European Minorities or Postmodern "Euro-vision" – towards Critical Aspects in a Political Anthropological Frame[1]

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Abstract. Globalization and Europeanization resulted in significant integration mechanisms, but in the same time they also generated the disintegration of the national communities. Thus, in parallel with the self-assertive attitude of several minorities, the decomposition of the national identities also occurred. In this context the most important questions are: how minority status will be defined, which kind of narratives and representations concerning minorities will arise, how ethnic boundaries will be built up in a fluid world of flows, and how minorities will react on the external pressures from the globalization forces, e.g. cultural, linguistic clashes and changes in livelihoods. These are the questions discussed in this essay.

Keywords: Europeanization, integration challenge, narrative minority, national policy, EU-vision, political anthropology.

Instead of Introduction

In parallel with the European integration of the states, the disintegration of the national communities, the decomposition of the national identities, and the expansion of some minorities' self-assertion occurred (Appadurai 1996; Lendvai 1997; Kovács 2002). Thus, in the context of today's socio-political transition, the national character of the states and associated representations still exist (see Brubaker 2001; Giddens 2004; Kántor 2006).

Even a superficial look at current European integration processes may lead us to state with a reasonable scientific ease: it has become quite precarious nowadays to think in terms of "nations," "national minorities" or any forms of existence "local identities" take, other than the national frameworks. Not because, or not

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1   Preliminary study with the contribution of Andrea Varga.

merely because minority identities and forms of existence can only be formed with excess risks amidst current identity policies, but mainly because the Benchmark itself, the majority "framework" has become more friable than any of the constructions or structures made up of state-forming forces in history so far. "National identities"—as a phenomenon narrated by the essentialist point of view—are eroding ever more so, and ever more intensely.

In this short essay I am not able to describe each of the reasons of this dissolution; I am concentrating only on a short enumeration of the causes. In the course of this endeavour, I am aware that in parallel with the process of dissolution, policies of state establishment and nation forming fervours, identity-building movements, etc. are taking place; all these are manifesting themselves with great power, and it seems that they do not always give attention to micro-historical changes and they are propagating the idea that major geopolitical changes can still be shaped within the frameworks of macro-regions and nation states.

I must start my enumeration with the anti-nation, anti-national government and anti-national policy oriented phenomenon, i.e. globalization. Instead of making references to the exhaustive bibliography on globalization, I am referring to the following typical aspects through which globalization impacts national and minority identities. For instance, it is beyond any doubt that—whether we like it or not—we are living in a network society and, as a consequence, it becomes unrealistic to conceptualize national and minority identities within the framework of those traditional state forms, political integrations and micro-level social movements which were characteristic a century or even half or quarter of a century ago. World economy and manifestations of military, political, international, etc. relations are illustrative manifestations of globalizations, of the games, policies and solutions which are taking place beyond nations and even continents; the economy creates multiple linkages between nations, reshapes the order of the international relations, creates new priorities for development, redefines the place and importance of the actors and agents of development. In this context, it is irresponsible not to pay attention to the fact that borders and even isolated places are losing their importance, at least in the sense that even isolated events become rapidly externalized and globalized; a bird flu virus originated from Asia, a tribal conflict from Africa, an extremist political movement from the Middle East, or even a well developed computer virus—with no "nationality"—are able to reshape for months, years or for longer periods the life of nations, continents and to generate new types of international relations and security policy. In the era of globalization it is very risky not to pay attention to what occurs at a distance. The influences and connections are evident (Lévi 2006; Brubaker 2006).

We cannot overlook the fact that national politics has only a minor chance of remaining independent from the conflicts taking place beyond its borders

in other states of Europe, Africa, Asia or South-America. In the context of globalization, national development policies which are overlooking the forces and manifestations of globalization are irresponsible and invalid.

Minority or nation-policy disadvantage?

I will cut it short here; everyone is able to extend this consideration to the several domains of their respective field of knowledge, to their given set of devices of effects and interplays, constraints and dilemmas, challenges and solutions. I only mention all these, because in the past one and a half decades EU-(ro)phoria, with its delicate balances and collective constraints (Kovács ed. 2002), has successively become the existential experience of the nation states now slowly marching out of the bipolar global system (Giddens 2004; Kántor 2006). National states, I repeat—that is, power structures based on national policies, national past and national strategies—are facing this situation born out of constraint. Let we refer alone to the small circles of minorities, micro-minorities, differing identities and collective representations, which, in most cases, have gained their legitimacy and sought their legitimable forms of identity *against* the state level control, management, national policy or majority rule principle imposed upon them. Nowadays, this unity of local identity seems to be diminishing—a process which has been happening for some time, but has intensified recently, as I see it. This happens not only because this "unified" nature was mostly externally defined (or internally dreamt about, and hoped for); but also because this "society against the state" group-like mode of existence is eroding ever more spectacularly and rapidly, even from an insider's perspective. If the main supporting pillars of social cohesion are melting away, if all the traits of the spatial coexistence and economical functionality of the (joint) family and kinship are ceasing; if the entire system of economic and market relationships becomes supra-national, transcending all boundaries; then who is entitled to still keep on discussing the self-protective powers of small community identities? If the presumed or imaginary "unity" of the community and society—which was there long before, but had vanished by now—is only leading to further erosion from now on, is it still possible to be leisurely measuring the survival abilities, the autogenic world and autonomy-needs of small-scale collectives within the nation-policy dimensions? It is the locals themselves who know most about this, for in its numerous forms they are all living in minority conditions. If the state itself becomes eroded, how can we judge small communities' needs for autonomy? This aspects can be well illustrated not only in the case of Romania in terms of Romanian-Hungarian or Hungarian-Hungarian dimensions, but also throughout Europe: we are more often witnessing those phenomena in which

real linkages between several communities are articulated in terms of European–non-European, we–they, citizens–migrants, familiar–unfamiliar tandems. Other interests, other tales, European and not only European narratives have redrawn national identities, appropriated national historical conditions, and generated international, multi- or pluri-cultural identities, universal expatriations, etc. There emerged intercontinental movements, together with trans-continental identifications, which have been deliberately connected not to places or roots, but to changing flows. Since the nation states themselves were not perfectly united and homogenous, then how the situation of European minorities is going to be in the context of globalization? Should we expect more chances for minorities to articulate their identities and rights or, on the contrary, does this new context make the search for specific identities and avatars irrelevant? In any case, we must be aware of the fact that in the context of macro-policies and global flows, minority status, whether we are referring to Europe or to other continents, is not marketable. Thus, the extension of minority rights within a certain nation state, even against the will of the majority, could represent a useless joy. Autonomy can be reached (see the Faeroe islands, Catalans or even Kosovo), and global public opinion can be sensitized towards the solidarity with those repressed (see the case of Tibet, the case of international migrants from Africa, or even the case of the Roma population in Hungary), but all these are not enough to solve the minority politics occurring in the age after the nation state. Staying or becoming a minority in the process of transition gradually becomes a more characteristic experience than that of upholding the national colours against the symbols that represent other nation states of the EU or against other regions' national representations of the world. However, if everybody becomes a minority in the age of diffluent majorities, then it will rapidly turn out that there is no minority without an even more minor minority, without a nucleus, without some inherent group-aspirations, striving to independency even within the minority status… It will turn out—which is an open secret among minority researchers—that the main questions or the most important aspects of the minority problem in our age are not the minority groups discussed in terms of majority/minority, or the ones related on the basis of the "minority as a unity" principle. As they are hugely divided, even their group-like units contain decisive, dominant minority forces, and "drifters" are just as much to be found as the opposing members and the ones on the periphery. Which kind of minority narrative will be presented, and when, to the public or to the secret diplomatic vocabulary, thus, it might turn out, is merely a question of viewpoint or interpretation, hence it will be primarily determined by the international scientific argot, the language of the economical or interest-policy discourses, or the group-level narration of values attached to minorities.

Ruling principles, scripts, roles

During the course of Europeanization and the connected state policies, one of the most obvious phenomenon consists in the state's withdrawal from the national politics. This results in the fact that sub-national groups, the majority and the minorities, political parties and organizations, immigrants and other actors are not the dominant actors, i.e. protagonists of the events concerning the social and political transformations. They are just mute actors. This state theatre, though, claims to adhere to Euro-compatible norms. However, the processes of Europeanization, participatory democracy and the idea of equal opportunities frequently remain only at a discursive level.

The question of how the "theatre ruling strategy" of the state meets the practice of the actors might be a basic one. Summing it up, I would say, the political communities are bound to follow the EU-integrative norm in social integration, even having to familiarize themselves with the sense that what they are to integrate into, is itself a peculiarly disintegrating social state of affairs. In this "scenic space" the director's conception and the problem around which the script evolves are both counting on such professional actors, who, besides having the necessary routine in acting in front of an ever darkening background, are not only undertaking the narration of some well-known story, but they do love acting it out, as well. In the meantime, "spectators", e.g., minorities are watching with disillusion how the effective play of the actors remains much behind the EU-phoric expectations. In fact, the actors are playing an *ad hoc* game, and must continuously adapt their behaviours to international constraints and changing expectations from the part of the international institutions. In this strange modernist act, in fact, two fundamental structural elements are taking part. One of these is the *state dramaturgy*, while the other is represented by a cultural strategy composed of those pledges which can be assumed in the context of Europeanization. Such a play is the metaphor of reshaping democracy, and establishes the demarcation between ours and theirs, development and marginalization, etc. In this sense, we can refer to cases like the EU enlargement towards other states, to questions regarding states' capacities to meet the European norms, the development of new national legal norms concerning minorities, etc. Building these demarcations is a form of an identity-building mechanism which serves both the preservation of the existing state-level legislation and the introduction of new legislative norms in various fields of life. This is a cultural narrative of border-crossing between the West and the rest: the EU-phoric expectation of the West is coupled with the situation in which the East is not embraced by the former. Accessing countries are comparing themselves to the West, they accentuate those patterns which separate them from the East; this results in a double identity and places the states in front of a choice: us or them.

This zone of demarcation creates borders in the sense that in the course of regionalization there are emerging new lines of separation between specific spaces which are shaped by various ethnicities, interactions, habits, etc. In such context there are appearing new forms of group definitions (from the inside or from the outside, on ethnic or on economic grounds), which represent culture-dependent units with potential border-forming roles. History, the course of local events and external constraints (e.g., migration) are also important aspects of identity creation and have an important role in shaping the creation of cultural demarcation lines and borders. Ethnic and cultural groups are components of social stratification and are affected by various demographic, migration, etc. changes, whether we refer to ethnic groups situated in Transylvania, Dobrudja, Tirol, or in other parts of the first or third world.

The duality for us stems from the fact that, though we are far from admitting that the inner stratification and political conventions of Eastern societies would have any bearing upon our state of affairs, we suffer, at the same time, from the fact that the western type of Christianity can not be realized in its pure form. All these social and mass relations, geographical and historical dimensions in public policy and in public sentiment are not determined by the condition of being closed, but always by the *cultural contacts* and the *changes* of the given time.

Ethnic groups, religious or social subcultures are frequently only theoretical concepts; minoritiesm in terms of their status, effective rights and potentials for actions are pushed on the margin of the society. We must admit two aspects: on the one hand, there is an internal segmentation in the case of the East-European societies, and on the other hand such societies feel uncomfortable because they cannot truly adapt themselves to the West. In the meantime, keywords and issues like stigmatization, migration, ethnic economy, integration, exclusion, political stability, legitimacy, social conflicts, etc. are illustrative for the definition of identity along borders and ethnicity. The irony is that in the same time, due to the fluidization of effective borders, interactions, patterns of space and time-use not only influence the specific cultures, but allow the development of intercultural phenomena and spaces.

In concluding my thoughts, I would like to draw attention to the way ethnic group-relations are being dealt with externally and internally, as an inherent way of managing them. It is well-known, at least since Barth's introductory essay to the book dealing with the problem of ethnic boundaries, that in contrast to the structuralist-functionalist approach, minority individuals are not merely the "carriers" of a given culture's norms and values defined in various ways. Individuals, their perceptions and goal-oriented decision making capability, their self-definition and their relation to "external events" should rather be regarded as active social factors.

Ethnicity, minority status or marginal inequality are forms of a cultural state of life. The transactions along, inside and outside of the borders are continuously

rearranging the space as well as the cultural lifestyle of the communities. Communities and their actors are constructing and de-constructing the demarcation line between past and present, past and future. In the context of extended modernity there is no state or citizenship, membership and faith (see Appadurai 1996); everything is in motion and flow, both margins and centers are in continuous movements towards and through each other. In accordance with Barth, the flow of changes occurring between the dimensions of ebb and tide is in fact the history, and this history is composed of a reciprocal relationship between various horizons, cultural and geographical spaces. From the outside such a situation can still be defined in terms of ethnical and cultural groups, while from the inside it is perceived as a space in active transformation.

Thus, intercultural relations and programs of integration must pay attention to both the processes from inside and outside (see A. Gergely 2005: 226–229): the formers are important because they are composed of identity building mechanisms and narratives of cohesion and separation through which the individual level ethnicity can be defined and articulated, while the latter is composed of those influences which continuously reshape the internal narratives and actions of identification. Thus, in the course of the process of Europeanization there are emerging processes of self-definition which are generated both from the inside and the outside, and the narratives of identification presuppose various forms of representations (see for illustrations Lévi 2006; Sanbar 2006; Silberman 2006). (See A. Gergely 2005; Sanbar 2006; Silberman 2006; Brubaker 2006; Erős 1998.)

Minority self-definitions and the chances and conditions of intercultural contacts are thus not only questions of rights and benefits or rules, but are themselves necessities of clarification hidden in the definition of the External and the Internal, Ours and Theirs, etc.

The integration mechanisms of the European nations have become important projects in many countries of the region, but deep down within these processes the disintegration of communities is taking place and, simultaneously, there is an invisible expansion of the minority condition into the (state)nation forming majority, as well. Remaining or becoming a minority in the process of transition gradually becomes a more characteristic experience than that of upholding the national colours against the symbols that represent other nation-states of the EU or against other regions' national representations of the world. We might therefore ask: is being a minority a condition or a possibility for integration, or is it a choice born of necessity or insight? If in the near future everyone will have already become a minority, will there be a chance for the historical, cultural, linguistic or state-national minorities to sustain themselves in the way they have had the opportunity to do it until now? My essay leads to the question of crossing the borders and of integration plays on the European "stage," also touching on the narratives pertaining to nations and minorities.

Besides theoretical questions, I consider the crucial issue to be the inclusion of the West in the East and the acceptance of the East in the West, a process which will thoroughly reshape the postmodern EU-visions following the recent changes in the political-economical systems.

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