

INTRODUCERE

Special issue: European, National and Regional Identity

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What are the relations between the layers of identity of Europeans' representations of self and others? Why do some people feel more attached to European Union than others? How can one strengthen the European identity? What are the individual uses of identification with big communities like region, country or ethnic group? Can we talk of a new variant of authoritarianism which is signaled by the recent popularity of right wing movements in Europe, and what are the explanations for it? What are the other attitudinal correlates of the new European institutional landscape?

This is just a sample of the issues that have been approached in March 2011, in Oradea (Romania) at the International Conference on 'European, National and Regional Identities' (ENRI) held within the homonymous research project which was implemented jointly by teams of social scientists from the University of Debrecen, University of Oradea and the Partium Christian University (Oradea) with financing from the Romania-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

Although this special issue of Romanian Sociology hosts merely a handful of the studies presented during the conference it can provide a hint on the current state of debates in the social sciences regarding the problems of loyalties and attachments given the rapid changes in the institutional frames of reference which make up the context of identifications, especially at the peripheries of the European Union. Thus, central to the concerns of the ENRI

project have been the debates on the articulations of the multiple layers of feelings of belonging and loyalties made salient by often cacophonous discourses of multiculturalism, European Integration and/or globalization. Sergiu Gherghina (*Spinning the European Wheel: Benefits, Welfare, and Identity Layers in the Old and New Member States*) investigates the predictors of European identification in EU, using data from the 2009 Eurobarometer. He finds that national identification remains very powerful in all EU countries, that Europeans build their attachment to European Union on the bases of Union performance, not reflecting domestic realities as previous researches had suggested and finally that one's image of identity is similar in all European countries, regardless of the economic context. The challenges of building European identity are approached by Dariusz Wojakowski who delivers the results of fieldwork in southern Polish borderland small towns (*Europe – region – town: cultural roots in narrations at southern Polish borderland*). He concludes that the recipe of creation of European identity should be not different from that of constructing national identity, by translating the transnational experiences of Europeans of individuals to the stages of imagined community. While indices of strengthening European identity can be found in EU members states, such identifications are weak in one of the most important candidate country – Turkey. Ahmet Ecirli provides statistical data (*Feeling "European" and European identity. Public perceptions in*

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Turkey – EU relation) to prove that ethnic and cultural barriers divide Turkey from the rest of the Europe, the sole rhetoric device that can be used to help Turkish European commitment being the appeal to constitutional patriotism i.e. the discourse on human rights and justice.

Identification is useful, both personally and collectively, in a positive way, much more than the usual associations with group conflicts and competition. Such an idea is supported by the increasing body of theoretical and empirical literature connecting group identification and subjective well-being for which David Bartram and Katarzyna Hamer provide proof. In her article which employs data from two large recent Polish surveys, Katarzyna Hamer (*Social identities and well-being in Poland*) shows how identification with big groups correlates with many dimensions of subjective well-being and endeavors to explain this covariance either through Social Identity Theory or the Terror Management Theory which both assume that group identifications have an anxiety buffering function. On his side, David Bartram (*Identity, Migration and Happiness*) warns that despite the positive relationship between subjective well-being and group identification, increasing group identification cannot taken seriously as a tool for improving happiness on societal level.

Authoritarianism, whatever be its name, has an important place in the topics approached in this special issue. This is the case primarily because two of the contributions included here are derived from the results of a research project on the topic of new authoritarianism which comprises researchers from the University of Debrecen (Hungary) and Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest. Basically, new authoritarianism is the resurgence of social attitudes that favor inequalities among groups of people, including ethnic groups. In their keynote address, Csepeli György and Prazsák Gergő (*New authoritarianism – a research note*) have described the measurement of two dimensions of Social Dominance Orientation – with reference to ethnic groups and social classes, their relationships with other attitudinal variables, like Rokeach's dogmatism and end by testing several predictions concerning the

cognitive and structural determinants of Social Dominance Orientation.

In a study that is of psycho-sociological vein Istvan Muranyi (*New Authoritarianism - New Subculture?*) analyzes the social determinants of authoritarian attitudes by putting to test the hypotheses derived from social dominance theory using a measure of Social Dominance Orientation which was applied to members of two types of voluntary organizations from Hungary: joiners of a paramilitary radical right-wing group on the one hand and the members of an environmental group. The main conclusion of his inspiring research is that measures of social dominance are peculiarly strong in the case of members of nationalist-radical group with the lowest social status. Laura Nistor and Petru Iluț (*Self-transcendence values in Hungary and Romania. A preliminary analysis of benevolence and universalism*) deal with a comparative assessment of value systems in Hungary and Romania using the answers to the Portrait Value Questionnaire from the fourth (2008) wave of the European Social Survey. It turns out that self-transcendence – that is the valuation of others' well-being – is the most important axiological dimension in both countries, albeit with an emphasis in Hungary and in the case of women and the more educated persons.

Starting from the assumption that national identity is constructed discursively through means like media, education or the law, Alena Chudzikova (*Representations of national identity in the political discourse in Slovakia*) attempts to decipher the Slovak canonical image of nationhood, identity and otherness by analyzing several recently adopted laws concerning citizenship, language use and the national symbols. Her hypotheses were that those acts construct national identity as one in a constant threat from the Other and emphasize inter-group conflict. Content analysis of the laws confirmed her hypothesis and gave the reasons for bitter considerations regarding Slovakia's adherence to universalistic principles of equality and justice.

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