



Youth Self-Identification in the Carpathian Basin

Book review

**Andrea SZABÓ – Béla BAUER – Péter PILLÓK (co-ord.):
MOZAIK 2011. Magyar fiatalok a Kárpát-medencében
[Mozaik 2011. Hungarian Youth in the Carpathian Basin]**

The self-identification of youth, the image it has of itself, as well as the role the young generations assign for themselves within a certain society, is always a fascinating subject, all the more so if one is talking about a youth belonging to an ethnic or national minority. Such is the case of the Hungarian minorities inhabiting the Carpathian Basin. MOZAIK 2011 is a comprehensive study dedicated to exploring the different varieties and levels of identity that the youth from this specific group experiences. It is, in part, a continuation of a 2001 study, bearing the same name, but while the latter one drew its information from questionnaires, the former is based on a more qualitative research done through focus group interviews.

The main purpose of the research was to explore the lifestyle and values of the youth belonging to Hungarian minorities in seven different countries and to sketch a possible identity, or rather the problems and dilemmas that these youngsters face in establishing an identity for themselves. In order to be able to compare these findings, the focus group interviews in the different regions revolved around the same topics: homeland, citizenship (dual citizenship), family, education, culture, use of language, work and future prospects. The interviewees were aged 15 to 25, and the groups included high-school students, college students, as well as people who were already working.

The findings of the study were published in a book which can be divided into four parts: an introduction, which briefly summarizes the scope of the research and its methodology, two middle parts, which we will elaborate on in the followings, and a conclusion. The first major part of the study contains the description and analyses of the focus group interviews according to the regions (Chapter 3). The seven regions in which the research was conducted are to be found in the countries surrounding Hungary, namely: Burgenland (Austria), Upper Hungary (Slovakia), Sub-Carpathia (Ukraine), Transylvania (Romania),

Vojvodina (Serbia), Southern Baranja (Croatia) and Prekmurje (Slovenia). The second major part of the research contains the thematic analysis of certain regions as well as comparative studies of the regions concerning specific issues (Chapter 4). In the followings, we shall briefly consider the studies within the two main chapters of the book referred to above.

The studies of the seven regions are in fact thorough descriptions and explanations of the information obtained through the focus group interviews. Some of the studies follow the thematic structure of the interviews, while others discuss the different cities in which the interviews were conducted separately. These structural differences do not interfere with the general understanding of the results or the findings they convey. Nevertheless, it is rather confusing that there is no presentation of the socio-cultural context of the specific region in all of the studies. Most of them are restricted to analysing the answers given to the questions of the focus group interviews. Where there is such an introductory explanation, it proves quite helpful in grasping the overall situation of the youth living in that region, and it considerably facilitates the interpretation of the results. Such is the case of Viktória Ferenc's and Magdolna Séra's analysis of Sub-Carpathia. They start their study by providing a short description of the history of this region, followed by demographic data from the cities concerned.

On the whole, these primary studies outline a wide variety of views, values and feelings concerning the identity of the Hungarian youth in these countries. They range from a quite remote sense of Hungarian cultural identity, as testified by some youngsters in Burgenland, to a strong sense of Hungarian national identity exhibited in Széklerland (Transylvania) or in some parts of Sub-Carpathia, for example.

While this part of the book relies heavily on the data collected and it is restricted to its interpretation, the comparative studies in Chapter 4 analyse this data within a socio-cultural, socio-economic and even socio-political context. In the first study of this chapter, Botond Dániel addresses a burning issue of our times, namely the situation of the youth on the labour market. He shows that the choices these young people make concerning their career and where they want to work is strongly influenced by their national identification and minority status. (He focuses on the Hungarian youth of Transylvania.) In the second study, Barna Bodó analyses the question of identity by comparing the different regions and sub-regions. He examines how the conflict between the majority and the Hungarian minority endangers the minority identity. It is interesting to note in connection with this study that it detects signs of strengthening regional-minority identities in some regions, while in others the minority identity is rapidly fading. In another study, András Déri looks at the political dimensions of the issue of identity, mainly in view of Hungarian party politics and how the youth reacts to these. Finally, the last comparative study analyses the relationship between the

digital culture and the minority status. Anna Galácz and Bence Ságvári showed that national identity is a secondary factor for the young generations in choosing the language of digital communication, which, on the whole, is influenced by more pragmatic considerations.

In conclusion, it can be said that MOZAIK 2011 is a truly significant study as it provides a complex image of the youth of the Hungarian minorities living in the Carpathian Basin. As such, it also fills a void within the sociological spectrum since it continues and completes the similar study conducted in 2001. Thus, this study makes it possible to examine the issues concerning the minority identity of the Hungarian youth, its changes and variations through a wider period of time.

Erika IMRE

Faculty of Sciences and Arts
Sapientia Univeristy, Cluj-Napoca