

## **Place and the Sense of Belonging in the Construction of Scottish National-Identity**

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### **Abstract:**

Place and a sense of belonging play(s) a crucial role in the construction of Scottish national identity which has developed and changed. Scottish national identity is a complex, dynamic and evolving multidimensional process. Despite being part of the UK, Scotland is a distinct country within the broader image of the Union. Scotland's landscapes are one of the main contributors to Scottish national identity and remain an important part of how Scottish people see themselves. This article takes a comprehensive look at what constitutes Scottish national identity in twenty-first century and provides a theoretical background to explain how that identity has developed with respect to Anthony Giddens's theory of identity. The article pays a special attention to the role of "the sense of belonging" in identity building in contemporary Scotland.

Keywords; (Scotland; Identity; Belonging; Place; Giddens).

## تأثير المكان والشعور بالانتماء على بناء الهوية القومية الاسكوتلندية المعاصرة

### الملخص:

يلعب المكان دورًا حاسمًا في بناء الهوية الوطنية الإسكوتلندية التي تطورت وتغيرت. الهوية الوطنية الإسكوتلندية هي عملية معقدة وديناميكية متعددة الأبعاد. على الرغم من كونها جزءًا من المملكة المتحدة، إلا أن اسكتلندا دولة متميزة ضمن الصورة الأوسع للاتحاد. تعد المناظر الطبيعية في اسكتلندا أحد المساهمين الرئيسيين في الهوية الوطنية الإسكوتلندية وتظل جزءًا مهمًا من الطريقة التي يرى بها الشعب الإسكوتلندي نفسه. يلقي هذا المقال نظرة شاملة على ما يشكل الهوية الوطنية الإسكوتلندية في القرن الحادي والعشرين، ويوفر خلفية نظرية لشرح كيفية تطور تلك الهوية فيما يتعلق بنظرية الهوية لأنطوني جيدنز. كما يولي المقال المزيد من الاهتمام لدور الشعور بالانتماء في بناء الهوية في اسكتلندا المعاصرة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: (اسكتلندا; الهوية; الانتماء; المكان; جيدنز).

### Place and the Sense of Belonging in the Construction:

This article takes a close look at a selected aspect of contemporary Scottish national identity. Scottish national identity is often associated with a romanticized notion of place and a sense of belonging to that place. The sense of belonging as a traditional aspect for contemporary Scottish national identity will be discussed in this article. Alongside social interactions, physical space is a fundamental marker of belonging in contemporary Scotland. The article focuses on the theoretical concept rather than on the performativity of national identity. It is worth noting that Scottish national identity is an active and dynamic process that can be performed and actively

constructed by Scottish people. The sense of belonging to Scotland plays a central role in connecting Scottish people to the social world and allows an examination of the mutual influence between the dynamics of the self, place and society. Scottish people have developed a strong relationship with their territory that becomes part of who they are—their identity. Sometimes the character of Scotland as a place is used to describe what Scotland is like and what makes it unique and different from other places. In Scotland, there is an emotional attachment between Scottish places and people, and identity where they have a sense of self in those places. Scottish places reflect figures and images with significant sense of self and belonging to those places. Scottish places have an impact on Scottish people's sense of belonging and their national identity. Through their capacity as self-conscious, self-aware human beings, Scottish people constantly create and recreate their national identity.

Social science has become increasingly interested in the importance of place for understanding the lived experiences of everyday life. Such work demonstrates that geographic spaces are more than simple backdrops to social psychological processes, and instead highlights how social categories are inextricably bound up with notions of place, and how places are central to concepts of identity, belonging and attachment. To discuss the topic of Scottish national identity more thoroughly in this article, it is important to familiarize oneself with some general aspects of identity with respect to the sense of belonging and attachment to place. One of the central interests of

social science is the relationship between self and society, and how social change affects individuality, constraining or liberating the selves that individuals can be - their identities. There is an interrelationship between place and community, space and identity. Identity is a dynamic product of the interaction between the capacities for memory, consciousness and organized construal which are characteristic of the biological organism and the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context (Breakwell 1986). Identity is intimately connected to belonging and roots an individual to the object of identity which comes through three types of belonging: spatial, through fixed and fluid segments, borders, cities, communities, landscapes and their symbolic transformation; cultural, through values and abstract and standardized ideas; and social, through social groups and their relations (Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*: 56). Belonging can be experienced at multiple levels, from a sense of attachment to family, friends, and local communities, to a sense of identification with larger social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality, cultural groups, and physical places. Belonging is characterized by a sense of shared norms, values, connectedness, acceptance, and identification with a particular social group or community and refers to an individual's perception of being included within a social context. Distinctions such as class, family, neighborhood, race, and nationality are still essential markers of identity, but the boundaries of what these differences describe are becoming less clear. People develop new

ways of belonging to social groups and networks that transcend physical and virtual boundaries. In contemporary world, people's social interactions become more complex and intertwined. In their social interactions, individuals use various symbolic systems and spaces in the construction of their identities where human interactions with spaces help frame social identities and practices. While in the past, a sense of belonging was defined in terms of social position such as class, gender or religion, the self has become a reflexive project no longer determined by social position, and people are able to select from a wide range of groups, communities and lifestyles with which they wish to align. In turn, people shape their social identities due to the new freedoms and challenges or uncertainties that this reflexivity entails and, at the same time, they may remain attached to the place in which they feel they belong to. Consequently, people manage themselves as individuals through their social interactions with other individuals where their identities are shaped by geographical spaces and places. A sense of belonging is based on an individual's perception of connection to a chosen group or place and is dependent on opportunities for interaction with others. The sense of belonging is not fixed to a community, with the implication of closed boundaries, but is more fluid, seeing places as sites for performing identities. Individuals attach their biography to their chosen residential location so that they tell stories that indicate how their arrival and subsequent settlement is appropriate to their sense of belonging. Identification and interactions between physical

geography and human geography provide insights into the process of identity building and the sense of belonging. Therefore, belonging should be seen as a socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a place as appropriate to their social trajectory and their position in other fields. As the world becomes more connected, the sense of belonging is characterized by a move away from traditional social categories and it is common for people to pass through the borders of individual countries, both physically and virtually.

Globalization, which is a main factor for social change, has shaped the sense of belonging where people are faced with a new individualism, in which they actively construct their identities. Globalization has paved the way for different logics of integration and differentiation, and many kinds of identities and belongings are built where people's imaginations roam over space and time. The sense of self emerges from one's predominant social and environmental contexts, reinforcing and challenging the subjective sense of belonging. Social, cultural, environmental, and geographical structures, provide an orientation for the self to determine a sense of belonging or alienation. Geography is crucial to creating a sense of belonging because people who live in a specific area create new sorts of belonging. Depending on the symbolic interactionism of human geographies, some geographers tend to consider how Scottish people manage themselves and identities in particular kinds of places, as well as in the face of social roles and rules

(Vincent 179). Geography is a broad discipline that spans the natural and social sciences. Its central tenet is that place matters. Social science is concerned with how people conceptualize space/place and the impact it has on self-identity, sense of belonging, and participation in society. Attachment to place requires attention to the geographic or spatial dimensions of human experiences. Attachment to place is central to Scottish national identity and reflects the sense of belonging to Scotland. For Scottish people, having a sense of belonging goes beyond what might initially be thought of as feelings of 'being at home' or of seeing oneself as fitting in to a community or place. In this way, Scottish people's sense of belonging to their landscape is a means to engender identification with its aims, objectives and values on a wide spectrum. For the Scots, Scotland is not just a geographical place: it is also a set of reciprocal relationships, of everyday events and practices, of accepting and being accepted as a legitimate part of a larger whole, involving a sense of belonging. The symbolic nature of social interactions is translated through geography's sensitivity for the complex relationship between symbolic and material space. Geographers try to understand social interactions and approach the politics of place and relate it to identity and belonging in a double move. First, the proliferation of situated studies of identity events in different places provides an on-going insistence and reminder that place matters. Underlying this insistence is the understanding that things turn out differently in different places, or that place makes a

difference. The second move is to problematize place (Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*: 19). Every culture has some form of standardized spatial markers which designates a special awareness of place. The global map, in which there is no privileging of place is the correlate symbol to the clock in the emptying of space. It is not just the mode of portraying what has always been there – the geography of the earth – but is constitutive of quite basic transformations in social relations (Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*: 16). Rather than accepting places as self-evident and static backdrops, sets, or stages on which human events happen, places are recast in dynamic relationship with the people that inhabit them. The materiality of place is seen as both acted upon by humans and affecting human action. Much attention is similarly drawn to the dynamic ways in which place exceeds its physicality, becomes an idea or an imaginary construct and in this way is culturally construed. Such interrogations of the human interface with place underscore the ways in which place and identity have come to be regarded as mutually constituting, and the politics of belonging are implicated in the place/identity making process.

Belonging as an emotionally charged social location combines perceptions and performance of commonality; a sense of mutuality and formalized modalities of collective allegiance, and material and immaterial attachments that often result in a sense of entitlement. Attachments link people to material and immaterial worlds; and make people belong to spaces,



natural objects, landscapes, climate, and material possessions. Growing up in a locality can create a strong sense of belonging – and so does the ownership of land or a place. Commonality, mutuality and attachments stabilize belonging, rendering collective sociability durable. To belong in the modern world means to reflexively talk about home and the sense of place. Belonging renders the boundaries of the social permissible, creating space for negotiations for new and expanded meanings of mutuality and togetherness. Belonging becomes increasingly problematic, given the pluralizing nature of contemporary societies and the differentiated character of any social space that the regimes of belonging seek to cover up. The concept of belonging provides an analytical tool to see collective boundedness, catering to identity representations, while simultaneously pointing to the possibilities of moving across social boundaries and negotiating their meanings. The challenge of grasping the central features of belonging is that the contemporary self-reflexivity under the conditions of globalization and transnational experiences renders the human preoccupation with territorial space and local attachments perennially pertinent. Belonging is a feeling of support when an individual observes inclusion and identity as a particular group member. The sense of belonging is a need that individuals must involve themselves in a group of choices. This need may lead to changes in behavior or attitudes as individuals try to fit in their chosen group or experience their sense of place. A sense of place is part of the politics of identity. Place/identity attachment refers to

bonds that people develop with places. The relationship between a place and an individual is interdependent. Senses of place often provide differences between one group of people and another, where these contrasts are complex and can be based on class, gender, race and other aspects of identity (Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*: 21). Sense of place is more than just one person's feelings about a specific place; such feelings are not only individual but also social. Places are significant sources of identity elements. Aspects of identity derived from places individuals belong to arise because places have figures and images that have meaning and are significant to those individuals. Places do not have a permanent meaning and the contribution to identity is never the same. Being in different or new places affect identity through accentuation or attenuation, threat and dislocation (Breakwell 35). One process in which identity is attached to a particular place is by a feeling that an individual belongs to that place. Therefore, identifying with a place is symbolized by certain qualities of the place, i.e., such a place offers a feeling of safety and refuge. Strong feelings of identification with a place may also concentrate on other kinds of places. Individual and collective memory shared with others can contribute to developing an effective bond with a place and strengthening a sense of belonging to that place (Dixon 30). Attachment to place is important for behavioral geography, to explore the emotional content of place, including issues involving belonging, identity, and sense of the self.

Attachment to place has profound implications not only for behavioral geography but also for human geography. For Scottish people, feeling they belong to a place necessarily entails that it belongs to them. Family, community, and national histories are intricately woven into the physical landscapes in which they exist. Landscapes are the means that express Scottish people's feelings for attachment to place (Keith 19). The image of Scotland as a place plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity of contemporary Scotland. Scottish national identity relates to the understandings Scottish people hold about 'who they are' and what is meaningful to them. Scotland refers to a geographical place, a territory on a map, a collection of rocks, earth and water, defined by its topography, climate and natural resources. For Scottish people, rocks, earth and water constitute Scotland's landscapes, which become iconic images of the country. Therefore, geography and Scottish identity are inextricably tied up with each other. The primary importance for the Scots is to see Scotland as their home where place/identity relationship becomes a cognitive database against which physical setting is experienced. Place/identity relationship develops as Scottish people see themselves as distinct from, but related to, the physical environment. Scottish people's attachment to place/Scotland is part of their national identity that differentiates them from other people in the United Kingdom. To people throughout the United Kingdom, they find that locality matters more than country, but this could be a less obvious distinction than

might be supposed because national identity is mediated – given meaning – by a more immediate ‘banal’ experience. For the Scots, Scottish national identity matters more than state identity. People may experience their Scottishness through their belonging to more proximate or intimate social groupings (McCrone 552). A place becomes a landscape of memories providing a sense of Scottish national identity that reinforces attachment to Scotland. Therefore, place, social participation and social memories become intertwined in the identity projects of the Scottish people. Scottish people's changing relationship with attachment to and appropriation of different places is a normative part of their changing perspectives. Scottish people examine the feelings associated with Scottish places where they find themselves attached to those places. Attachment to place helps to reinforce Scottish national-identity - which personalizes the living space and conveys a sense of Scottishness and belonging. Scottish national identity would be seen as a process of constant negotiation and interactions between Scottish people and place. Within the image of Scotland, many Scottish people tend to regard themselves as belonging more or less than others. This is linked to another aspect of the national imaginary, and that is the personification of Scotland. Scottish national identity is intertwined with the place itself. Scottish people see themselves as centrally or peripherally positioned in relation to the 'heart of the nation' or its 'core'. Specific Scottish landscapes have a “heightened status as markers of Scottish national identity” (Smith 81). When talking

about the importance of place for Scottish national identity, it not only includes territory in a literal sense, but also the images it holds. It is the attachments and associations, rather than residence in or possession of the land that matters for identification. It is where the Scots belong and make Scotland their homeland.

In addition to place, within human geography, Scottish national identity is a process of social and spatial intertwining the emphasis on the centrality of space and everyday life. Scottish national identity is the result of the sense of belonging to the Scottish landscape and geography, therefore, Scotland as a place is what constitutes Scottish national identity. In Scotland, geography exceeds its physical characteristics to reflect the sense of Scottishness and acts as a shared resource to underpin national belonging. The shift toward considering the political dynamics of belonging represents a deepening engagement with the politics of identity and the politics of difference. The politics of belonging are characterized by recurring debates over the role that place and the sense of belonging play in the construction of Scottish national identity. The importance of place for Scottish national identity not only includes territory in a literal sense, but also the images it holds. It is the attachments and associations, rather than residence in or possession of the land that matters for identification. It is where Scottish people belong. Although globalisation is an important phenomenon in modern society, the homeland and national territory nevertheless remains a key aspect of Scottish

national identity. Because the Highlands have provided many of the images and meanings, Scotland can be described as a “landscape of the mind, a place of the imagination” (Edensor 17). Places become imbued with symbolic meaning; they inform current self-concepts and become a crucial part of an individual's self-identity. There is an emotional connection between people and place i.e., attachment between place and people, and identity as having a sense of self in that place. The physical characteristics of a place shape activities and lifestyle choices. Place attachment contributes to the formation, maintenance, and preservation of the identity of a person, group, or culture (Altman 10). Through attachment to a place, individuals build community and find meaning and purpose in the places where they live. With a place-based orientation to everyday life, individuals have the potential to heal their relationships with each other and nature. Belonging to a place arises from social interactions in the environment including information and social common signs. Sometimes the character of Scotland as a place is used to describe what Scotland is like and what makes it unique and different from other places. Scottish people have developed a strong relationship with their territory that becomes part of who they are—their identity. Place imagery has been examined as an ideology that allows Scottish people to make sense of their personal lives and to deal with broader community conditions. Scottish places reflect figures and images have a sense of Scottishness. Scottishness refers to a Scottish individual's sense of self in relation to a specific place.

Identity development begins when Scottish individuals identify with role models to explore whom they can become. The geographical features and landscapes of Scotland have an impact on the Scottish individuals' experiences. For example, growing up in a city of the Highlands may lead to a different identity from growing up in a rural area of the Lowlands. Overall, living in a Scottish area plays a significant role in shaping Scottish national identity. Places carry meaning, memories, cultures, and people. Scottish people have developed a strong relationship with Scottish landscape, and it becomes part of their national identity. One process in which Scottish national identity is attached to a particular place is by a feeling that the Scots belong to that place - Scotland. For many Scottish people, place instigates their awareness of Scottishness and sense of belonging. Scotland is often portrayed through iconic characteristics rather than as a geographical landmass, despite being bordered by other territories. These abstracted characteristics of Scotland are also associated with the identity of its people. Scottish national identity is framed by a sense of belonging to the imagined space of Scotland or to the imagined national community. Therefore, the sense of Scottishness is, the perception held by Scottish people by the characteristics some geographic places have. The sense of Scottishness is the feelings Scottish people experience, express, imagine and know the place in which they live. In Scotland, place can define the distinctive features, both tangible and intangible, where place not only contains the elements of a

location, but also includes the associations and feelings that people have. Moreover, Scottish people's attachment to Scotland refers to the complex relationship between them and their environment. Scottishness is about creating and developing a strong relationship with Scottish landscape that becomes part of who the Scots are and shapes their national identity. Scottish people become aware of their Scottish national identity and realize that it is different from other identities. Scottish people have a deep-seated sense of belonging to their Scottish landscape, thus, they implicitly differentiating themselves from other people in the United Kingdom. This self-regulation is presented as behavior born out of the sense of belonging to the Scottish landscape and an attendance to responsibilities for keeping their Scottish national identity. Knowing the categories of people who are in a place, or the kinds of behaviors that one might expect from them is a main construct of Scottish national identity. Scottish people's ability to go anywhere in their local area is constructed as a function of both knowing and understanding the space and the people in it, and thereby claiming their Scottish national identity.

To conclude, Scottish national identity is framed by a sense of belonging to the imagined space of the nation and its community. In other words, by connecting Scottish people to the fabric of their surroundings is to see them as belonging to an integral part of place/Scotland.

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