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## **Chance or transitory condition? Toward the Post-nations European minorities\***

### **In place of Introduction**

Even a superficial look at current European integration processes may lead us to state with 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 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 are eroding ever more so, and ever more intensely.

Evidently, I can not consider each and every vital reason for this in my lecture, I am therefore solely confined to a short listing, albeit I do it filled with premonition, for all around us state-forming policies, nation-forming fervour, identity-strengthening forces, and such tendencies are gaining ever more space, where, on the grounds of majority principle, overwhelming priority-principles are being practiced, as if micro-historical changes, or even continental transformation processes (such as the Asian or African) could still only be constructed within great regional or nation-state frameworks alone. No question, I must start this listing with globalization, the product of the confluence of non-national or contra-national and contra political governance influences.

Rather than summoning the tremendous germane literature, I will confine myself to merely indicating: if and when, the emergence of network societies becomes an indisputable and undeniable fact (whether we like it, or not; want it, or not), it becomes impossible to still conceive of minority mode of existence in terms of the traditional ones, that is, within the framework of the state, political integrations and small scale collective movements – conditions, which even a quarter of a century ago were characteristic features of societies, their workings and interactions.

If we only consider the processes of global economy, the different pertaining factors, such as the military, federal political, international interest-policy, and a few more; which are parts of games and plays unfolding, by now not (necessarily or only) within national or continental frameworks, but beyond; then we should acknowledge, that the economy undoubtedly rechannels and pervades national economics, weaves through the national economical networks, transforms the (present) layout of the international and inter-state relationships, priority-indicators, just as the place and status of the actors – sometimes not for decades or years, but for mere months only.

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If we do not acknowledge that an Asian bird disease, an African tribal conflict, a Middle Eastern extremist group, or even one well-formed computer virus (devoid of „nationality”) is able to totally redraw the political, economical, security and communication networks of more continents for long months and years – then we are confining our vision to our household only, peeping through the attic’s ventilation window merely. If we are unable to consider the chances for a national policy to remain free from European, African, Asian or South-American occasional conflicts, then we might pursue our national planning blindly and inoperatively. If we are unable to measure and weigh the new exodus of the international migrating crowds, their effect on the national culture which is being challenged and constrained by them, indicating crisis, demanding a change of strategies, labour market concessions as well as forcing minority rights conditions – if we ignore all this then, again, we will only be able to inspect our own bathtub closely and not the actual events taking place...

### **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 this, because in the past one and a half decades EU-(ro)phoria, with its delicate balances and collective constraints, has become successively the existential experience of the nation states now slowly marching out of the bipolar global system. 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 alone 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. 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 economical, proprietary basis and market relationships is becoming not only regional but 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 – I only want to indicate, that it is not only regarding Romania, nor exclusively the Romanian–Hungarian, or Hungarian–Hungarian dimensions, but transcending all that, the real relationship-stories are nowadays to be measured with the dynamics of European and Non-European, kin and alien, our own and migrant, acquaintance and stranger. Other interests, other tales, European and not only European

narratives have woven through the national boundaries, have redrawn national identities, have appropriated national historical conditions... – and international, multi- or pluri-cultural identities, universal expatriations, intercontinental movements have emerged, together with trans-continental identifications, which have been deliberately connected not to places or roots, but to provisionalities.

The question arises: if even nation-states hadn't been so fabulously unified, only a little bit "other-like" compared to the others, a bit more colourful or single-coloured in the age of nation constructions... – then what has become of the condition of the post-nation European minorities? Does it primarily contain chances as to the "at long last formulatability" of an independent identity-condition, or quite on the contrary – it is the indicator of a condition, the frameworks of which allow for, but at the same time ridicule the seemingly unified particularity of minority identities searching for a place on the palette with their own colour? If we add to all this, that minority states of being have ceased to be marketable either on a European or on an Asian or African scale by now, in the age of macro policies and the drifting currents of globalization, then we have to acknowledge, that the joy of the invisible extension of minority condition – despite the resistance of the (nation)state forming political majority – might be futile.

One may even attain autonomy (see Faeroe Islands, Catalans or even Kosovo's successful efforts to independency); one may even secure acceptance of the solidarity with those living under oppression, or the intolerability of being constantly threatened with the ethical sympathy of the world (see the case of Tibet, the request for political asylum of some African refugee-groups; or even the case of the Hungarian Gypsies' European and Canadian migration); nevertheless these are by no means a solution to the minority policy process of the post-nations age.

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. But 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-aspiration, 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. For they are hugely divided, even their group-like units contain decisive, dominant minority forces, and the "drifters" are just as much to be found, as the opposing party and the ones on the periphery, the committed, and the helpless, as well as the faithful and the resisting ones... What 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 on minority-principle basis...

### **Ruling principles, scripts, roles**

In the Europeanization process – and along the present state-political strategies – the strongest influence may be manifesting in the slow and deliberate withdrawal of the state from national politics. Therefore the transformation of the ruling principles of state policy (instead of a conscious improvement to that of the undertaking of the role of the main director of a drama) mainly leads to the fact, that the state forming social groups – the majority, the minority, the parties and political organizations, the refugees and those forced to a lifestyle deconstruction are *no longer protagonists* but only crowd-man, stand-by actors of the events taking place on the stage. This state theatre, though, claims to adhere to Euro-compatible norms, but in the handling of the processes participant democracy and the idea of equal opportunities concerning life chances of the social actors can no longer be seen in the sphere of the goals to be achieved, but has rather become a structural principle, which completes its way of functioning in the solidification of chancelessness, as such. The equal opportunity normative is almost only used to regulate the movement and the conditions of appearance of the actors present in the scene.

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, having even 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... Meanwhile, on the „audience’s side” (let’s say, this is the minorities’ side) it is almost dramatically visible, that the actors’ stupendous interplay and the whole scene’s production-capacity falls badly short of the daydreams listed on the playbill (e.g. see the wide range of EU-illusions). In fact the *ad hoc* groups of actors, or rather representatives stand for particular behaviour routines, and they are primarily linked by the chosen/inevitable existential situation in which they have no way of calculating the possible behaviour of the other actors. Most of those who are affected by the situation are forced into continuous improvisation, as it were, like on an amateur stage, where the stage production pours over the auditorium again and again, and if a bucket of water slops over in the dramatic situation, this will make everyone wet in the auditorium, too.

In this strange modernization play two basic structure-forming items ask for and are given space. One is the *state script* wanting to mark out the boundaries within which the actors should move, and which is modernist in the sense of taxing the patience of even the more experienced actors (the ones living with a traditional role-awareness) and even the trusting audience. The other is the structural, or rather morphological norm which is *the undertaking of the regulation of cultural strategies* of the participating groups and which – in the state script – divides the political culture of the society into the groups of Euro-enabled and those who are left out – or annexed ones and excluded ones. The cast and the libretto of the latter have completed mainly the re-creation and the regulation of participant democracies from above, and is only suitable for drawing a *demarkation line* between the acting groups, separating Ours from Theirs – the ones who are able to Improve from those who are Lagging behind, or anything which meets the European norm with quality-assurance from everything else which does not. It is enough to refer to the public sentiment and opinion regarding the EU-aptness of the newly joining

countries, or to the kind of narratives which are building up with respect to the newly forming relations with the forthcoming joiners... or to what kind of minority-policy norms will become standard for us on the basis of European legal patterns, or maybe even in spite of them...

*The program of building up demarcation force-lines is, in my view, a kind of identity-building procedure, which serves equally both the maintenance of the right to the existing state-level regulations, and the introduction of new ones. For this is a kind of cultural boundary-building narrative which, in the name of neighbourly ideology, might be undertaken by the mediary function between the „long awaited West” and the permanently present East. The “West awaited with open arms” attitude had once symbolized a behaviour which was ready to sacrifice the fake brotherly intimacy, but at the same time was asking for help and inclusion – while today, the „East awaited for with closed arms” is reflecting the changed condition of solidarity. The weighing against the West and the accentuation of the traits separating “us” from the East serves as a means of forming a particular double identity or role-awareness which theoretically ensures the presence of both plus *the confidence of the possible choice* as well. Obviously, this demarcation zone has at the same time got a boundary-forming function, too, for it enhances the expansion of a polyethnic space if needs be from the inside, or in case more is needed, then from the outside; and it is also shaping the boundaries, the form, the interactions, the choice of patterns, the conflicts and the compromises of this space formed out of the presence of various ethnic groups.*

At this point I am well aware, that it is very difficult to locate the „spaces” and „worlds” I have been trying to identify so far. Practically, I am speaking of all *group-definitions* (be it internal or external; ethnic or economic) which can be described as *culture-dependent units*, and as *boundary-forming ways of organization*. In the ethnic *group-boundary-narratives* this appears as a process whereby amongst the elements of a *polyethnic social system*, both the *identity-organization* and the *value system(s)* gain status based on the ethnic groups’ *mutual dependency-system*. In the sphere of social group boundaries, naturally, this (*culture-dependent group definition*) is surrounded by *polit-ecologically* important moments; and is determined by historically impacting *demographic perspectives* or migrational trends alike. As history, the process of local events and the system of external effects-impositions are just as subject to factors of identity-change as the internal value systems; the structure of the complex (and even more so of the pluralist) social systems are formalizing, operating and, as such, considerably preventing the formation of a more wholesome system of the movement of the cultural boundaries towards or further away from each other – and they do all this in a historical trend.

Hence the ethnic and cultural groups are presented as components of social stratification in the scene which, as a system, is characterized by changeability; where the reasons for, and the ways of this are just as complex here with us, in Transylvania, as they are in Tirol, Dobrudja, or as is the case with the majority of the third world and those countries which have become semi-peripheral. 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. I would only recall the fact, that the core questions and the key phrases (such as stigmatization, migrational mobility, ethnic economy, integration, exclusion and annexation, dichotomization, political stability, legitimacy, social conflict and a long list of such terms) in the public political and non-political public speech have for some time served mainly as a means to delineate the way in which it is through the boundaries that the institutionalized and continuous organized existence of several ethnic or ethnocultural groups becomes definable. However, the dim outline of the boundaries is the very reason why the interpenetrability, the interactions, and the different ways of using time and space do not only solidify cultural differences, but at the same time make the condition of existing between cultures constant and undefinable as well as subject to change.

I was referring to the question of chances and conditions in the title of my lecture... 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 thinking tradition, minority individuals are not merely the „carriers” of a given culture's norms and values defined in various ways. Rather, individuals, their perceptions and goal-oriented decision making capability, their self-definition and their relation to „external events” (that is, to decisions taken independently of the individual but which affect him/herself, too) should be regarded as active social factors. In this respect ethnicity, minority mode of being, or marginalized inequality of opportunity are not thought to be made up of a heap of cultural characteristics, among which each individual might be identifiable with a certain name or function – and thus a boundary might be drawn around him/her; instead it is exactly through the characteristic action's transgression of the invisible fields making up the social space itself, that ethnicity as a minority and cultural mode of being is created. This transactionalist basic pattern (and at the same time a very practical approach) is based on the notion that the meaning-related (imposed, created, accepted, rejected) ethnical-cultural boundaries are constantly interpenetrable. However, every effect coming from the outside to the inside, and from above to below *leads to an interaction*, and it is exactly the deliberately claimed space of belonging or identification that makes up the boundary itself. Demarcation lines are talked through and with this traditional procedure are thus constructed by the actors between the past and the future, although this is done in the present (for more on this see Siikala), and it is exactly because of this that the rules and effects of the lack of participation or “joining in” in the ordinary sense may change in character. Today, in the expanded modernity there is no such thing as citizenship and stateship, membership and faithfulness in the traditional sense says Appadurai (1996). Instead everything is in constant motion – flowing from one condition to another including even the peripheries in relation to the centres, the other way round too with the rural areas in a confrontational relationship with the centres... Barth regards the thus „rewritten”, talked-through process of change flowing between ebb and tide due to its „wave-like nature” to be history understood as a sequence of events and in this the personality which is able to experience and accept regularity and to manage its expansions is constantly enriched with a wider horizon and expansion both in the geographical and cultural sense. This is where the outsider's (say, the politician's, the social planner's or the EU(ro)phoric administrator's) view can be formed which defines something as an „ethnic” or „cultural group” without having anything to do with, or participating in the

least in the defined complexity. This is the same point where in addition to the outsider's view the insider's standpoint can be formed too for whom it would be indeed limiting if he/she were to consider only the internal dimensions of ethnic culture or regional expansion, thus almost rejecting all those external effects from which, after all, he/she can not be independent.

Today, the possible interpretation of this in the Barthian sense must be practically a transactionalist one (see more of this in A.Gergely 2005:226-229), for it is the *internal and external processes* that make up intercultural understanding and the determinators which may be regarded as an equality-based participation undertaken in the integration program. The meaning of the above is that it is through these processes that the individuals signal their belonging to a certain group, and through which they separate the ones outside the group from themselves – an action which the „outsiders” perform as well for the sake of defining their identity. This is where a distinction can be made between individual and group manifestations, but self-centred ethnicity on a basic level can only be made sensible if identity representation refers to a socially constructed identity and a culturally legitimized practice. The time factor of the Europeanization process and the beginning of the self-defining process are seemingly contradictory with one another, since the search for a cultural identity might seem to be a completely internally generated one. Nevertheless, not even this can exist without some preceding basic interactions, for together with the external time factor and the necessity of norms it presupposes some kind of surroundings, narrators and listeners – a socially reflective surrounding in which and for which the self-defining experiments are happening, and without which all the determining effects coming from the outside, or the self-interpreting initiatives would lose their meaning. It is worth looking up a number of illustrations of these questions in the recently published microhistorical reader (see 2006; Sanbar 2006; Silberman 2006).

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 – one's Own and the Stranger and most probably we will find them to be *collective* EU, European and sub-national necessities for all of us...

### **Post-national European minorities – chance or condition?**

The integration mechanisms of the European nations have become an important project 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 lecture leads to the question of crossing the borders and of integration plays on the European „stage”, touching also 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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## Summary

### **Chance or transitory condition? Toward the Post-nations European minorities**

The integration mechanisms for the nations of Europe become significant in several national intention, but in the meantime happen the disintegration of the national communities, and the decomposition of the national identities, parallel to the expansion of some minority's consciousness. To be remain or survive as a minority, as well as becoming minority into the socio-political transition that is a most powerful impression in our time, still more intensify the national character contrasting with the state representation. The question to be answered: the minority status it is a prospect to the necessity on integration challenge, or a possibility to establishing some kind the basic competition in the struggle among the historical, cultural, linguistic or livelihood existence. This paper is part of a larger project to integrate into european space utility discourses the voices of ethnic boundaries, specifically their inter-ethnic experiences of the europeisation, as well as their ways of narrating minorities and nationalism studies. After a theoretical introduction on the importance of aspirations into the West, I will discuss the interpretations of some inter-cultural relations, I have [re]written their various, over a period of system changing to the postmodern "Euro-vision".

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