and other minority populations have suffered from social, political, cultural, and economic marginalization. Their linguistic and cultural rights have been recognized only recently. New national policies have also been created to address immigration that has grown considerably since the 1990s (see Liebkind 1994, 2000; Korkiasaari & Söderling 1998). The conventional understanding of Finland's cultural make-up is thus changing rapidly. This article outlines the newly-recognized, increasing diversity in Finnish society and some related political, social, and economic challenges.

The visible change, the authorities' new responsibilities, and the lively public debate have produced a growing body of literature, especially since the 1990s. Several introductory texts and essay collections of Finland's cultural landscape or its constituents have been published recently. The living conditions, identity, and traditions of particular minority groups, experiences of newcomers, and the majority population's attitudes have attracted particular attention (e.g., Westerholm 1993, 1996; Lounela 1994; Liebkind 1994, 2000; Pentikäinen & Hiltunen 1995; Dahlgren 1996; Paulus 1996; Seppälä 1996; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind 1997; Raivo 1997; Matinheikki-Kokko 1997; Pitkänen & Jaakkola 1997; Seurujärvi-Kari 1997, 2000; Söderling 1997, 1998; Jaakkola 1999, 2000; Löytönen & Kolbe 1999; Oinonen 1999; Virolainen 1999; Pirttilahti 2000). Regional cultural distinctiveness and the transformation of the Finnish state in relation to cultural minorities have also become popular topics for graduate theses (in geography, e.g., Raivo 1996; Karppi 2000). Regional cuisine and foodways, and the dialects of Finnish dominate the parallel upsurge

of popular writing on the majority culture's traditions and folkways (e.g., Kettunen 1999; Languages… 2001; Raento & Raento 2001). Much of this material is written in Finnish, but the number of publications available in English is increasing.

The Swedish-speakers in Finland

Swedish has been spoken within the contemporary territory of Finland at least since the thirteenth century, possibly even earlier (see Languages… 2001). Finland formed a part of the Swedish Empire until 1809, receiving considerable cultural, political, and economic influence. The Swedish-speaking population in Finland formed two separate groups: the urban upper classes (administrators, bankers, and entrepreneurs) and the farmers, fishermen, and seafarers of the southern and western coasts. Their language was in a dominant position in Finnish society until the end of the nineteenth century, when the importance of Finnish began to increase. This was due to the decline of Sweden's regional hegemony, the language's new official status granted by the Russian authorities in 1863, and the subsequent Finnish nationalist aspirations for independence. Many of the movement's leaders were native Swedish-speakers, but a separate Swedish-language national movement emerged to counter this development. This united the minority society's two groups for the first time.

Finland gained independence from Russia in 1917. Soon afterwards, Finnish and Swedish earned constitutional equality as the country's "national languages." The practical application was the 1922 legislation on language and its amendments in 1935, 1962, and 1975. A broad reform of the legislation is currently in process and scheduled to be implemented in 2004.

The law regards the Finns as "Finnish-speakers," "Swedish-speakers," and "speakers of other languages." Municipalities can also be defined as bilingual. This is the case when a minimum of eight percent of the residents, or 3,000 people, speak one of the two official languages. The status can be revoked only if the proportion of the minority declines below six percent.

21 of Finland's 452 municipalities are currently defined as monolingually Swedish-speaking (STV 2000: 98). These include the 16 municipalities of the autonomous Åland Islands in the southwest (see Dressler et al. 1994). Here, Swedish is the only official language, as defined in the 1921, 1951, and 1993 legislation regarding the status of the islands. The islands form a demilitarized zone, and their 25,700 (1999) residents have an autonomous provincial government. Its authority extends to cultural and educational affairs, health care, law enforcement, postal service, and economic development, under its own annual budget. The legislation limits the rights of outsiders to own property on the islands, thus guaranteeing the linguistic and cultural integrity of the autonomous population.

On the mainland, 42 municipalities are regarded as bilingual. Swedish is the majority language in 22 of these settlements. Finnish dominates in all others (STV 2000: 98). Overall, the 300,000 Swedish-speaking Finns comprise 5.7 percent of the total population of 5.17 million (in 1999) (STV 2000: 98). Their regional distribution is strongly clustered in the coastal Ostrobothia region to the west and in the southwestern and southern coastal areas (CD-Fig. 1). Many of the Swedish-speakers in the rural communities of the west are monolingual, whereas bilingualism is typical of the southern coast. The capital city Helsinki–Helsingfors is the largest concentration of this minority in the country, with a Swedish-speaking population of 36,300 (6.6% of the city's residents) (STV 2000: 60). Here, as elsewhere, the formal bilingualism is visible in street and road signs and other official markers that are bilingual in order of commonality (CD-Fig. 2). All official matters are accessible in two languages, as is required by law. In many areas, this has not been met in practice, however (Westerholm 1993: 186–187, 1996: 125; Jansson 1994: 57).

The linguistic boundary between Swedish and Finnish is not as clear and definite as it appears in the statistics. Nor has the legal status prevented the decline of the minority language both absolutely and relatively (Fig. 1). Industrialization and migration into urban centers after World War II brought an increasing number of Finnish-speakers into predominantly Swedish-speaking areas, upheaving their linguistic structure. The linguistic boundary became particularly blurred in the urban Uusimaa–Nyland region in the south, and the trend continues today (Aitamurto 2001). As a result, many Swedish-speaking Finns are fluently bilingual and a growing number of native Swedish-speakers live in a Finnish-speaking environment. Many residents of the rural and monolingually Swedish-speaking coast have found their language and traditional forms of livelihood

threatened, and local conflicts have emerged (Oksanen 2001). Particularly in the 1960s, some opted for emigration to Sweden. Many of these emigrants were young, which directed the age structure of the minority towards older cohorts and lowered the birth rate (the latter trend has since been reversed). Local differences in economic and linguistic history thus led to territorially different strategies of accommodation in the context of change and highlighted the minority's historic division into two communities (Sandlund 1985; Westerholm 1993: 180–182, 1996: 122–124).

The vitality and significance of Swedish in Finnish society rests largely on the minority's own political and cultural activity despite the legal support. Since 1907, through the time of general suffrage in Finland, three quarters of the Swedish-speakers have voted for the Swedish National Party (Svenska Folkpartiet – Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue), established in 1906. The language of the political party unites the minority across ideological boundaries, although working-class affiliations are more diverse (Liebkind 1994: 76). Education is available in Swedish from the kindergarten to the university, and the Lutheran National Church and the Finnish military have special segments for the minority. The Swedish-language media and numerous cultural organizations further enhance the vitality of the language. Swedish continues to be an important language in the economy.

Swedish is, nevertheless, clearly a minority language in today's Finland. Bilingualism amongst the native Swedish-speakers is increasing. Fewer and fewer Finnish-speakers can communicate in Swedish, despite the requirement that the language be studied for at least three years in school. Exposure to Swedish in everyday life is nonexistent in many parts of the country. An old image of Swedish as a language of the elite also adds to the reluctance of many native Finnish-speakers to learn and use it, leading to demands for the elimination of the Swedish-language requirement in schools. Doing so would certainly marginalize the language in Finnish society (Westerholm 1993: 185–193).

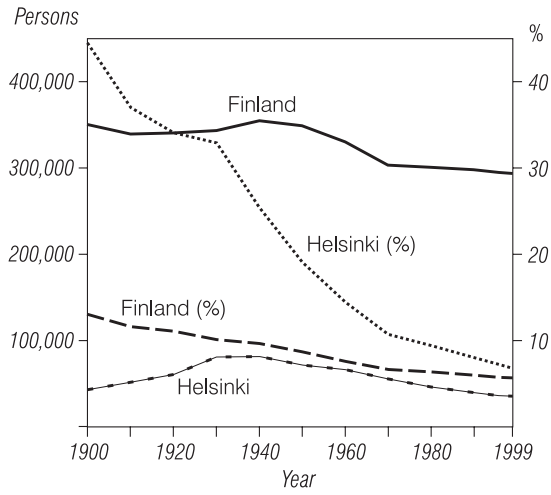

Fig. 1. Swedish-speakers in Finland and in the capital city Helsinki–Helsingfors, 1900–1999 (STV 2000: 60; Helsinki tilastoina… 2000: 26).

Other minorities

Statistical comparisons of the indigenous Sami, the Romani, and other 'old' minority populations in Finland are considerably more difficult. Instead of legal and institutional arrangements, their minority status and identity has been determined until recently by individual feelings of belonging or descent. Furthermore, the majority of these people are native Finnish-speakers or they lack an unambiguous mother tongue. As the national record-keeping is based on language, much of the available information is incomplete or varies greatly. The following discussion focuses on the Sami and the Romani, but similar issues apply to the other minorities as well. These include the Russians, the Karelians, the Ingrians, the Turko-Tatars, and the Jews, who have all resided in Finland through the time of its independence (see Pentikäinen & Hiltunen 1995).

The Sami

The number of Sami, the Nordic Countries' indigenous people, is roughly 6,500 in Finland (The Sami in Finland 2000; cf. STV 2000: 96). The definition of a Sami is based on self-identification and linguistic ancestry: a minimum of one parent or grandparent who spoke Sami as the first language is required. The number of Sami-speakers is considerably lower: less than one half of the Finnish Sami speak one of the three Sami languages spoken in Finland. This points to the long-lasting dominance of Finnish among the Sami. Until recently, education in Sami was not available, and

entire generations learned to consider the language(s) inferior to Finnish.

The Sami are divided into several linguistically, territorially, and culturally distinctive groups. The Sami territory (*Sápmi*) extends across the national boundaries of several countries, from central Scandinavia to the Kola Peninsula. The total Sami population is 60,000–100,000 (depending on definition), most of whom live in Norway. The Finnish Sami are speakers of North Sami (over 2,000 speakers), Inari Sami (350), and Skolt Sami (400) (Languages… 2001). They have also been grouped geographically and anthropologically into eastern and western Sami, and, according to livehood, into farmers and foresters, and reindeer herders (see Yli-Kuha 1998; Seurujärvi-Kari 1997, 2000; Tanner 2000; Susiluoto 2000; cf. The Sami homeland 1998).

The current Sami territory in Finland covers only a fraction of the historical Sami hunting and settlement areas that extended to the southern parts of the country in the medieval period. A territory defined as the Sami Domicile Area consists of Finland's three northernmost municipalities (Inari, Enontekiö, and Utsjoki) and the Lappi reindeer herding district of Sodankylä municipality, covering 35,000 square kilometers (CD-Fig. 1). Roughly 4,000 Sami live within this area. They form the majority in Utsjoki, but are in minority elsewhere. An estimated 40 percent of the Sami within the Domicile Area get their income from traditional livelihoods that include reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, gathering, and traditional craftwork. Tourism and other services employ most of the rest. An estimated 100,000 reindeer, or about one half of the entire stock in Finland, live within the Domicile Area. 85 percent of these are under Sami ownership (STV 2000: 147; The Sami in Finland 2000).

The status and rights of the Sami in Finnish society improved considerably in the 1990s. The Sami language awaited official recognition until 1991. Recognition improved its status in education (see Languages… 2001). Sami cultural autonomy went into effect in the Domicile Area in the mid-1990s as an outcome of constitutional reforms that guaranteed the minorities' rights "to maintain and develop their own language and culture" (§14.3, cit. Virolainen 1999: 11; see Karppi 2000). Official announcements, administrative documents, and street and road signs are bilingual in Finnish and Sami within the Domicile Area, where Sami also serves as a conference language and in religious ceremonies. The ongoing reform of the 1991 legislation regarding language is expected to make Finnish and the three Sami languages equal within the Sami Domicile Area. The implementation of the new law is scheduled for 2004 (HS 2001c).

The Sami have elected their own parliament at four-year intervals since 1973. Since 1991, the Sami representatives have been heard in the Finnish parliament over matters that concern them directly. The Sami parliament's visibility and influence have increased. International links of cooperation of the Finnish Sami include the Sami Council of the indigenous people in Sweden, Norway, Russia, and Finland; the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP); the Nordic Council; the Barents Euro-Arctic Region; and the United Nations Human Rights Committee (The Sami in Finland 2000). The latest addition to Nordic cooperation in Sami matters is the joining of Finland's national broadcasting company Yleisradio to the Nordic network of Sami-language television news (Pohjanpalo 2002).

Despite the diversification of channels for cultural expression, education, and international cooperation, the *de facto* rights and equality of the Sami remain to be fulfilled (Land rights 1997; Forrest 1997; Karppi 2000). The Sami languages are still far from being equal with Finnish and Swedish. Instruction given in Sami has increased fivefold since the 1970s, and classes are available throughout the Domicile Area and in Helsinki. The Universities of Helsinki and Oulu and the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi offer classes as well. The number of pupils who receive their basic education in Sami has yet to exceed 600, however (The Sami in Finland 2000). Despite the new opportunities, it is still impossible to receive full education in Sami, and instruction suffers from a constant lack of qualified teachers and teaching material (see Land rights… 1997).

Disagreements over land ownership between the Sami and the central government have created conflicts, especially since the 1960s, and remain unresolved (Harju 2001; Tahkolahti 2001). The Sami claim that they have historic rights to land, water, and traditional livelihoods that the state's legal system does not recognize – at the core of the conflict is a disagreement over the definition of territoriality and ownership (Forrest 1997; Karppi 2000). Currently, 90 percent of the lands within the Sami Domicile Area are defined as "public" and only one tenth is privately owned.

The situation allows free economic competition and imposes certain restrictions without granting any special rights to the Sami within their territory, unlike in Sweden and Norway where only the Sami are allowed to herd reindeer. Also contested is the central government's right to the natural resources within the Sami territory. Particularly, mining and logging have led to conflict and Sami complaints to the UN Human Rights Committee, which has taken the minority's side. Currently, then, "the rights of the Sami as an indigenous people are not fully realized in conformity with international human rights agreements" (The Sami in Finland 2000).

The Romani

Most of the estimated 10,000 Romani in Finland live in Southern Finland (CD-Fig. 3). Many of them migrated to urban centers in the 1960s, when their traditional sources of income were becoming obsolete in the structural transition of the Finnish countryside. During the past couple of decades, the Romani population in Helsinki and its immediate vicinity has increased significantly so that roughly one-fifth of the entire Romani population now lives in the capital city. Another 3,000 Finnish-speaking Romani live in Sweden (Grönfors 1981, 1995; Välimäki 1995; Paulus 1996; Finland's Romani… 2000; cf. Karjalainen 1981: 25).

The Romani have been at the bottom of the social pecking order of Finnish society since their arrival in the country in the sixteenth century. The Finnish nation-building aspirations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries deepened the minority's centuries-long marginalization. The first governmental attempt to address the poverty and social ill-being of this group was the Advisory Board on Gipsy Affairs in 1956 under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Its impact was limited or even negative, as it saw "the problem children of Finnish society" (Waris 1952: 24, cit. Virolainen 1999: 7) as a burden and their problems as self-induced. The 1960s brought new publicity and representative organizations to the Romani in the context of international social and political awareness and the emerging welfare state in Finland. New concerns regarding equality and social justice informed the 1968 reorganization of the notorious board, now called The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in Finland (Finland's Romani… 2000). The new climate was reflected in the 1970s' legislation that included a ban on discrimination (1970) and improvements of the living conditions of the minority (1975). These measures were passive in nature, however, and opened no channels to increase Romani participation in matters that concerned them directly. The large structural problems thus remained intact (Paulus 1996; Virolainen 1999: 7–10).

Only in the 1990s did the Romani voice begin to be heard in decision-making, emphasizing the focus on education, employment, cultural awareness, and tolerance in the context of legal progress. An Education Unit for the Romani People was established under the National Board of Education in 1994 (Languages… 2001). The most important legislative reform was the 1995 constitutional amendment that also gave the Romani "the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture" (§14.3, cit. Virolainen 1999: 11; see Finland's Romani… 2000). Among the first steps of implementation was the creation of four regional Romani councils to promote regional and local cooperation between the population groups (CD-Fig. 3). Other significant legal arrangements included the decision to work towards tolerance and prevention of racism (1997) and the 1998 implementation of the European resolution regarding the protection of national minorities. The Romani language was included in the responsibilities of the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland regarding linguistic research, maintenance, and development, in 1997 (Virolainen 1999: 11; Finland's Romani… 2000; Languages… 2001).

These measures have not had an equal impact across the Romani population. The initial results vary from one region to another, reflecting local conditions and characteristics of the minority's sub-segments. Marginalization has even accelerated outside the southern urban areas. Increasing competition in the housing markets in the city of Oulu, for example, has left entire Romani families homeless. This has contributed to the circle of marginalization by complicating the schooling of children. Overall, school attendance of Romani children has not improved as expected (see Pihlaja 2001). Gaps in education narrow these children's future employment opportunities, already limited by the difficult context of prejudice and discrimination. Criminal activity by some members of the minority has further enhanced stereotypes and prejudices, often labeling the entire group (Virolainen 1999: 5; Pirttilahti 2000). In

fact, the status of the Romani as the "most hated" population group in Finland was replaced only recently – by the Somalis (Lanas Cavada 1998: 13). In absolute terms, the Romani remain among the groups looked upon most negatively in Finnish society. Discrimination still forms a part of the Romani everyday in Finland, and support from Finnish law enforcement has often not been forthcoming (Grönfors 1979; Finland's Romani… 2000).

Another challenge regarding schooling is the role of the Romani language in education. The language was a central element of cohesion among the minority community in the nineteenth century (Grönfors 1981). Without recognition and due to the Romani marginalization in Finnish society, the language's vitality declined rapidly in the context of Finnish nation-building. It became impoverished, as it was not learned as the first language. In the end of the 1980s, the increased concern regarding the future of the language brought Romani to elementary schools in Helsinki and Kuopio. The pupils numbered roughly 250 in 1995. Instruction is now available in Romani, but it suffers from a chronic lack of textbooks and other material. An estimated one third of the adult Romani knows the language. The improved legal status of the language has enhanced Romani identity. A further emphasis on the welfare of the language in education is seen as a way to improve the relationship between the minority and the majority-dominated educational institutions (Suonoja & Lindberg 1999; Finland's Romani… 2000; Languages… 2001). The legacy of long-term structural violence is difficult to overcome, however.

Regional and religious variety

The Finnish majority culture contains several regionally distinctive patterns, the most notable of which are the contrasts between the east and the west and the urban and rural areas (Vuorela 1976; Talve 1990: 395–412; Virtanen 1991: 61–65). Much of this variation owes to different local conditions and to external influences and contacts. The Finnish language is divided between dialectic hearths, each of which is easily recognizable in everyday speech (CD-Fig. 1) (see Kettunen 1999). In fact, the Finnish language was not normalized and unified into a standard literary language until the 1950s. Recently, regional differences of the vernacular Finnish, together with foodways, have been highlighted in the (re)construction of provincial identities and traditions. Dozens of cookbooks and 'translations' of popular comic books into regional dialects illustrate this revival (Languages… 2001; Raento & Raento 2001).

Religion

Christian influence first arrived in Finland roughly one thousand years ago through the commercial route between Novgorod in the east and Sweden in the west. The Lutheran reformation in the Swedish Empire brought the state into union with the church. During Russian rule, the Lutheran Church maintained its status in Finland despite the Orthodox Czar. The Orthodox Church was the only other congregation in the country at that time. Protestant minorities (Baptists, Methodists, and Adventists, among others) were allowed to organize in 1889. Since then, Finland's religious landscape has continued to diversify. The first Jewish and Islamic congregations were formed in the late nineteenth century, and Pentecostals, Jehova's Witnesses, and Mormons followed in the early twentieth century. Liberty of faith in independent Finland was guaranteed by law in 1923. The state became non-affiliated, but the Lutheran and the Orthodox Churches maintained their special status within the state and their right to taxation. The number of congregations has increased rapidly since the 1960s, particularly among urban populations and the youth (Heino 1991: 17–19).

Today's Finland is a secular country. Religion is usually considered a private matter and confined to the ceremonies of the life course, but its institutional role is maintained in the military and schools. In schools, Christianity forms a part of the curriculum of those children who are members of the Lutheran National Church. 85 percent of the population belongs to this church, but secularization is on the rise: the National Church membership has declined from 90 percent in 1980. The population not registered in any religious community increased from 8 percent in 1980 to almost 13 percent in 1999 (STV 2000: 93).

The religious landscape varies regionally. The historic core area of Finland's largest religious minority, the 55,300 Greek Orthodox (1999), is in eastern Finland, particularly Karelia (Fig. 2) (Raivo 1996, 1997; STV 2000: 93). This population has become increasingly urban, however, and one third of the entire congregation now lives

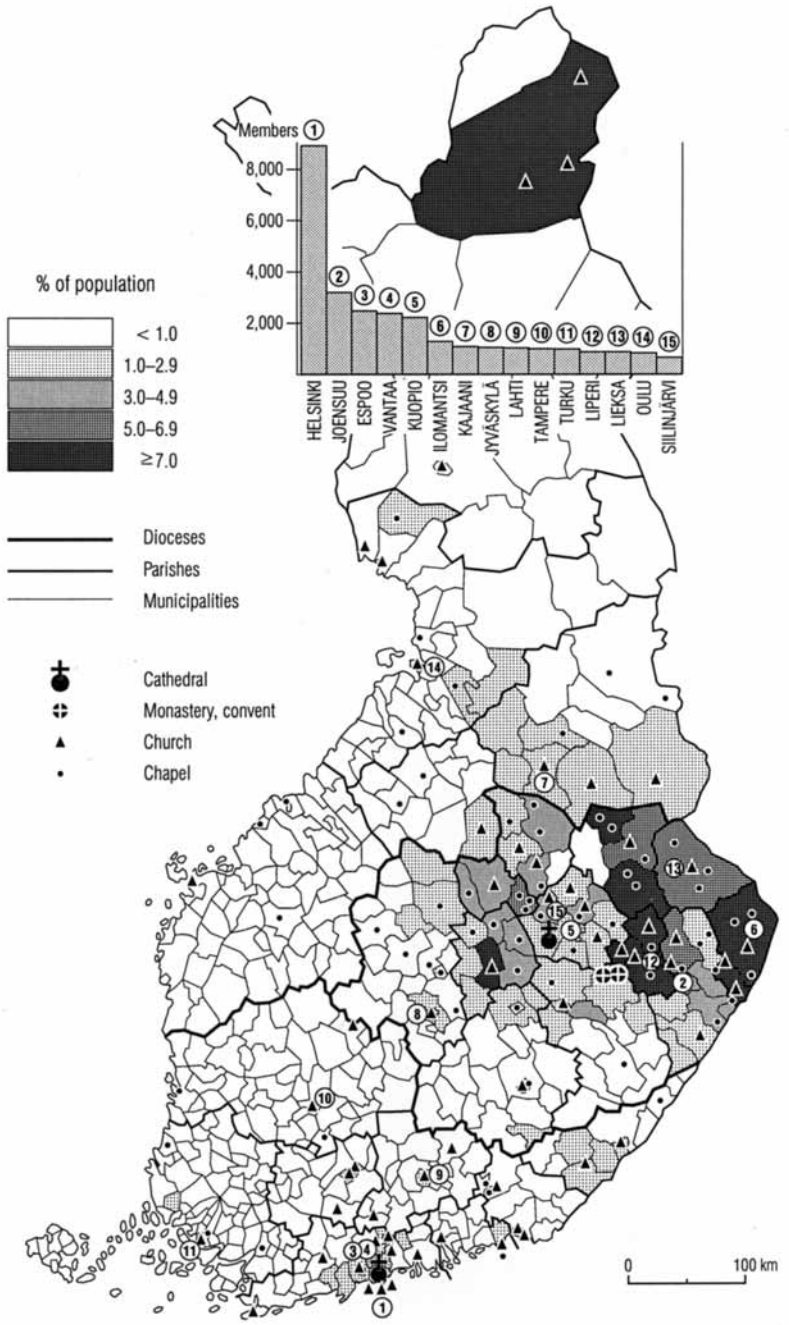

Fig. 2. The Orthodox Church in Finland (Ortodoksisiin… 1999; Suomen ortodoksinen… 2000; Väestönmuutostietoja… 2000).

in the Helsinki parish (Suomen ortodoksinen… 2000; cf. Helsingin väestö… 2000: 20). The largest Protestant minority in the country is the Free Church in Finland, with 13,400 members in 1999 (STV 2000: 93). The most extreme example of regional concentration is Supplicationism in a small area on the west coast (CD-Fig. 4).

The urban centers in the south represent the most diverse religious landscape, although religion's visibility in daily landscapes remains low

here as well. The Roman Catholic (7,000), Jewish (1,200), and Islamic (1,100) parishes are located in Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere (STV 2000: 93). The practitioners of Eastern and 'new' religions are notably urban as well. The growing number of foreign citizens adds to the heterogeneity. Particularly the number of Muslims has grown considerably in recent years. The southern urban centers are also more secular than the rest of the country. Secularization and privatization of religion are particularly notable in Helsinki. One-fourth of the capital city's population is not affiliated with any religious community (Helsingin väestö… 2000: 20).

Food and foodways

Regional differences of food and foodways are notable on the map of Finnish culture (CD-Fig. 5). The climatic and topographic conditions between different parts of the country and historical external influences have given several regions a distinct cuisine that employs different ingredients and cooking methods. Physical geography has contributed to a north–south division of cuisine by determining what can be cultivated. On the coast and in the lake region, fish has been a particularly prominent ingredient of meals. In the climatically harsh north, reindeer meat has accompanied fish in the diet, whereas many still consider reindeer a specialty elsewhere in the country. Cultural influences from Russia and Sweden dominate the differences between the east and the west. Development of distinct oven types, for example, encouraged a diverse baking culture in the east, whereas the westerners favored grilling over open fire. The eastern and the western tastes also stand apart: the former is considerably more sour than the sweeter west. The texture and flavor of rye bread and buttermilk exemplify the differences (Uusivirta 1998: 6–16). Recently, food and foodways have gained considerable prominence in regional and local identity construction and maintenance across the country.

The culinary landscape of Helsinki and other urban centers is changing rapidly due to immigration and the increasingly frequent world travel of the Finns. The growing number of 'ethnic' food markets and the broadening selection of fruit and other ingredients in the supermarkets reflect the increasing diversity (CD-Fig. 6A & 6B). Most of Helsinki's 'ethnic' restaurants are located in the downtown area and along the main arteries in its vicinity. The most popular are Chinese restaurants and diverse lunch establishments that serve pizza, kebab, and salads (CD-Fig. 7A & 7B). The definition and content of ethnicity remains complicated, as menus have been modified strongly to meet the Finnish mainstream taste, and as some establishments are merely themed along ethno-regional lines. Whereas many 'Mexican' restaurants serve globally acknowledged, simplistic Mexican-style fast food, some of Helsinki's Russian restaurants, for example, approach their selection more 'seriously'. When compared to the size of each cultural group, the Somali and Vietnamese kitchens are underrepresented. 'Ethnic' restaurants are also notably absent from those eastern suburbs where foreign nationals represent the highest proportion of the residents. The patterns suggest that whereas the urban natives are gradually expanding their culinary experiences, many immigrants regard the home as the primary space of identity maintenance (Raento & Raento 2001: 26–29).

Immigration

Finland remained relatively isolated from international immigration until recently (Korkiasaari & Söderling 1998: 14). The reasons included the country's geographical location and its non-colonialist history. Its labor pool was relatively self-sufficient due to the settlement of over half a million people from the territories ceded over to the Soviet Union after World War II. Finland's cautious relationship with this powerful neighbor shaped the country's immigration and refugee policies during the post-war decades. The approach was passive and ad hoc in nature and seen as strictly a national matter, which kept the issue outside of the otherwise intimate sphere of Nordic cooperation (Salmio 2000: 43–46). The number of foreign citizens in Finland remained low until the 1990s and the country lacked clearly defined immigration and refugee policies.

The number of foreigners in Finland began to grow towards the end of the 1980s (Fig. 3). The figures that had remained around 10,000 since the 1950s had risen to over 20,000 by 1989 (SVT 1996: 7, 34). The growth accelerated significantly in the early 1990s, when Finland began to adopt more receptive and coherent policies. Behind this change were the considerable changes in international political and economic environment: the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland's membership in the European Union (1995), and

accelerated migration and communication worldwide had a marked impact at the national level. In the end of 1999, the 87,700 foreign citizens in Finland comprised 1.7 percent of the total population (STV 2000: 86). The foreign nationals were centered in the southern parts of the country, urban centers, and border regions (CD-Fig. 8). 16,400 individuals had immigrated to the country as refugees (STV 1999: 88, 130). By the end of 2000, the total number of foreigners had reached 91,000 (1.8%) and the number of refugees had risen to 18,500 (Valtavaara 2001). Despite the notable growth in the Finnish context, these figures remain among the lowest in the European Union.

Most of the foreign nationals in Finland originate from Europe (67%) (1999). 18 percent are from Asia and 9 percent from Africa. The 32,200 citizens of the former Soviet Republics form the largest single group. Almost 60 percent of them are from Russia and one-third from Estonia. Other significant groups include the Swedes (7,800), the Somalis (4,400), the Germans, and the British (both at 2,200). Refugees from former Yugoslavia number 3,400 (STV 2000: 86). The most common foreign languages spoken in Finland are Russian (25,700 native speakers), Estonian (10,000), English (6,800), Somali (6,300), and Arabic (4,600) (STV 2000: 94). In the case of some groups, a comparison of the citizenship statistics with those of native language portrays a more comprehensive image of each community. This is clearly the case of the Somalis. Another illustrative example is the Vietnamese, the first of whom arrived in Finland as refugees in 1979. In the end of 1999, there were roughly 1,800 citizens of Vietnam in Finland, but almost 3,500 Vietnamese-speakers (STV 2000: 86, 94). This shows that many foreign-born individuals have obtained a Finnish passport (Fig. 4). It suggests also that language is a key element in the maintenance of a sense of community and distinct identity in Finnish society (Oinonen 1999). That the number of Finnish citizens who have been born abroad has risen from less than 40,000 in 1980 to over 131,000 in 1999 reflects both the increasing immigration and the increased mobility of the Finns born in Finland (STV 2000: 90; cf. SVT 1996).

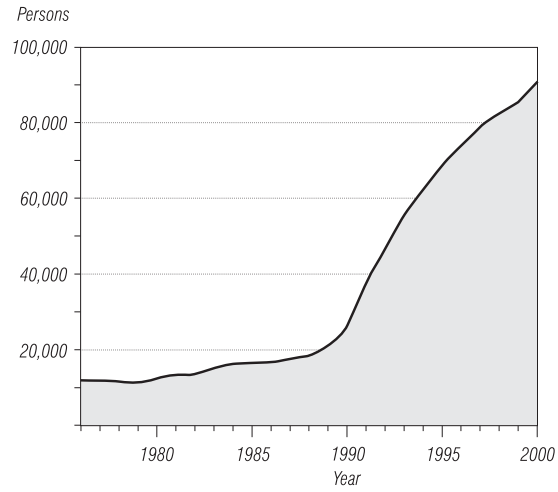

Fig. 3. Foreigners in Finland, 1976–2000 (STV 1999: 88, 2000: 86; Valtavaara 2001).

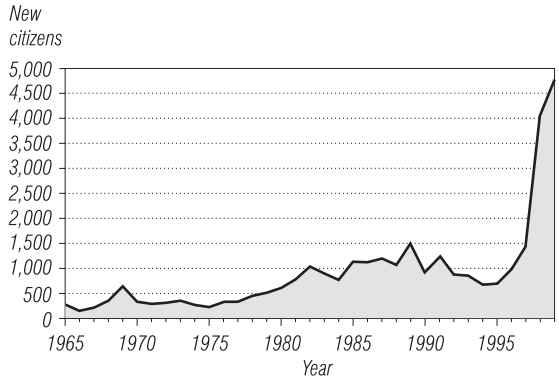

Fig. 4. New Finnish citizens, 1965–1999 (STV 1999: 127, 2000: 131).

Diversifying Helsinki

Helsinki is the most diverse city in Finland linguistically, culturally, and ethnically. In the late nineteenth century, 15 percent of the city's residents had been born abroad, but their proportion had declined to 2 percent by the 1960s and did not exceed this figure until the 1990s. In 1900, the largest group of foreign citizens in Helsinki was the Russians (75% of all foreigners), many of whom were soldiers or merchants. Sixty years later, the Swedes had become the largest single group (30% in 1960 and 15% in 1985) (Helsinki tilastoina… 2000: 26–28).

Today's Helsinki is the capital city of all the discussed immigrant groups in absolute numbers. The new diversity owes to both international and

domestic migration. The number of foreign citizens had risen to roughly 5,600 by 1990 (1.2% of the city's population), compared to 3,500 (0.7%) ten years earlier. By 2000, this number had increased to almost 26,000, or 4.7 percent of the city's population. These people carried 144 different passports (Helsingin väestö… 2000).

Roughly one half of the foreigners who reside in Helsinki are Eastern European or former Soviet nationals. Westerners comprise one-fifth of the population. The rest are primarily from Africa and Asia. The largest single groups are Russians (4,600 in the beginning of 2000), Estonians (4,000), Somalis (2,100), Swedes (1,100), and U. S. Americans (800). In addition, there are roughly 10,000 foreign-born Finnish citizens in Helsinki. The most frequently spoken foreign languages are Russian, Estonian, Somali, English, and Arabic (Helsingin väestö… 2000: 114, 117–119, 129) (CD-Fig. 9). The largest concentration of both foreign nationals and speakers of foreign languages is in the eastern neighborhoods of Helsinki (Fig. 5).

Some demographic characteristics of the immigrant population in Helsinki stand in sharp contrast to the Finnish- and Swedish-speakers, reflecting similar trends nationwide. The gender division is relatively even in each of the three groups (CD-Fig. 10). Overall, women dominate slightly. A comparison of the immigrants by continent reveals a slight dominance of men among Africans (58%) and North Americans (62%). Extending the examination to the national level shows notable

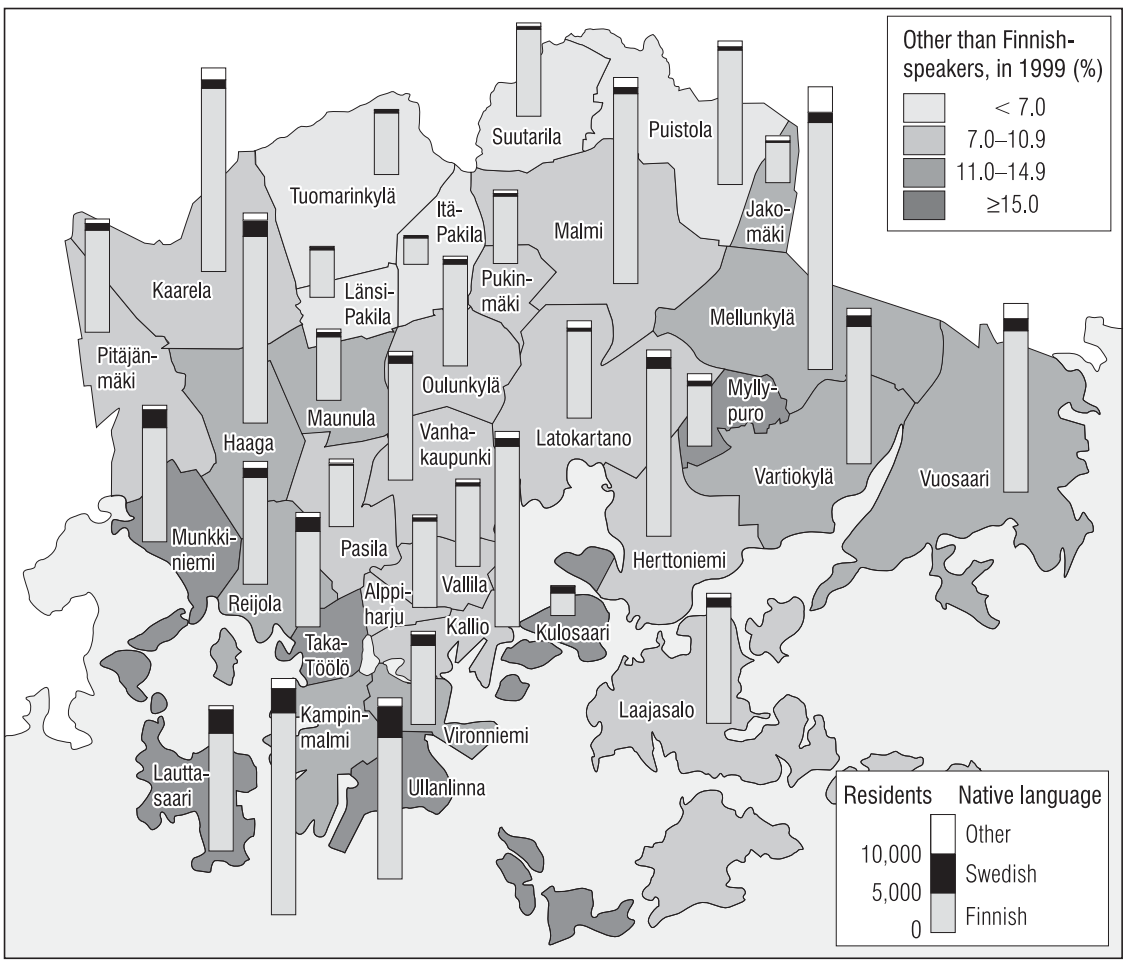

Fig. 5. Finnish-speakers, Swedish-speakers, and speakers of other languages in Helsinki, in 1999 (Helsinki alueittain 2000; cf. Raento & Husso 1999: 188).

contrasts between the groups. Whereas women dominate among the Estonians and the Russians (58%), they are clearly underrepresented among the European Union nationals, of whom only one-third is female. Explanations of the differences may include differences in motives for migration, cultural backgrounds, and employment patterns in Finnish society.

The immigrant population is considerably younger than the rest of Helsinki residents (CD-Fig. 9 & 10). This reflects immigrant history, cultural and religious values, and available employment opportunities – especially given that many recent immigrants from the Western countries have come to Finland to work. The immigrants differ notably from the Swedish-speakers, of whom over 18 percent have reached their sixty-fifth birthday. At the other extreme are the Somalis, among whom this age cohort represents less than one percent of the population (CD-Fig. 9). Almost one half of the Somali population is 15 years of age or younger, whereas this age group represents less than 15 percent of the Swedish-speakers in Helsinki (Helsingin väestö… 2000: 129).

These differences of age and gender can also be interpreted as indicators of success or hardship in the light of employment statistics (CD-Fig. 11). The unemployment rate of the foreign nationals in Finland decreased throughout the 1990s, being over one half in 1994 and one-third in 2001. There were considerable differences between population groups. Whereas unemployment among the Western Europeans and the North Americans is below 10 percent and thus close to the national average, the rate still reaches 60 percent among the Iraqi, the Irani, the Somalis, and the Vietnamese (Nieminen 1999: 17; STV 1999: 59; Valtavaara 2001; Tervola 2001). Behind these differences are differences in education and linguistic skills, both related to the type of employment (in high-tech companies command of English may be enough) and the attitudes and linguistic skills of the majority society. Employment opportunities are more abundant in the Helsinki area, but the same trends apply in the capital as elsewhere. The differences suggest that a dual labor market is emerging among Finland's immigrant population. At one end are the highly educated Westerners that are often invited to join the Finnish work force because of their special skills. At the other end, there is a growing group of people with limited educational background, linguistic skills, and work experience who have emigrated from Eastern Europe or the Third World, often as refugees (Jaakkola 2000). Because many of these people are young – either at school or in the prime working age – the difficulty of integration is underscored further.

Conclusion

The cultural geography of Finland is being reshuffled. The increasing cultural and demographic exchange and internationalization in the 1990s have led to recognition of Finland's cultural heterogeneity. A new sensitivity and new policy measures, aimed at accommodating an increasingly heterogeneous population and at taking into account considerable differences among the groups, have emerged. There has been a notable upsurge of new policies towards both the old and the new minorities at the national, regional, and local levels. Particular foci have been the cultural and linguistic rights of the neglected 'old' minority groups, immigration and refugee policy, and housing, education, employment, and cultural accommodation that apply to all minorities in Finland. Simultaneously, there has been a revived interest in the majority culture's folk traditions.

For centuries, the country has been more heterogeneous than the Finnish nation-builders have admitted, but the old, state-promoted perception of homogeneity and subsequent attitudes are difficult to overcome. Recognition and respect of cultural difference and international exchange continue to be a novelty for much of the Finnish-speaking, Lutheran, and White majority population. Whereas the majority culture's regional differences are approached as colorful and harmless curiosities, more 'exotic' difference is often treated with suspicion. As a counter-reaction to new developments, signs of negative attitudes towards diversification have emerged among the majority population (Dahlgren 1996; HS 2001a, 2001b), making discrimination, racism, and cultural conflict topics of public debate. Attitudes towards minorities and immigration and refugee policies seem to vary regionally according to such elements as political worldview, degree of urbanization, age, level of education, and exposure and experience regarding different cultures and lifestyles (Jaakkola 1999). Many continue to be isolated from the cultural change in their quotidian life. Integration and assimilation between the ma-

jority population and the old and the new minorities therefore vary considerably in degree from place to place. Much of the cross-cultural interaction and the change of demographic and ethno-cultural landscapes remain urban phenomena that mostly attract the educated and the young.

Also complicating the minorities' integration into the mainstream society and the implementation of the new policies are disagreements within the minority groups themselves. These disagreements vary from political worldviews to generational, gender-related, and cultural differences in relation to the integration process. In some cases, the internal fragmentation of the groups has weakened their possibilities to influence the society (see Lanas Cavada 1998), which may lead to new forms and patterns of marginalization. This poses an additional challenge to the authorities who need to recognize the heterogeneity within their 'minority subjects' themselves. It is thus clear that Finnish society is currently facing a rapid, significant, and perhaps somewhat unpredictable change of demographics, culture, and value structures that is only taking its first steps.

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