Paper prepared for the Euroacademia International Conference

Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

Zagreb, 18 – 20 April 2013

This paper is a draft

Please do not cite

Neglected Peripheries: Discovering Hybridity in Transylvania

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Abstract

The paper builds on the general premise that scholarly approaches to ethnic diversity in Romania (or Central and Eastern Europe in general) follow the theoretical lines informing the top-down study of nationalism and ethnicity which focus on the binary logic of national majority-minority relations, and envision the coexistence of separate, parallel, ethnocultural 'worlds' and 'ethnic groups' in a multicultural framework. Social research does not make the next theoretical step towards, first acknowledging, then analyzing and theorizing the multiple occurrences of cultural and ethnic 'mixtures'. The aim of the paper is to argue for an alternative perspective which can address the neglected phenomena of 'hybridity' arising from ambiguities of identification and belonging in the 'peripheries' of Transylvania. Focusing on surveys addressing the topics of inter-marriage, bilingualism and media consumption in the discussed region, the paper claims that there is strong empirical evidence to support such an alternative theoretical approach in framing and defining ethnic diversity in Transylvania.

Keywords: ethnicity; minority group; hybridity; assimilation; Romania;

> Motto: *"Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that*
> *is how newness enters the world."*
> (Salman Rushdie)

Introduction

The ethnic diversity of the Transylvania and the Banat in Romania is mostly described along the theoretical lines informing the top-down study of nationalism and ethnicity addressing this geographical area. Both the majority of scholarly works, and the political discourses addressing Transylvania follow the binary logic of national majority-minority relations, and envision the coexistence of separate ethnocultural 'communities' and 'worlds' in a multicultural framework. This perspective on inter-ethnic relations, called 'groupism' by Rogers Brubaker[1] is appropriated, instrumentalized and perpetuated by both Hungarian and Romanian political entrepreneurs.

In contrast to this 'groupist' understanding there is considerably less scholarly work which attempts to go beyond the binary logic of reified 'collective identities' and bounded ethnocultural 'groups'. Unlike the scholarship addressing issues of culture and ethnicity in postcolonial and immigrant societies (from India to Brazil and the USA), approaches to diversity in Romania (or Central and Eastern Europe in general) rarely make the next theoretical step towards, first acknowledging, then analyzing the multiple occurrences of cultural and ethnic 'mixtures'. The general trend in the literature is to approach such phenomena within the framework of assimilation. In this paper, I wish to argue for the need of an alternative which can complement the well-rehearsed 'groupism' of majority-minority relations by addressing the neglected phenomenon of 'hybridity' arising from ambiguities of identification and belonging in the 'peripheries' of Transylvania. Focusing on surveys addressing the topics of inter-marriage, bilingualism and media consumption in the discussed region, I will argue in my paper that there is strong empirical evidence to support such an alternative theoretical approach in framing and defining important aspects of ethnic diversity in Transylvania.

Groupism, binary logic and Transylvania

The starting idea for this paper came from an intriguing paragraph by Rogers Brubaker on inter-ethnic relations in Transylvania.[2] His observation warns us against viewing the ethnic diversity of the region in the '*Modiglianesque terms*' of well-defined ethnic groups that carry strong 'collective identities':

"… in Transylvania group boundaries are considerably more porous and ambiguous than is widely assumed. The language of everyday life, to be sure, is rigorously categorical, dividing the population into mutually exclusive ethnonational categories, and making no allowances for mixed or ambiguous forms. But this categorical code, important though it is as a constituent element of social relations, should not be taken for a faithful description of them. Reinforced by ethnopolitical entrepreneurs on both sides, the categorical code obscures as much as it reveals about ethnonational identifications, masking the fluidity and ambiguity that arises from mixed marriages, from bilingualism, from migration, from Hungarian children attending Romanian language schools, from intergenerational assimilation, and from sheer indifference to the claims of ethnocultural nationality."[3]

The social imaginary of the ethno-national categorical codes, which imposes a division of individuals into 'Romanians' and 'Hungarians', encountered in 'the language of everyday life', originates from the elite-constructed and politically driven nationalism that is characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe. The overwhelming majority of theoretical scholarly interest has focused either on the broad analysis of these top-down processes of nationalist politics of categorization and mobilization ('the politics of identity'), or on the sociological quantification of how these reified identities, as administrative and categorical units, are handled by individuals. In both cases such an inquiry uses the 'categories of practice' devised by ethno-political projects and administrative powers, and fails to develop alternative 'categories of analysis'[4] through which attention could be directed to the interaction and intersection of ethno-national categorizations that produce, in Brubaker's terms, 'fluidity, ambiguity and mixed forms'.[5]

Ethnopolitical-collective level:

The focus on the discursive constructions and political actions of the nationalist elites – or the regulating state –, determines the conceptual imagination that addresses ethnic diversity into limiting the scholarly attention to a binary logic of putative minorities and majorities. This top-down focus is necessary in order to understand the construction and instrumentalization of the 'categorical codes'. Thus, in the case of Transylvania[6], the literature on political nationalism[7] identifies two competing nationalisms: the centrally regulated 'nationalizing state', and the regionally organized 'nationalizing Hungarian minority'.[8] In Romania, the former is characterized by framing 'Romanians' as the 'titular nation' of the country, from the preamble of the Constitution to the public cultural and political discourses, constructing 'Romanianness' as the primary, normative category, in opposition to which all other ethnonational categories are defined. The latter process of 'nationalizing minority' refers to the political organization of the Hungarian minority in Romania which is based on the principle of nationality, and "oriented towards maintaining and strengthening ethnocultural boundaries."[9] This process can be seen as a 'minority nation building', based on separate ethnically organized institutions, driving towards the actual and discursive construction of a 'parallel Hungarian society', nested within, but isolated from the wider 'Romanian world'.[10]

Another major theoretical trend influencing the way ethnic diversity is discussed in Central and Eastern Europe, and Transylvania in particular, comes from the global diffusion of the discourse of multiculturalism, elaborated most famously by Will Kymlicka.[11] He draws the picture of 'national minorities' living in 'multination states', and 'ethnic groups' living in 'polyethnic states', normatively perpetuating the conceptualization of ethnic diversity through the binary logic of majorities and minorities forming well-defined, bounded, homogeneous ethnocultural communities. The ascription of a 'societal culture' to each of these minority communities, conferring them a putatively coherent, 'owned' history, traditions, conventions, social practices and institutions, provides the basis for viewing multiculturalism as the liberal, regulated, institutionalized framework through which different 'ethnocultural communities' live side-by-side, mostly isolated from each other. But as Brubaker is quick to point out, these normative approaches reproduce the familiar simplifications of 'groupism': "…the multicultural landscapes of late modernity are themselves usually represented in the Modiglianesque terms, that is, of juxtaposed, well-defined, monochrome blocks."[12]

The impact of the multicultural discourse has been significant in the Transylvanian context. Multiculturalism first became a politically significant concept when in 1997/8, Andrei Marga, the rector of the Babeş-Bolyai University (UBB) in Cluj, promoted and introduced the term in order to define and regulate the trilingual structure of the university. At first, the Hungarian political elite opposed the multicultural discourse but it gradually came to accept and appropriate the approach when it recognized that the inherent structure and logic of such an 'isolationist' version of multiculturalism can be easily synchronized with the political worldview and objectives of the 'nationalizing Hungarian minority', driving towards the production and perpetuation of a 'parallel Hungarian world'.[13] As a result, all normative and political declarations about Transylvania being a 'multicultural region' refer to this putative, institutionally based ethno-cultural dividedness.

Sociological-individual level:

Closely connected to the 'groupist' approaches of political science which follow the binary logic of bounded majorities-minorities, the methods of quantitative sociology and social-psychology use the categorical codes and frames of identification provided by the ethno-politically defined 'groups' as their basic units or entities of analysis. Such studies, through quantitative research, examine how these reified identities, as administrative and categorical categories, are appropriated, judged, seen and handled by individuals.[14]

Furthermore, the research into identity construction and socialization in Transylvania has been determined by a 'relational perspective'. For example, minority identity construction is envisaged, and then surveyed and analyzed, as a dialectical interaction between an already formed 'Hungarian ethnic Self', and a well-defined, ethnoculturally different 'Romanian Other'. This presupposes the existence of 'strong', enduring identities that emerge as a direct translation of the discursive constructions of the 'nationalizing state' on the one hand, and the 'nationalizing minority' on the other. Moreover, it projects the automatic, full-scale application of the ethnonational categorical codes to individuals, who either belong to the 'cultural club' of the 'Hungarian world', or the 'Romanian world'. Irina Culic, moving within this relational perspective, goes as far as to claim that the social interaction of 'ethnic Hungarians' with 'Romanians' "help them understand and define their relationship with the Romanian state and its institutions (on the one hand, through interactions with Romanian employees working in the various institutions; on the other hand, with Romanians as representatives of a culture that marks the character of the state)."[15] In this approach, each individual is either the manifestation of the 'ethnocultural Hungarian community' or the representative of the 'Romanian culture and state', and their interaction is the meeting point (or 'clash') of two separate 'societal cultures'.

Heterogeneous Transylvania

I wish to argue in this paper that social analysis should not assume the automatic and exclusive application or appropriation of the ethnonational categorical codes on the reception-end of the nationalist discursive practice. Most importantly, research should not uncritically presuppose the existence of bounded ethnocultural communities, but dedicate more attention to the heterogeneous nature of the region's ethnic diversity, in a geographical, infrastructural, social and cultural sense.

Although the heterogeneous nature of Transylvania's ethnic diversity is a highly complex social phenomenon, analytically it is still more useful to view it in terms of ethnic Hungarian 'centers' and 'peripheries' (in Hungarian called the 'szórvány'[16]), than to describe it in a groupist fashion. What differentiates the two types of regions is that: while in the 'Hungarian centers' one finds not only a higher concentration of individuals who identify themselves as ethnic Hungarians (both in absolute numbers, and in percentage), but also a well-developed network of institutions and infrastructure that 'produces and reproduces' the 'Hungarian world'. Such centers would be Eastern Transylvania, or the 'Szeklerland' (75% Hungarian, with 38% of all Hungarians of Transylvania), with the counties of Hargita (84%), Covasna (74%) and Mureş (37.8%); the Partium (25% of Hungarians), with Satu Mare (35%) and Bihor (25%) counties; and Central Transylvania (20%), with Sălaj (23.2%) and Cluj (15%) counties. In contrast to the 'center' areas, the 'peripheries' have a significantly low number and percentage of Hungarians (below 50.000 or 15% in counties), with few institutions and networks which would keep the categorical codes strongly activated, especially in everyday life. The peripheries comprise 'the rest' of Transylvania: the Banat (6% Hungarians), South (7%) and North (4%) Transylvania.[17]

In order to build the argument for viewing multiethnic Transylvania – and the 'Hungarian' population within it – as a heterogeneous social phenomenon, the paper will demonstrate that, besides the important demographic and infrastructural differences between the above-presented 'centers' and 'peripheries', there are also major differences in areas of social life like marriage patterns, family life, linguistic practices and media consumption, aspects which significantly determine the socialization and identity construction of individuals. Empirical evidence will be drawn from three recent surveys addressing these topics.[18]

Mixed marriages:[19]

Perhaps the most important area regarding socialization is the phenomenon of cross-ethnic or mixed marriages. The data for István Horváth's study on mixed marriages between Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania comes from the National Institute of Statistics in Romania (Institutul Naţional de Statistică, INS), covers the period between 1992-2002, and deals with the 16 counties of Transylvania and Banat. According to the statistics, there were 160.887 Hungarians who registered to marry between 1992-2002, out of which 28.401, representing 17.7%, chose a non-Hungarian partner. Horváth does not indicate whether this should be considered a 'high' or 'low' percentage, but compares it to the data coming from Slovakia (1990), where 27.7% of Hungarian marriages were to non-Hungarian partners. Furthermore, if 132.846 Hungarians married a Hungarian, the number of homogamous Hungarian families is half of this number, 66.423. The total number of families created in this period involving an ethnic Hungarian is 94.464 (66.423 + 28.401), meaning

that the percentage of homogamous families is 70.32%, while heterogamous families represent 29,68%. Or to phrase it differently: almost one third of the total families created in Transylvania between 1992-2002 are mixed (counting only the Romanian and Hungarian ethnic elements).

When looking at the regional distributions of these mixed marriages, the major differences between the 'centers' and 'peripheries' become apparent. While in the regions discussed as 'centers' the percentage of heterogamous marriages moves between 3-5% (for the Szeklerland) or 11-23% (Sălaj and Cluj), in the 'szórvány' regions (9 counties) the percentage goes from 32% (Alba) to 76% (Caraș-Severin). Thus, the 'peripheries' which hold 20% of the Hungarian population, account for 49% of the total mixed marriages in Transylvania.

Explaining the emergence of heterogamy, Horváth points to structural and cultural factors influencing partner choice. The structural factor refers to the marriage market, and whether non-ethnic preferences and needs can be fulfilled within the ethnic network. The cultural factor refers to the norms governing and judging instances of homogamy and heterogamy within the local community. Horváth's study shows a direct correlation between the ethno-demographic composition of regions and counties in Transylvania and the number of mixed marriages: their number grows as the percentage of ethnic Hungarians, living sporadically, decreases.

Bilingualism:[20]

The survey (also coordinated by István Horváth) addressing linguistic competence and practices related to the bilingualism of Hungarians in Transylvania was carried out by the Research Centre on Interethnic Relations (CCRIT) in 2004, covering the same 16 counties, effected in 73 locations, with 1215 respondents who declared themselves as Hungarian.

As concerning linguistic competence, the researchers differentiated between four categories of 'knowledge' of the Romanian and Hungarian languages: Hungarian linguistic dominance (ranging from Hungarian monolingualism, to passive and productive competence of Romanian), effective bilingualism or ambilingualism (balanced knowledge of both languages), Romanian linguistic dominance (ranging from Romanian monolingualism, to passive and productive competence of Hungarian), and semilingualism. The results showed that 88% of Hungarians in Romania have some measure of bilingual competences, 60% of them have a productive competence of Romanian (while 30% of the remaining have a passive competence), and 27% can be categorized as ambilingual. The regional distribution shows that the percentage of Hungarians characterized by Romanian linguistic dominance and ambilingualism is much higher in the 'peripheries' than in the 'centers'.

Related to linguistic practices, that is the nature and frequency of bilingual communication, the study differentiated four types of situations, determined by Romanian or Hungarian language usage in both the public and private spheres. Firstly, the dominance of Hungarian was reported by 39.7% of the respondents; secondly, the dominance of Hungarian, with the presence of Romanian in public communication was reported by 27.2%; thirdly, the equal presence of both languages was claimed by 24%; and lastly, the dominance of Romanian (even in the private sphere) is declared by 9.2% of the respondents.

The regional focus brings the usual differences: in the Partium ¾ of the respondents declare the dominance of the Hungarian language, while this reaches 90% in the Szeklerland. By contrast, half of the respondents from South and Central Transylvania, ¾ from North Transylvania, and 9 out of 10 from the Banat region claim the equal presence, or dominance of the Romanian language. Moreover, in the Banat, 1/3 of the respondents declared the overwhelming dominance of Romanian in the private sphere.

Media consumption:[21]

The survey addressing the media consumption of Hungarians in Transylvania was coordinated by Tivadar Magyari, carried out by the Research Centre on Interethnic Relations (CCRIT) in 2004, covering the same 16 counties, with 1168 respondents who declared themselves as Hungarian.

Concerning the patterns of print media consumption of Hungarians in Transylvania, the first obvious point to be made is that both Romanian and Hungarians newspapers are strongly tied in their production and distribution to the cultural hubs of the larger cities, most of them situated in the 'centers', and only a few of them in the 'peripheries'. This would account for the high percentage of respondents in the 'szórvány' region who declared that they do not read print media (from 63% in Temes, to 72% in Alba, and 90% in Hunedoara). Due to the financial situation of minority media, the established routes of newspaper distribution did not extend to cover most of the 'peripheries', which led to whole cities and villages renouncing the access to Hungarian print media products. On the whole, in villages where Hungarians are in small numbers, only 3% read Hungarian media, and in cities with similarly small Hungarian presence this percentage goes no higher than 34%.

The access to and consumption of radio broadcasting show structural similarities to the print media, since both the Hungarian language radio programs of the public channels (in Târgu Mureș, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Bucharest), and the Hungarian commercial radio companies are connected to the large Hungarian 'centers', with a limited broadcasting range. Additionally, consumers in the Partium (Bihor, Satu Mare, etc.) have access to the Hungarian state radio (Kossuth Radio), and several Hungarian commercial channels. The 'peripheries' have access to almost none of these, only to the Romanian commercial radios which are able to cover the entirety of the country, and are also played in public places (like bus stops, bars and malls).

Finally, the results referring to television access and consumption also adhere to the general trend described above. A significant difference in this case comes from the fact that there is not minority Hungarian television channel in Transylvania, only hour-long Hungarian language programs on two public television channels in Romania (TVR1, TVR2). These programs are accessible in all parts of the country, and their access does not require high financial input. Thus, all forms of Hungarian language television broadcasting come from Hungary, and can only be accessed through satellite reception or subscription to cable companies (here again the Partium, and parts of the Banat, are exceptions, since Hungarian state TV is potentially accessible in these areas). Due to the constraints of cost/benefit calculations and the estimated demand, cable companies include Hungarian channels only in regions densely populated by Hungarians, that is, in the 'centers'. All in all, the results show that the most widely watched channel is the Hungarian, state-managed Duna TV (27%), followed by the Romanian commercial channel Pro TV (16%), and the Romanian public channel, TVR1, as third (8%).

Summing up we can state that besides the significant ethno-demographic differences between the Hungarian 'centers' and 'peripheries' in Transylvania, there are also major differences in patterns of mixed marriages, percentages of linguistic competence and bilingual communication, and trends in media consumption. The presented differences in areas of social life which are particularly important for socialization and identity construction can be considered strong enough to undermine the groupist perspectives which project a coherent, homogeneous minority community. The empirical data seems convincing enough to substantiate the argument for viewing multiethnic Transylvania, and the 'Hungarian' population within it, as a heterogeneous social phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by the binary logic of opposing majority-minority.

Alternative approach - 'Hybridity' in Transylvania

In the following, I wish to take the argument to the next theoretical level. The conclusion drawn from the previous two parts is that the groupist assumptions about majority-minority communities and reified identities are undermined by empirical evidence which point towards a more heterogeneous social reality. By deconstructing the relevance of the groupist approach and the binary logic, most importantly in connection to the 'peripheries' of Transylvania, it becomes apparent that the process of identity construction of individuals living in these regions cannot be described by a simple, exclusivist story of ethnic socialization. This complex process, playing out in an ethnically heterogeneous and highly mixed field, cannot be fully conceptualized by the 'relational perspective' which posits the development of the 'ethnic self' in dialectical opposition to an 'ethnic other'. But then, how does one theorize and explain the 'fluidity, ambiguity and mixed forms' that emerge in these situations?

Stuart Hall's discursive approach to subjectivity and identity formation in the 'diaspora' is helpful in theorizing ethnic mixtures because this perspective, instead of presuming the a priori existence of a coherent, bounded 'ethnic self' (being the manifestation of an ethnocultural categorical code), rather constructs 'identity' as the meeting point and intersection of nationalizing discourses and practices. For Hall "identities are never unified, but increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions."[22] In this perspective, all identities are already 'fluid, ambiguous, mixed forms' that emerge in the context of cultural heterogeneity.

I wish to argue that, at least in reference to the 'periphery' regions of Transylvania, identity formation could be conceptualized in this manner, focusing on the various 'hybridities' that emerge from the contextual intersections of the two nationalizing discourses which are present in different ways. Basing the argument on the empirical data presented, I argue that the social and cultural particularities of the 'peripheries' produce a mixed socialization that determines the emerging of 'hybrid' identity formations or constellations. Mixed socialization arises from the high number of mixed marriages, the significant percent of bilingual communication in the family, social circles, institutions, work place, and the consumption of mixed media products. Phrasing it differently: if the usual markers of ethnicity, like descent/family, language and social/cultural practices have such a heterogeneous and mixed nature it is plausible to claim the resulting ethnic belonging and self-identification will be a 'hybrid' one. I believe the definition of Ulf Hannerz for 'creolization' is useful in understanding this mixture, since:

"… a creolist view is particularly applicable to processes of cultural confluence within a more or less open continuum of diversity, stretched out along a structure of center-periphery relationships which may well extend transnationally, and which is characterized also by inequality in power, prestige and material resource terms."[23]

Assimilation and/or 'Hybridity':

Naturally, I am aware that such a theoretical claim is problematical, both in the context of scholarly research of the wider region, and mostly in relation to the political discourses and positions about ethnicity in Transylvania. The phenomena I am attempting to describe have no legitimate definition, codification or categorization in the literature on Transylvania, and would have difficulties in gaining political significance since, by their ambiguous nature, they go against the groupism and binary logic of the two nationalizing discourses present in the field. Discussing the difficulties of recognizing and legitimizing 'hybridity', Jan Nederveen Pieterse writes that:

"Recognition and difference are a function of the existing identities and boundaries that are available on the social and cultural maps. Recognition is part of a process of struggle over cognition. Hybridity is a journey into the riddles of recognition. Take any exercise in social mapping and it is the hybrids that are missing. Take most models and arrangements of multiculturalism and it is hybrids that are not counted, not accommodated."[24]

In contrast to this new type of re-cognition, in both scholarly and ethno-political contexts, the phenomenon which I want to redefine is viewed and discussed in the macro-analytical terms of assimilation: being a stage or a transitional situation on the long-term transformation process through which minority groups and individuals assimilate to, and are 'incorporated by'[25] the majority.[26]

On the *theoretical and scholarly level*, sociologist Tamás Kiss – in his excellent book on demographic changes in Transylvania[27] – draws on Brubaker's re-conceptualization of a 'general and abstract' understanding of assimilation which refers to the multiple processes and directions of change in increasing similarity or likeness on the aggregate level of populations, shifting from one mode of heterogeneity to another.[28] For this macro-approach, focusing on the collective level in the long-term, hybridity seems 'essentializing and ideological'[29], because there are no accessible signifiers, categories, discourses or institutions to recognize and support such mixed identifications. Furthermore, all of the dominant ethnicized social mechanisms active in Transylvania enforce the division and decision on all individuals to opt exclusively for one pre-existing categorical code.

But, as Kiss's book title suggests, such sociological investigations follow the 'administrative perspective', and remain on the collective level, seeing categories of populations, even if not imagining them in 'Modiglianesque terms'. This approach deals with ethnic categorizations and self-identifications as closed and final decisions on the part of individuals, which define them invariably, no matter the multiple future contexts where the hybrid nature of mixed identification will repeatedly come to be activated. Even the 'long-term assimilationist' argument can be undermined by the plausible claim that such mixed socializations, and context dependent identifications, appeared simultaneously with the competing nationalizing projects starting from the late 19th century in Transylvania and continuing into the present: reproducing the heterogeneous environment for 'hybridities' to emerge. Thus, there are multi-directional, competing processes of producing 'similarity or likeness', which I believe can be better described and examined in the peripheries of Transylvania through projecting a 'hybrid' experience or state (which we all share), as a continuum which is composed of different constellations of more or less accentuated ethnic mixtures in the daily experience.

On the *ethno-political level* of minority elites, ethno-cultural 'fluidity, ambiguity and mixed forms' are understandably viewed as negative phenomena, since this tendency goes against the groupism and binary logic of the nationalizing discourses present in the field. As a result, mixtures are discursively framed in the language of an 'organic'[30] understanding of assimilation which sees it as a process of incorporation and absorption of the 'minority' by the 'majority.' Gábor Biczó describes this as the 'narrative of loss or deprivation'[31] where assimilation is judged morally in reference to the holistic view of 'nation', and represents the loss of ethno-cultural identity and also a collective downward slide in the social hierarchy.[32]

In contrast with this 'purist' point of view which characterizes much of nationalist projects in CEE, in different contexts of immigrant and postcolonial societies there was not only a 'differentialist turn' promoting the 'politics of identity', but also a general change of perspective which embraces and celebrates mixed and hybrid forms. As Hannerz observes, this was a "shift of ethos, away from quiet pain or compassion, toward assertiveness and, indeed, celebration. Impurity and intermingling … is now a source – perhaps the most important source – of desirable cultural renewal."[33] I would argue that such a shift of attitude from the 'narrative of loss' to the recognition, accommodation and celebration of 'hybridity' in CEE, and in our case Transylvania, would be a bold, but nonetheless interesting, useful and welcomed transformation to challenge the age-old nationalist projects, and could perhaps improve the "possibilities for liberal politics in the region."[34]

However, presently 'hybridity' in Transylvania is illegitimate, un-recognized, un-theorized, un-codified, and not accepted. This paper addressed the still open question of whether such types of mixed identifications and multiethnic coexistence should be theoretically and publicly/politically articulated. Should 'hybridity' and mixture organize and determine the conceptual imagination that addresses ethnic diversity in the region? Also, should 'hybridity' acquire political significance and power with an enabled agency? Could it become, in Homi Bhabha's terms, the 'third space of enunciation', a position having the "unsettling advantage" that makes one "aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition"[35] ? Could it become a new form of culture and politics in Transylvania, and perhaps in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe? I do not wish to gamble any answer to these questions, but it seems clear that once the simplifying illusions of 'groupism' will start to fade, these dilemmas will have striking actuality.

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to argue for the need of an alternative perspective which can complement the well-rehearsed 'groupism' of majority-minority relations by addressing the neglected phenomena of 'hybridity' arising from ambiguities of identification and belonging in the 'peripheries' of Transylvania. Focusing on surveys addressing the topics of inter-marriage, bilingualism and media consumption in the discussed region, the paper claimed that there is strong empirical evidence to support such an alternative theoretical approach in framing and defining important aspects of ethnic diversity in Transylvania.

By analyzing the three surveys, the paper stated that, besides the significant ethno-demographic differences between the Hungarian 'centers' and 'peripheries' in Transylvania, there are also major differences in patterns of mixed marriages, percentages of linguistic competence and bilingual communication, and trends in media consumption. The presented differences in areas of social life which are particularly important for socialization and identity construction can be considered strong enough to undermine the groupist perspectives which project a coherent, homogeneous minority community, and convincing enough substantiate the argument for viewing multiethnic Transylvania, and the 'Hungarian' population within it, as a heterogeneous social phenomenon.

The last part of the paper put forward a call for an alternative approach addressing the neglected phenomena of 'hybridity'. The argument for the recognition, accommodation and celebration of forms of ethnic mixture was elaborated against the general trend of the scholarship and the ethno-political projects which view this phenomenon as a transitional stage of assimilation. Relying on empirical data presented, it was claimed that the social and cultural particularities of the 'peripheries' produce a mixed socialization that determines the emergence of a 'hybrid ' existence, and could frame the political enabling of such a new category.

Notes

[1] Brubaker, Rogers, *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004.

[2] Brubaker, Rogers. "Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism." In: John A. Hall (ed.) *The State of the Nation. Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 272-305. And: Brubaker, Rogers. "Beyond Identity." In: *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004, 28-63.

[3] Brubaker, *Myths*, p. 27

[4] Brubaker, *Ethnicity*, p. 10

[5] An important exception to this scholarly trend is the research project carried out in Cluj-Napoca: Brubaker, Rogers; Feischmidt, Margit; Fox, Jon; and Grancea, Liana. *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.

[6] For the sake of this analysis the term 'Transylvania' is incorporating the Banat and the Partium as well.

[7] Ironically enough for the context of this paper, much of this literature starts off from, or engages with, Brubaker's 1996 book: *Nationalism Reframed - Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe.*

[8] Kántor, Zoltán. "Nationalizing Minorities and Homeland Politics." In: Trencsényi - Petrescu - Petrescu - Iordachi (eds.): *Nationalism and Contested Identities: Case Studies on Romanians and Hungarians*. Budapest–Iasi: Regio Boks–Polirom, 2001, 249-274.

[9] Kántor, p. 255

[10] Ibid, p. 257

[11] Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.

[12] Brubaker, *Myths*, p. 24

[13] For the impact of Kymlicka's theories in local political science, see: Salat Levente. *Etnopolitika: a konfliktustól a méltányosságig [Ethnopolitics - From Conflict to Equity. The Normative Bases of the Authentic Existence in Minority]*. Marosvásárhely: Mentor, 2001.

[14] For example: Csepeli, Gy., Örkeny A. and Szekelyi, M. *Grappling with National Identity. How nations see each other in Central Europe*. Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 2000.

[15] Culic, Irina. "Nationhood and Identity: Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania." In: Trencsenyi Balazs et al. (eds.) *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*. Budapest–Iasi: Regio Boks–Polirom, 2001, 227–248.

[16] Meaning: dispersed and scattered population, and 'internal terminology' used in the political and academic discourses on Hungarian minorities who do not live in ethnic blocks, but in scattered settlements.

[17] Provisional results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census in Romania (INS).

[18] It might seem self-contradictory to deconstruct ethno-national categories through surveys which utilize these very same categories, but as of yet there is no other type of empirical evidence I can use.

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