

A stylized map of Europe in dark teal with white borders, set against a light blue background.

CROSS-BORDER REVIEW

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Editorial notes

James W. Scott

Introduction

This issue of the Cross-Border Review has been compiled during a rapidly changing geopolitical environment in Europe and the world in general. The year 2022 was marked by a violent assault on the sovereignty of an independent state by a foreign power obsessed with imperial delusions. The unthinkable and irrational has come to pass and not only is Putin's war conditioned by imaginaries of (re)creating a Russian Mir in Eurasia, it is also grounded in a nihilistic zero-sum-game geopolitics. It is now not only a question of vanquishing Ukraine, Putin insists Russia is at war with the West, fighting for its survival in the face of NATO and other threats. Even in the best of times cooperation based on a recognition of mutual dependency and targeting mutual benefit was never really part of Vladimir Putin's geopolitical repertoire. Moreover, pluralistic and liberal political cultures have been targeted by the Russian government as inimical to Russian national interests. The EU is thus an enemy because it propagates values and norms that would supposedly undermine cultural traditions and national identities.

In the face of this situation of aggression, what prospects are there for peaceful cooperation within the EU and between the EU and its neighbours? As this edition of the Cross-Border Review demonstrates, cross-border cooperation and intercultural dialogue are alive and well despite numerous challenges. They persevere not only because of the political commitments of state actors but also because of the activism of civil society groups and individuals who challenge hierarchical power structures and exclusion. Indeed, diversity and inclusion are the enemy of autocracy and anti-democratic forces; they focus on the many aspects of life that connect people across cultures rather than indulging in narcissistic narrations of national exceptionalism and difference. With this in mind, however, caution is advised: democratic values are neither given, absolute nor self-evident, they instead reflect local contexts and conditions. European democracies and the EU are well advised not to lecture others too insistently about what counts as democratic and liberal and what does not. Cooperation, to the extent it promotes inclusion – and thus social integration – should be about mutual learning and the co-creation of democratic values. These considerations are of course highly idealistic if the objective is to achieve rapid progress towards equitable economies, social justice and global governance. On the other hand, the reality of cross-border and intercultural cooperation is rather one of gradual change in ways of thinking and doing things.

In their own specific ways, the various contributions to this year's Cross-Border Review provide a number of highly salient accounts of cooperation practices and contexts at different spatial levels. They also provide food for thought regarding the complexities of intercultural dialogue as a form of physical, mental and ideological border-crossing. The authors represent perspectives and experiences that range from the conceptual to the very practical, from the normative to the pragmatic and critical. We offer in this issue global, European, diasporic Haitian insights. Moreover, as was the case in the last edition of this series, we showcase research reports from Erasmus Plus projects that link civil society organisations operating in several different countries within Europe. These bottom-up perspectives on cooperation and dialogue provide a stimulating discussion of how horizontal learning processes help build trust and governance capacity.

Overview of this edition

In the opening contribution to discussion on cross-border cooperation and intercultural dialogue James Scott focuses attention on regional cooperation and the EU's project of "Neighbourhood". In doing this, Scott points out some of the concerns that the implementation of Eastern Partnership (EaP) as well as other aspects of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy have raised. Under the present context of conflict and instability, what can be done to effectively adapt to situations of uncertainty? The main thesis of this contribution is that cooperation based around civil society networks can increase the impact, resilience and mutual benefit of EU-neighbourhood relations. Rather than apply a top-down approach that pre-supposes a specific geopolitical role for the EU within the so-called Neighbourhood, this contribution will suggest a reconceptualization of regional cooperation dynamics and support mechanisms. The essence of the suggested approach is to go beyond traditional models of structured relationships and conditionality and to revisit the idea of regional border-transcending cooperation as the construction of "civic neighbourhoods". While this approach is not suggested as a cure-all or universal solution to cooperation dilemmas, civil society networks are a necessary resource for the building up of trust, mutual understanding and practical cooperation across issues and actors.

In the next article Aleksandar Pavleski and Rade Raljkovčevski debate the cooperation role of education which historically has been used to both build peace and foment conflict. In this regard, especially in term of their role in promoting peace, educational services are perceived as an integral part of strategic peacebuilding approaches. The connection between education services and peacebuilding strategies stems from the role that education has in the context of transforming hatred, establishing and promoting intergroup communication, relations and identities, mutual trust building and promoting social cohesion as well. They presciently recall Burton's "human needs" concept, according to which the causes of conflicts can be

found in unfulfilled basic human needs of recognition, security, and identity. Within this context the role of higher education cannot be underestimated. As an example, a new interdisciplinary master studies program implemented by three universities from Macedonia and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden is discussed in some detail. This contribution specifically focuses on the circumstances of peacebuilding under which the project has been implemented.

Another example of higher education as a vehicle for improved cross-border cooperation is provided by Miloš Petrović. In his contribution he provides insights regarding the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) which ranks among the most recognised platforms for international higher-education collaboration specifically aimed at Central and Eastern European countries. Unlike Erasmus Plus, which has evolved from being an instrument for EU cohesion to a more international and even globally focused programme, the geographic scope of CEEPUS has remained limited to the eastern, or perhaps rather, “non-western” part of the European continent. This paper explores the role of CEEPUS in promoting closer collaboration between its two contracting parties, Serbia and Croatia. Despite its potential significance, however, the author argues that CEEPUS has not received sufficient attention in the academic literature, with this contribution the author seeks to address this gap.

Zoltán Hajdú and James Scott follow with their discussion of regional contexts for cross-border cooperation. Here the concrete focus is on the geographical idea of the Carpathian Basin and how it has been employed in post-1989 Hungarian conceptualisations of regional development and territorial cooperation across state borders. As the authors indicate, this is a contested regional idea and their contribution highlights the tensions that have emerged between different and partly competing notions of the Basin as a cooperation space. We find a spectrum of meaning-making that ranges from de-bordering Europeanization to a geographical context that is central to Hungary’s sense of place (and neighbourhood) in Europe. The approach developed by Hajdú and Scott is based on the assumption that links between geography, geographical imaginaries and questions of national identity remain highly salient. The authors take inspiration from traditions of geographical research that emphasize the subjective nature of space–society relations and their representation in geographical imaginaries. The sources used reflect scholarly and political narratives, primarily geographic and regional research, and politically narrated geographical imaginaries. As part of this undertaking, the essay highlights change and continuity in the use of the Carpathian Basin idea from the 1920s to the present. More specifically, the essay considers the consequences of Hungary-centric neighbourhood imaginaries for territorial cooperation as well as the difficulties involved in the institutionalisation of regional ideas.

We move in the next research essay from the geographically focused to the realm of conceptual debates. Federico Salvati critically engages with liberalism as an assumed foundation of international relations. He argues that attempts by the “liberal West” to regain control of the institutional nature of the international system can be seen as a reaction to the perceived fragility of the liberal order. According to Salvati, however, these attempts rest on a biased view of international relations, which tends to see the development of international governance intrinsically and necessarily connected with the diffusion and realisation of liberal values. Salvati’s approach is to explain what kind of theoretical assumptions move the Western strategy and where the perceived fragility of liberal governance comes from. Among others, he discusses how authoritarian and non-liberal actors are resisting the hegemonic universalistic pressure of the liberal world and its attempts of drawing a specific epistemological line which divides the international community into law-abiding-countries and anti-systemic actors. Using discourse analysis Salvati demonstrates how the discussion on the semantics of fundamental regulatory ideas constitutes the centre of a fierce political battle for influencing the future of the liberal system. Autocratic countries like Russia and China, while they clearly do not line up with liberal values per se, do not reject outright either. On the contrary, they try very hard to move their epistemological and linguistic boundaries to be included within the ranks of countries whose behaviour can be considered not only legitimate but even reflect the evolving nature of the international order. It emerges from the author’s analysis that all the arguments made by China and Russia are done in the name of unspecified pluralism. This is in itself a core value of the liberal system and it works as an entry point for Moscow and Beijing in manipulating successfully the semantic ideas they discuss. This is a good example of how authoritarian countries that are more socially articulated are able to learn, use and develop key semantics that allows legitimate interaction with the other members.

After this sobering assessment of the workings of the world system, we move to the realm of everyday border-crossing and migrant experience. Anja Söyünmez provides us with inspirational observations regarding place-making and identity construction as reflected in border-crossing literatures. In her essay Anja Söyünmez focuses on Haitian diaspora literature and examines transatlantic territoriality and diasporic place-making as represented in Edwidge Danticat’s Haitian short story “Children of the Sea” which forms part of her book entitled *Krik? Krak!* Through the concepts of *dyaspora* and *the wake* Söyünmez argues that diasporic place-making is a process of positioning and transformation which marks a space of the in-between, that Danticat defines, locates, and claims. The focus on Haitian diaspora is analysed with the help of Stuart Hall’s essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” and Danticat’s concept of the *floating homeland*. And it is this latter concept that transforms former Haitian citizens into that of the Haitian diaspora.

Research notes from civil society networks

As part of the 2022 Cross-Border Review we also offer perspectives on cross-border cooperation as reflected in the work of civil society and multi-stakeholder networks operating across Europe and beyond. There are unbounded ecosystems of intercultural dialogue that are often neglected in more official and formal accounts of cross-border cooperation. However, the slow progress of cooperation between public agencies and governments only serve to emphasise the need for horizontal capacity-building and “de-bordering”.

In the first research note, Hannah Heyenn and her colleagues provide an overview of the INCLUDATE project which addresses the EU’s Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 (European Commission 2020). INCLUDATE targets adult education initiatives and is supported by the Erasmus Plus programme. It is implemented by two municipalities and five European NGOs, including two migrant associations. INCLUDATE is thus a transnational project that aims at “Educating for Inclusion”, promoting inclusive societies by empowering migrant associations in Europe and supporting public actors in their policy-making for inclusive, multicultural cities. INCLUDATE will utilise tools of community reporting and storytelling to boost community voices and learn about the experiences of migrants living in Budapest, Copenhagen, Gdynia, Palermo, and Berlin. Now that the stories have been collected, the project will seek to mirror the themes and issues addressed by the residents of migrant backgrounds back to stakeholders on local, national, and European Level. By the end of the project, each participating city will produce action plans and recommendations for more inclusive policies in all participating cities. As the authors indicate INCLUDATE aims to support:

- Migrants and migrant associations in making an impact on their own future
- Cities and other municipalities to integrate migrant needs into policies
- NGOs in collecting and spreading the needs from people of diverse backgrounds to institutions

In the second research note, Krisztina Keresztély introduces us to the EURBANITIES and EURBANITIES 2.0 projects that have been implemented based on an approach linking intercultural dialogue, education and the gamification of urban participation. The two consecutive adult education projects have spanned close to seven years since 2015 within the framework of Erasmus Plus funding. The main objective of these projects has been to empower citizens and NGOs working with them by providing them basic knowledge on the main objectives and tools of citizen participation, as well as on the way how participatory processes are going on in cities and how citizens can make their voices heard and later, collaborate with local authorities and stakeholders for achieving a sustainable local development of urban neighbourhoods. Diversity and intercultural dialogue were an essential part of both projects at several levels: through the partners’ activities, the methods used, as

well as in the complexity of the final outputs including case study analyses, training curricula, online games and a list of policy recommendations. Keresztély's contribution discusses how interculturality and intercultural dialogue was included in the Eurbanities projects, through the partners' work, the tools and methods used and the main results achieved.

Book reviews

Finally, two book reviews complete this year's line-up. Both of the reviewed books deal with various aspects of Slovakian history and Hungarian-Slovakian relations and elaborate highly nuanced perspectives.

György Farkas reviews Leslie Waters' book "Borders on the Move" which is a partial history of the Hungarian-Slovak borderlands. As Farkas elaborates, the book is brilliantly written and well researched, it represents an important resource for those interested in the complex twists and turns of Central European history and the tragedies associated with the Holocaust. However, Farkas also points to several weaknesses in the book. As he notes, one rather puzzling aspect of the book is its exclusive focus on the period between 1938 and 1948 which implies neglect of the momentous events directly after World War I – indeed, everything that occurred in 1938 had a *precedent* 20 years earlier. Another issue that Farkas raises refers to the tragedy of population changes after 1945. In his book, Waters refers to the population arriving to Hungary as "resettled" and the whole process as one of "resettlement". However, the fine line between a seemingly neutral concept of resettlement and the more negative connotations related to "deportation" is crossed in this book, perhaps unwittingly.

Teodor Gyelnik provides a review of István Kollais' 'Szlovákia királyt választ' (Slovakia Chooses a King) and argues that a tense dichotomy exists within the Slovak narration of history. In this dichotomy, two profoundly different approaches clash with each other and there is a zero-sum game between them. One is the oversimplified narration of oppression, a "thousand years of slavery" imposed by the Hungarians. This narration became dominant as part of the Slovak national awakening during the 19th and 20th centuries and was informed by a one-dimensional interpretation of national history and identity, pitting a Slovak "us" against the Hungarian "them". However, the book also depicts another side of the story as there have always existed Slovak interpretations that underline coexistence and co-influence. As Kollai's book indicates this more nuanced view of history has been overshadowed by easier, unambiguous narration of victimisation and conflict. As Gyelnik explains, Kollai's book highlights a more complex picture of history that is capable of highlighting and reflecting situational dependence (peaceful or sometimes tense) between linguistic and cultural groups. In this reading, the Slovak people participated on the everyday life of the Hungarian Kingdom for centuries, but at the same time they preserved their own ethnicity. Hence, there is a clear historical basis for legitimising Slovak claims for autonomy and independence.

Regional Cooperation in Times of Disruptive Crisis: Revisiting 'Civic Neighbourhoods'

James W. Scott

Introduction

One of the more somber messages that overshadows this still new Millennium is that disruptive geopolitics will be with us for quite some time to come. Despite all attempts to improve the workings of global governance and multilateralism, it appears that the blunt exercise of “hard power” never really faced a serious challenge. As part of European integration and long-term enlargement perspectives, cross-border and regional cooperation have been long promoted as a vehicle for improved interstate dialogue, environmental governance and economic development. However, within the present context of military conflict, competing national interests and the promotion of national spheres of influence in Central and South-East Europe (e.g. the Western Balkans), regional cooperation is increasingly influenced by geopolitical considerations that are often particularistic, cultural and ethnopolitical in nature. The consequences of these “geopoliticisation” processes are visible in a new reality of fragmentation and the emergence of a less stable environment for the flourishing of more long-term cooperation initiatives.

These developments have faced the European Union with a stark reality: it needs to work harder at developing a sense of coherent and forceful agency not only internally but at as a promoter of global governance. Events since the 2014 annexation of Crimea demonstrate that the EU cannot unilaterally define the elements of its actorness and even less impose a new geopolitical order. Whether or not this represents a temporary situation, questions regarding the EU’s transformative power within and outside its borders have been raised by the multiple crises presently facing the EU and it is not altogether clear where the limits of the EU’s regional influence potentially lie. Perhaps not surprisingly, advocates of more traditional geopolitical thinking have chided the EU’s “naïve” notions of interdependence and some, such as John Mearsheimer (2014) have even suggested that Western liberalism has provoked Russia into its aggressive action. The liberal values that are at the centre of the European Union’s political identity and geopolitical project are thus also under attack; however, abandoning such values would leave the EU little option but to assume (geo)deterministic political thinking and a ‘hard power’ stance in its

neighbourhood dealings. In addition to more unstable environments for regional cooperation, the EU itself has also been a victim of its own policy rigidities and shortcomings. Much criticism has been targeted at the often paternalistic and technocratic style of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) as well as a lack of decisiveness in strengthening ties with neighbouring states such as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

All of the above considerations weigh heavily on the future of regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and beyond. Under the present context of conflict and instability, what can be done to effectively adapt to this situation? Rather than apply a top-down approach that pre-supposes a specific geopolitical role for the EU within the so-called Neighbourhood, this contribution will suggest a reconceptualization of regional cooperation dynamics and support mechanisms. The essence of the suggested approach is to go beyond traditional models of structured relationships and conditionality and to revisit the idea of regional border-transcending cooperation as the construction of “civic neighbourhoods” (see Laine 2007; Liikanen and Scott 2010). Discussion begins with observations regarding the geopolitical role of the European Union, arguing that the EU cannot truly compete as a ‘hard power’ actor without compromising its political identity. However, the power asymmetries inherent in EU-Neighbourhood relations as well as the disruptive impacts of Russia’s war on Ukraine are forcing the EU to take a more forceful stance. At the same time, it is essential that the EU learn from the shortcomings of its cooperation policies, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) in particular.¹ Consequently, this contribution to the Review will point out some of the concerns that the implementation of EaP as well as other aspects of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy have raised. Discussion then proceeds to the main thesis of the paper, namely that cooperation based around civil society networks can increase the impact, resilience and mutual benefit of EU-neighbourhood relations. While civic neighbourhoods are not suggested as a ‘cure-all’ or universal solution to cooperation dilemmas, civil society networks are a necessary resource for the building up of trust, mutual understanding and practical cooperation across issues and actors.

Shifting geopolitical contexts and regional cooperation

Symptomatic of political responses to the rapidly changing international security environment is the resurgence of national particularisms and competitive rather than cooperative understandings of international politics. The European Union is a project of interstate integration that is inherently geopolitical in nature: the principal question revolves around the ability of the EU to exhibit actorness in the world

1 According to the official website of the EU’s External Action Services, The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and six Eastern European Partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

system and the impact that this actorness signifies. One aspect of this is the heavily contested ideational basis of the EU's political identity as a "force for good in the world" which sets it apart from traditional hegemons and world powers. Another issue that can be raised here is the fact that in its attempt to develop a comprehensive politics of regional cooperation, the EU has been unable to avoid clashes of interest and confrontations with old school realism and new-age hybrid warfare. Through the project of European Neighbourhood, the EU has attempted to project its soft power in Eurasia, the Black Sea Region, North Africa and elsewhere, feeding either by design or default numerous political tensions and rivalries.

These tensions have culminated in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine which has fundamentally transformed Europe's security thinking and confirmed the role of NATO as a defence community. The European Union has already been reconsidering its own positionality as a geopolitical actor within the world system. As Commissioner Thierry Breton stated in a communication of 10 September 2020: *"The era of a conciliatory or naïve Europe that solely relies on the virtue of its soft power is behind us. We are now seeing the dawn of a Europe that is determined to defend its strategic interests"* (Breton 2020). Breton also called for *"a powerful and geopolitical Europe"* that would be able to protect its economy, democracy and information space while avoiding debilitating geopolitical dependencies. To an extent, Breton's thoughts on EU international actorness possibly reflect a certain 'common sense' positionality given the present global disorder.

Perhaps inevitably, however, regional cooperation and instruments such as the EaP have become subject to geopolitical competition for normative power based on different understandings of sovereignty, state-society relations and the significance and value of regional cooperation (Rotaru 2019). Cadier (2018) has pointed out, however, that the geopoliticisation of EaP is not exclusively a result of Russian assertiveness; the EU has also implemented EaP strategies in order to extend its influence and was perhaps presumptuous in assuming that this would not be interpreted negatively by the Russian leadership. Indeed, the present military aggression against Ukraine culminates the Putinist doctrine of what is essentially non-cooperation. This has been a context of zero-sum-game geopolitics according to which only political influence and recognition count and neither of these can be shared with other powers or states.

Hence, the idea of a geopolitical European Union and the EU's project of regional and neighbourhood cooperation are now being tested by the disruptive force of current events. The EU does not represent a traditional international actor that can rely on domestic, that is, nationally defined, bases of legitimacy to stabilise its geopolitical identity. Indeed, it is hard to characterise the EU according to existing categories and IR concepts as it is a multifaceted and hybrid actor that pursues a number of conflicting objectives. For example, there is ample evidence of EU actorness as

torn between idealism (normative aspirations) and realism (interest-based policies) (Dandashly and Risse 2015). It is unclear how the EU will in future reconcile these apparently contradictory policy directions. However, what is significant is the need to sustain development of the – as yet unfulfilled – principles guiding EU's regional cooperation paradigm which include partnership, co-development and, most significantly, a recognition of mutual interdependence.

Ambiguities of Neighbourhood and the Eastern Partnership

The EU's Neighbourhood Policy and its Eastern Partnership are elements of a networked policy that pursues many global governance goals, and thus might offer prospects for broader multilateral cooperation. The scope of ENP as well as its basic premise, the creation of a multilevel forum for regional cooperation based on mutual concerns, are ambitious. Even without the geopolitical challenges facing the EU, regional cooperation has also struggled with its own contradictions and tensions. As several observers have noted in the past, the EU has not been terribly successful in promoting regional cooperation based on partnership and conditionality (Korosteleva 2012; Goldthau and Sitter 2015; Morozov 2010; Scazzieri 2020). The EU's ENP and EaP strategies appear to suffer from their own ambitions and assumptions. One of the more problematic assumptions is that the EU by definition as a large political community can directly influence developments in neighbouring states. There is no doubt that the EU has had transformational impacts on the societies of the former Soviet Union and has, in its own way, contributed to more open and empowered societies. However, this normative power does not automatically provide the EU with the influence to elicit institutional and policy convergence given the different interests and state-society relations that exist between EU member states and eastern neighbours.

One critical point that can be made is the of the EU's attempt to construct a geopolitical identity based on a set of European values and its own *acquis communautaire*. Such notions of Europeanness as democratic, liberal and progressive are, on the one hand, essential to the definition of an EU exceptionalism that can be projected outside the confines of the EU 27. On the other hand, this exceptionalism can only be promoted through soft power, conditionality, incentives and prospects of political and economic benefits. Moreover, there has been ample criticism of the EU's selective engagement with its neighbours, marginalisation of local needs and often one-sided focus on security issues (Dandashly 2018; Kourtellis 2017).

Consequently, a major weakness of the ENP has stemmed from a promotion of western liberal economic and social institutions without commensurate concern for their potential to strengthen political community and citizen engagement (Lehne 2014; Scott 2017; Tömmel 2013). Such universal narratives only resonate in domestic contexts to the extent that they represent resources that can be appropriated

and adapted, bolstering, for example, civil society's sense of identity and direction. EU-led ideas of Neighbourhood have thus tended to marginalise non-elite, outsider perspectives and as a result local needs. These issues have been raised, for example, by Georgian and Ukrainian civil society actors (Scott 2017). As Lyutsevych (2013) has documented, EU support, as well as western support more generally, has engendered professional 'NGO-cracies' in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries that enjoy privileged access to policy elites but which are disconnected from the public at large. Local civil society organisations are largely side-lined. Additionally, research conducted by the author (Scott 2017) in Ukraine suggests that a lack of support to wider social agendas, coupled with highly selective access to the European Union, create a sense of EU paternalism and aloofness.

In response to these criticisms, the EU has since attempted to adapt its external actions to changing conditions and in response to demands for change. The "renewed agenda" (European Commission 2021) targets, among others, *"increasing trade, growth and jobs, investing in connectivity, strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law, supporting the green and digital transitions, and promoting fair, gender-equal and inclusive societies."* This comprehensive plan for EaP harks back to the 2015 review of ENP (2015: 2), which confirmed the EU's commitment to partnership as a basic structuring principle of Neighbourhood. The review's main aim is:

"to propose how the EU and its neighbours can build more effective partnerships in the neighbourhood. In doing so, the EU will pursue its interests which include the promotion of universal values. The EU's own stability is built on democracy, human rights and the rule of law and economic openness and the new ENP will take stabilisation as its main political priority in this mandate."

At the same time, the EU has also recognised that: *"differentiation and greater mutual ownership will be the hallmark of the new ENP, recognising that not all partners aspire to EU rules and standards, and reflecting the wishes of each country concerning the nature and focus of its partnership with the EU."* Evidence for changes have been provided by road maps for civil society engagement as well as more recent iterations of Euro-Med cooperation agendas (European Commission 2015; 2017) indicate a widening of perspective and the promise of a more inclusive approach. Hence, while maintaining a values-oriented approach, the EU appears willing to adapt a more pragmatic stance in its relations with neighbouring states.

Conceptualising a 'Civic Neighbourhood' in practical and philosophical terms

According to Gleditsch (2002), political neighbourhoods are contexts where geopolitical identities and rationales of individual states emerge as a result of political, economic and cultural interaction. Beyond this, the logic of regional stewardship or regional neighbourhood as promoted by the EU is based on the assumption of vital economic, security and political interests emerging from geographical proximity. However, given the complexities of the EU's experiences with constructing a Neighbourhood Policy how might neighbourhood play out as a shared regional idea? Even the most 'innocent' delimitation according to cardinal directions, or any express or implicit categorisations of spatial community have always been laden with certain political values and implications. Thus, as part of the renewal of ENP/EaP certain pitfalls need to be avoided that can be linked to the idea of Neighbourhood as a "*special relationship (...) founded on the values of the Union*" as enshrined in Article 8(1) of the Treaty on European Union. However, despite this Eurocentric mission statement the difference between Neighbourhood as originally defined by the EU and the realist concept of 'spheres of influence' is precisely that of possibility. Spheres of influence are unambiguously linked to state interests and projections of power that entail some form of territorial control or domination. Here we are reminded of geopolitical discourses that have sought to demarcate 'Europe' from 'Eurasia' through an emphasis of difference and diverging historical paths (see, for example, Nartov 2004 and Sengupta 2009).

In contrast, what emerges from this discussion is that the EU's regional role cannot be a question of a grand geopolitical game, which implies the acceptance of rules dictated by more aggressive regional actors, but of developing a sense of Neighbourhood understood in the broadest terms. Above all, if the EU's ambitions to promote institutional modernisation, democracy as well as social and economic development are to succeed, a greater degree of engagement with societies that ENP addresses is necessary. This would also involve a substantial rethinking of the premises upon which ENP is based and would consist of the mutual construction of interaction spaces that are local as well as networked and transnational, and that involve societal issues, social needs and cultural dialogues. Such a socially focused perspective would also involve re-conceptualisations of Neighbourhood as a cooperation context not wholly dependent on external conditions convergence to pre-defined conditions.

An alternative strategy would be composed of interlinked conceptual and practical components in which the goal of civic neighbourhood would receive greater emphasis. This perspective is supported by Crombois' (2019) assertion that the EU need to maintain transformational momentum in its relations with Eastern Partnership states and this demands a bold rather than merely pragmatic approach in the face of geopolitical threats. According to Crombois, among the agendas that require

the EU to follow through with its promises for policy renewal are strengthening are engagement with civil society, as well as attention to gender equality, non-discrimination and independence of the media.

Following Browning and Joenniemi (2017), I thus suggest that the EU needs a more flexible and adaptable relationship to its own political identity in developing its external role. Conceptually, Neighbourhood Policy would also be characterised by openness towards and engagement with pluralities of interests, even if these might be “unfamiliar” or not always correspond to those of the EU. This requires greater acceptance on the part of the EU of fundamental difference between European and domestic understandings of the role of civil society. This includes, for example, a better understanding of the role of different civil societies in defining and/or transforming state-society relations as well as their role in generating alternatives to traditionalist and authoritarian regimes. The impetus here would lie in an acceptance of the contingencies of accommodation rather than a regulated and orchestrated political scenario, privileging diversity and civic participation in cooperation initiatives. In practical terms, greater engagement with civil society, not merely as a collective of elite organisations but as grassroots representatives of local concerns, and as intermediaries between different social worlds, would be a logical option (Buzogány 2018; Laine 2017; Youngs 2020). Possible framings of broader cooperation would allow for new and often unforeseen spaces for action. Finally, a more concerted combination of different policy areas that involve external actions, including cross-border cooperation and development, as well as more targeted involvement with international organisations, could provide a concrete basis for a renewed Neighbourhood Policy.

Evidence for this potential is provided by the workings of international NGO and civil society networks which are contributing to global governance even as sovereign states fail to take meet their international responsibilities as guarantors of human security. These networks have taken up the challenge to promote environmental, social justice, human rights and other agendas at a global scale. In addition, such non-state networks demonstrate considerable resilience even under difficult operating conditions. The state of the art in collaborative and adaptive governance processes provides a rich foundation for conceptualising more effective means of managing pressing global issues. This in effect underlines *the need for applied knowledge approaches in which learning processes are at the heart of institutional change*, providing an alternative and/or complement to rules-based reform (see Unsworth 2010). What can be emphasised within this context is the need for understanding adaptive forms of networked multiactor and multisector collaboration (Forrer 2017). This emphasises social and institutional learning through interaction (Berdej and Armitage 2016; Berkes 2017), but also the role of activism in politicising specific issues and creating sensitivity that influences political behaviours (Zelko 2017).

These ideas and experiences bear transferring to the promotion of regional cooperation and Neighbourhood. Following an approach along these lines would recognise the increasing complexity of regional cooperation and issues related to development and human security; all of these are inextricably linked with issues such as social welfare, health, human rights, social justice and climate change and they need to be a more prominent part of the conversation regarding EU actorness. Put simply, the EU's goal has been - or at least is said to be - one of achieving a global governance that matters. As a step in this direction, cooperation and regional dialogue continue to be part of the EU's (geo)political identity and its regional and global role. And yet, it is quite unclear how and to what extent principles of multilateral and multilevel cooperation is to be upheld by "a powerful and geopolitical Europe".

These ideas are not totally new nor do they suppose a revolutionary break with the EU's regionalist principles. As previously mentioned, they hark back to ideas of New Regionalism as proposed by Hettne (2005) and others but also reflect more recent elaborations in terms of post-hegemonic and democratic regionalism that have been emerged in Europe, Latin America and other parts of the world (Ruggirozzi and Tussie 2012; Serbin 2012). What this involves is in essence a regionalist framework that, while not ignoring trade, energy and security issues, puts greater emphasis on social policy and collective action as areas of social and territorial development (Ruggirozzi 2014). As the EU forges ahead with Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA), multilateral cooperation platforms, mobility partnerships and security cooperation, the importance of greater social involvement would therefore be emphasised. Social development and regional stability are mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive. ENP and Eastern Partnership could thus become powerful tools to address social issues (ranging from poverty, health and vocational training to the promotion of entrepreneurial skills), cultural cooperation (such as education and research) and regional inequalities through targeted investments rather than temporary aid mechanisms. In effect, this could involve, but by no means necessitate, incorporating principles of European Cohesion into ENP policies (see Lepesant 2014).

Philosophically, this strategy would imply reflectivity, or a constant evaluation of the EU's positionality vis-à-vis its strategic neighbours, and it would also eschew evocations of geopolitical competition between spheres of influence. Civic neighbourhood can be related to the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt which prioritises inclusion, voice, and by extension, visibility, within the political sphere as an essential element of productive, everyday life (Borren 2008). This debate allows for a considerable expansion of notions of security and geopolitics, including questions of citizenship rights, empowerment and political visibility. In taking up Hannah Arendt's (1958) understanding of political life, a move away from traditional geopolitical narratives would involve addressing the plurality of human needs and capacities. If the EU is to make a sustainable difference in the world in the sense of promoting

peace and well-being, then it must understand its external role as closely linked to questions of social, and not solely economic, development. In its own admittedly limited way, the EU could promote the agency of social actors in neighbouring countries by making the EU more accessible – both in terms of mobility and in facilitating joint agenda-setting in regional cooperation. With such access could come greater recognition of and political voice to Neighbourhood situations, groups, persons, needs and concerns.

An Arendtian “politics of visibility” would thus entail an acceptance of the contingencies of accommodation rather than a regulated and orchestrated political scenario, privileging diversity and civic participation in political life (Gordon 2002). Openness towards a plurality of interests could allow for new and often unforeseen spaces for action whereas (often hubristic) adherence to normative models as guides for political action tends to limit choices and marginalise groups distant from policy elites. Similarly, Radchuk (2011: 22) has suggested that a “reconciliation” between the EU’s and Ukraine’s aspirations lies in two-way positive perceptions of the various polities, and more importantly in certain cultural values that pertain to the EU but are seen by these countries’ citizens as being important for their own societies’ A reflective process might be an alternative to the policy determinism implied by resurgent competitive geopolitics that the EU is also apparently embracing.

Along similar lines Laine (2017: 11) proposes that one option for realising a civic neighbourhood might be characterised by “*a non-Eurocentric bottom-up concept open to broader definitions of what is meant both by Europe and by borders (...)*.” This idea also recognises the mobile and networked nature of cross-border and transnational relations. In accordance with Laine’s arguments, alternative spaces, e.g. civic neighbourhoods, are promising ways of understanding very different Neighbourhood relations without finalising them. Neighbourhood can be conceptualised as a context of interaction that is politically framed in very general terms but that in detail is composed of many different interaction spaces interlinked in complex ways. The European Neighbourhood may therefore emerge as a patchwork of relations rather than merely as an asymmetric cooperation policy, border regime or geopolitical rationale. Within this patchwork Laine (2017: 10) argues the strengths of sustained and more forceful support of CBC:

“If only at an asymmetric level, CBC is about mutual learning: it attenuates our tendency to think in normative and categorical terms about what civil society is and what it should do. It opens up new perspectives for understanding why civil society actors develop specific practices and provides insights into the specific social identities of civil society organisations.”

Conclusions

What emerges from this discussion is that regional cooperation needs to be shielded from grand geopolitical games by understanding regional neighbourhood in the broadest terms. If the EU's ambitions to promote institutional modernisation, democracy as well as social and economic development are to succeed, a greater degree of engagement with societies that both ENP and EaP address is necessary. This would also involve a substantial rethinking of the premises upon which EaP is understood as a co-operation context that is not overly dependent on or informed by convergence to pre-defined conditions. Barring this, the EU might, ironically, be reproducing what it explicitly seeks to avoid: the creation of new divisions in welfare, social opportunity and political dialogue. Having achieved its ambitions enlargement agenda, and now securing its eastern borders, the EU appears to have lost sight of the material and symbolic significance of regional cooperation. Civil society struggles to receive greater recognition and support from the EU even though their political salience continues to increase. Based on the above discussion, some brief conclusions can be drawn.

The clearest long-term contribution of the EU to social modernisation would be one been of reframing social and welfare issues. Furthermore, considerable potential exists for horizontal, non-hierarchical institutional learning that involves motivated sectors of the population and strengthens their social impact locally and regionally. In particular, almost all of our informants agreed that the EU has been missing important opportunities to develop neighbourhood partnerships by neglecting the role of civil society. Working with and through civil society actors helps promote new forms of policy learning outside formal institutionalised policy channels by creating a pragmatic rather than normative environment of transnational communication and exchange. Given the present context of crisis and EU-Russia tensions, the only viable alternative to further securitisation would appear to be thinking of Neighbourhood as a space of possibility based on greater recognition and engagement with social and cultural realities on the ground. Moreover, I argue that the main challenge to achieving a more effective ENP is not geopolitical competition but greater accessibility, acceptability and everyday relevance of EU policies with regard to its neighbours and putative partners. Here, greater engagement with civil society, not merely as a collective of elite organizations but as grassroots representatives of local concerns, and as intermediaries between different social worlds, could be a logical option.

Ultimately, if we are to understand regional co-operation progressively, i.e. as based on mutual interdependence and multilevel societal interaction, then the ideational basis for a regional Neighbourhood should not be based on the external imposition of a set of values but a product of co-definition and co-development. Neighbourhood could be understood in terms of socio-cultural relationships, political partnerships and shared societal concerns. This would be an important elaboration of a de-territorialised vision of regional neighbourhood that, nevertheless, would need to be reconciled with more clearly territorial and state-centred understandings.

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Peacebuilding and Higher Education: An interdisciplinary Approach in the Context of Macedonian Society

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Introduction

At its core, peacebuilding nurtures constructive human relationships. To be relevant, it must do so strategically, at every level (including educational one) of society and horizontally across the potentially polarized lines of ethnicity, class, religion, and race. In this regard, peacebuilding has the capacity to develop strategies to maximize the impact of initiatives for constructive change within this complexity. It focuses on transforming inhumane social patterns, flawed structural conditions, and open violent conflict that weaken the conditions necessary for a flourishing human community (Philpott and Powers 2010). There are certain hallmarks of the constructive relationships that peacebuilding approach seeks to foster among conflicted or divided peoples. These include the cultivation of interdependence as a social and political context for the effective pursuit of human rights, good governance, and economic prosperity, the promotion of transparent communication across sectors and levels of society in the service of including as many perspectives and actors as possible in the reform of institutions and the repair or creation of partnerships conducive to the common good, and the increasing coordination and integration of resources, programs, practices and processes.

The educational institutions and the educational process itself, certainly represent environments that can have a positive impact on the promotion of social cohesion and participatory activities shaped in an intergroup communication and mutual trust in divided or insufficiently integrated societies. Considering that peacebuilding actions should be undertaken on multiple levels: citizen awareness raising and democratization, as well as stimulating social cohesion, interethnic coexistence, intercultural learning and elimination of prejudices, the paper's scope is to explore and analyse the Macedonian higher education's impact in peace building process.

In that way, the preliminary part is focused on the theoretical aspects of the strategic peacebuilding, interaction and bringing to the educational process. The second part deals with the higher education as a tool for peacebuilding in the Macedonian multi-ethnic society, considering historical and socio-political context of the society suit to proclaimed independence from former Yugoslavia (1991), armed conflict (2001) and in context of EU and NATO membership processes.

Theorizing the peacebuilding approach

In a broader context, the peacebuilding refers to the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships and partnerships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. Peacebuilding seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate conflicts. In this regard, peacebuilding is perceived as a long-term and comprehensive strategic process. It is no doubt that peacebuilding becomes strategic when it works over the long run as well as in establishing and sustaining relationships and partnerships among people and within society at all levels.

Theoretically, there are many definitions of peacebuilding and varying opinions about what it involves. Historically, the term itself first emerged during the 70th years of the XX century, by the Johan Galtung, who called for the creation of peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the “root causes” of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution (Galtung 1976). The peacebuilding is also considered as:

“...process of socio-economic reconstruction, development and expansion in conflict and devastated areas and between non-privileged nations. Hence, conflict structure could be transformed only by creating appropriate conditions as well as by creating mutual trust. . .” (Harbottle 1984).

According to the International Conference on Peace Building (1986), peacebuilding is a constant, positive human endeavour for building bridges among opposing nations and groups. Its aim is establishing mutual understanding and cooperation as well as removing the stones of mistrust, fear, and hatred (International Conference on Peace Building 1986). Fetherstone (1996) defines peacebuilding as an instrument of preventing the renewal of hostilities, reconstruction of the economic and social infrastructure and facilitating the resolution of the conflict. It makes sense on the difference between peacebuilding and international assistance, i.e. humanitarian and development aid, as it arises from the fact that peacebuilding should be understood as a long-term process aimed at eliminating the essential roots of the conflict.

At the international level, peacebuilding became a root concept within the United Nations’ approaches. Following Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s 1992 report, it defined peacebuilding as action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict (An Agenda for Peace 1992). In 2000, the Brahimi Report defined it as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” (UN 2000). In 2007, The Secretary-General’s Policy Committee stated that:

“Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. The peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities referring to pre-identified objectives” (Secretary-General’s Policy Committee 2007).

Such UN’s understandings suggest that one of the main peacebuilding objectives revolves around the effort to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict in its aftermath by establishing or strengthening the needed social foundations about peace lasting. It means that peacebuilding seeks to transform a war-torn society into a sustainable one in various arenas (politics, security and socioeconomics), by creating or reforming the state apparatus, state institutions, and other relevant institutions, including those identified as the civil society.

Considering the evolutionary nature and goals of the peacebuilding concept, the dilemma arises whether peacebuilding refers to post-conflict societies uniquely, or it is relevant and applicable in societies not affected by conflict. Both dilemmas are coherent with perception of the peacebuilding as an effort for constructing new or better living conditions through establishing a so-called sustainable peace. As concept, sustainable peace frames the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that causing the deadly conflict, in term to strengthen the local and national capacities for dealing with the past, engaging with the present, and shaping the future to not exclude, oppress, or divide the people and society.

In this way, peacebuilding is increasingly perceived as strategy that encompass concrete measures and cooperative projects in connecting all state and non-state actors toward achieving its goals - improving mutual communication and trust, better social cohesion, economic and social development. Therefore, peacebuilding involves complex environment of stakeholders at all levels. Still, it is neither a purely political, security nor developmental process, but one that gathers key security, political, economic, social and human rights elements in a coherent and integrated way. In such complex circumstances, the educational institutions can and should have a significant role within peacebuilding process. Their role in this context can especially be traced through the prism of their contribution to the improvement of social cohesion as well as in intergroup communication and contact activities.

Bringing peacebuilding into the education process

In the debate about the nexus between peace and education, the education could be perceived as a factor which can threaten peace, but also as an instrument for peace strengthening and promoting. In this regard, any analysis of the education system is more likely to highlight a range of areas where some parts of the system may be fuelling conflict in a highly politicized way, whilst there may be other aspects of the system that are trying to bring about change and contribute towards peacebuilding (Davies 2010). The “human needs” theory, as developed by Burton, identifies the causes of conflicts raised from unfulfilled basic human needs of recognition, security, and identity. If any of those needs remain unfulfilled, individual or group conflict will result (Burton 1990).

The access and right to education, as an integral part of the basic human needs is considered as a universal worldwide human right respectively. Its importance and value affect the personal and community development. The right to education is seen as one of the critical issues of peace governance arrangements that could facilitate peacebuilding and create a contact platform between communities. Therefore, in societies that have experienced violent conflict(s), the education policy may also has a longer-term role in the post-conflict development, to help successive generations understand the causes and consequences of the local or broader violent conflict and potentially to contribute in the peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes. The so-called “integrated education” in conflicted societies can be perceived as an instrument that drives positive impact in enhancing social cohesion and intergroup communication through immediate activities.

The educational systems can provide positive interpersonal relations, a sense of belonging of all students, group solidarity, tolerance, and mutual trust, while the aspects of educational social cohesion can be directly brought into relation with the peace building objectives. The impact of education in general is seen as “the most powerful generator of social capital” in today’s society, contributing to social cohesion by socializing the new members of the society, providing them with knowledge and skills to facilitate their social participation. Durkheim considers social cohesion as the capacity of a society to ensure the wellbeing of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization. Still, although there is no single agreed definition about social cohesion, this term can be linked to the generation of shared values, identities, and norms, and denotes an awareness of social exclusion and inclusion (Tawil and Harley 2004). According to Green and more specifically, social cohesion places emphasis on the integration of the individual and the group as the basis of overcoming social, ethnic, or political conflict (Green et al. 2009). Such an integration understanding usually implies that ‘other’ (e.g. minority) groups must adjust to the majority’s social and cultural norms so that the society becomes cohesive.

Social cohesion in educational systems refers to positive interpersonal relations between students, a sense of belonging of all students and group solidarity. The tolerance and inclusion are key elements of social cohesion in education process (Hoskins 2008). Education institutions are regarded as places where students should learn to be members of a culturally diverse community (Schuitema and Veugelers 2011) and where mutual understanding and shared values should be promoted (Phillips et al. 2010). Social relations are defined as “*the most prominent aspect of social cohesion*” (Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017) and affect the quantity and quality of relations. Schiefer and Van der Noll distinguished four components of social relations that should be achieved through the educational process: social networks, trust, mutual tolerance, and participation. The social networks in educational settings are defined as the configurations of relational ties among peers in a class and school, relations between students and teachers, and patterns of relations between parents (Carolan 2014).

Trust refers to classmates, teachers, or the school as an institution. Perceived helpfulness and fairness are two of the key elements of students’ generalized trust in others (Dinesen 2011) and are thought to also play a role in one’s trust in classmates. Tolerance toward outgroups refers to both observable positive relations in the classroom or school and attitudes toward students from outgroups. Based on contact theory (Allport 1954), cross-ethnic friendships are regarded important for tolerance toward outgroups and contribute to stronger social cohesion. Participation is connected to a positive school climate or involvement in civic education. Students can participate in social activities both within and outside the school. An active participation in the classroom during lessons is regarded as helpful for a positive school climate that fosters social cohesion, while from a citizenship education perspective, student participation refers to providing students with knowledge and participatory skills within the school enabling them to participate in civic affairs and social life outside their schools in their neighbourhood and country (Banks 2017). The education’s influence on the intergroup communication and intergroup contact activities, reflected through a contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), aims at promoting intergroup relations within conditions of status equality and cooperative interdependence. Educators also facilitate sustained interaction between participants and the potential formation of friendships and might help alleviate conflict between groups and encourage change in negative intergroup attitudes. In this regard, educational institutions are environments that enable or should enable direct contacts and interactions between participants/students from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and social groups.

Interactions with people of other cultures offer opportunities along to road to more peaceful communities, while the intergroup communication competence gives the needed tools for building bridges over the cultural divides. Allport (1954) emphasizes that the intergroup contact does not automatically or always reduce prejudice,

but it is affected by: 1) equal status among group members; 2) group members working toward a common goal; 3) cooperative interaction among group members; and 4) clear institutional forms of support for intergroup contact. Allport's approach in defining the criteria is quite restrictive as his focus is mainly on race relations, while the intergroup contact theory has widened over the years and includes prejudice based on ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality.

Hypothetically, by establishing contact and increasing knowledge about other cultural groups, the prejudice has to be reduced. Another way that contacts reduce prejudice is by facilitating empathy and perspective taking. Intergroup contact, especially when it fosters close personal relationships, makes easier taking and understanding perspective of outgroup members, share their emotional experiences and empathize with their concerns, thereby improving intergroup attitudes. Thus, the intergroup communication in educational environments can be perceived as perspective and significant instrument that enables creation of partnerships, friendships, and mutual trust between different parties/students as well as that has positive impact on peacebuilding process.

Higher education processes in Macedonian society: Background information

The question of the role of high education in Macedonian multi-ethnic society has emerged from the broader context of interethnic relations and specifically as an issue of the access to high education of non-majority ethnic groups. It becomes the most salient aspect of interethnic tensions as access to high education have become politicized and political parties' representatives claimed it is a matter of high priority that requires all necessary means to be achieved (Georgieva et al. 2014). The core problem in this regard has different ethnic perspectives. The ethnic Albanians demanded more favourable conditions and access to high education, while ethnic Macedonians perceived such claims as repetition of once experienced separatist Serbian-Kosovo scenario.

The data about graduate students for Universities in Skopje and Bitola in 1990-1991 (the only state universities in that period) show that 1.5 percent are Albanians, while 87.9 percent are Macedonians (Leatherman 1999). According to the State Statistical Office (SSO), the situation in 2015/2016 shows an evident change in ethnical representation of the graduated students in the universities, compared to 1990-1991. Total number of graduated students counts: 6 015 out of 8 124 are Macedonians (or 74.03 percentage), 1 592 (19.59 percentage) are Albanians, 153 Turks, 30 Roma, 57 Vlachs, 85 Serbs, and 192 Other (SSO, 2016). In 2021/2022, the total number of first-time enrolled students are 47 493. Out of total number 32 819 (69.10 percentage) are Macedonians, while 11 828 (24.90 percentage) are Albanians (SSO

2022). Such proportion is derived from the introduction of Albanian as a language of instruction in the higher education. In this regard, the provisions of the Law on Higher Education (2000) envisaged the introduction of minority languages in higher education, opportunities for establishment of private higher education institutions and the establishment of professional bodies for accreditation and evaluation. The law's amendments and changes enabled the establishment of the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo in March 2001. In the followed period, three more new state universities have been established: State University of Tetovo in 2004, Goce Delchev University - Štip in 2007 and the St. Paul the Apostle University for Information Technologies – Ohrid in 2009, and lately in 2016 the sixth state university - Mother Teresa University in Skopje, was established.

According to the SSO's data, Macedonians are the majority among students at the: Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, St. Clement of Ohrid University in Bitola, Goce Delchev University in Štip and St. Paul the Apostle University for Information Technologies in Ohrid. Within these universities, Macedonian is main language of instruction. In other hand, Albanians are the majority students at the: South East European University in Tetovo, State University of Tetovo and Mother Teresa University in Skopje, with Albanian as the main language of instruction in education. However, above presented statistics by the SSO, shows that the access of ethnic communities to high education is improved in the past 20 years, but the dilemma is whether and how the high education contributes for promoting and building social cohesion/segregation and interethnic dialogue and communication as well as to which extent the high education impact on peacebuilding. Additionally, the SSO's data show a serious absence of mutual contacts and communication between ethnical Macedonian and ethnical Albanian students because of their choice to enrol in universities where their mother tongue is main language of instruction.

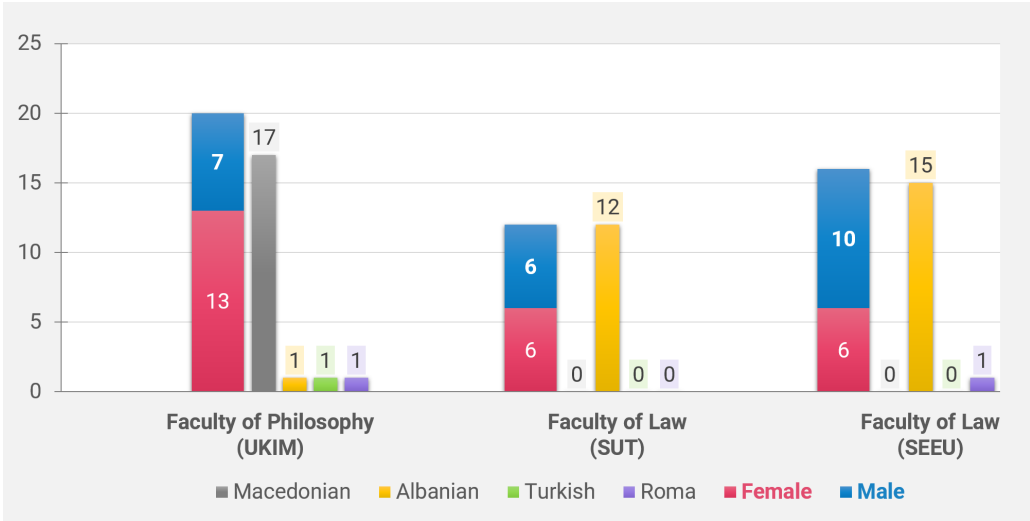
The peacebuilding model in higher education: An interdisciplinary approach in the context of Macedonian society

The state of art of Macedonian high education respects and implements the idea of intercultural education. The policies in high education are continuously facing with criticism, as they are inconsistent and based on frequent experiments, and they are not incorporating the models of intercultural education, its priorities and goals. There are several explanations for such a perception, as: parallel education systems are established, which produce physical and cultural distance; poor teacher competencies for teaching intercultural education; strong influence of the non-formal and the in-formal educational influence (family, local community, political parties); as well as absence of clearly defined and nationally and locally accepted education goals (Georgieva et al. 2014). There is a general concern that current educational system (including higher education), produces more ethnic distance than social co-

hesion, communication, and dialogue (to which, among other things, the peace building approach is aimed to).

Beside the current state of the art, the Macedonian high education system experienced the sporadic, but significant efforts to move forward the intercultural dialog between students and between teaching staff from different ethnicities and universities. The EU funded TEMPUS project titled “Interuniversity 2nd and 3rd Cycle International Relations Study Programs in Macedonia”¹. In Macedonian context, the purpose of the project was manifold, but primarily it boiled down to capacity building and establishing academic links across the largest ethnical communities in Macedonia. In this regard, a joint Program for Interdisciplinary MA Studies in International Relations: conflict resolution, diplomacy, and human rights, has been established as a part of this project in 2010, with participation of three state universities from Macedonia - Ss. Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje (UKIM), the Southeast European University (SEEU), and the State University of Tetovo (SUT), the University of Gothenburg (as a project holder) and other partners from Austria, France and Ireland. The Faculty of Philosophy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University led the specialization in Conflict Resolution Studies, the Faculty of Law at the Southeast European University provided expertise in Diplomacy and International Relations Studies while the Faculty of Law at the State University of Tetovo led the specialization in Human Rights.

Figure 1: Gender and ethnical composition of the enrolled students in the first year of studies (2010/2011)



1 Project reference 144787-TEMPUS-1-2008-1-SE-TEMPUS-JPCR, 2009-2012. More information at: <http://pf.ukim.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/macedonia2008.pdf>, p.78.

Once the accreditation process of study program was completed, 48 students enrolled in 2010/2011 and it largely matched with the objectives of the project, as it was envisaged to be enrolled total of 60 students in the first year or 20 students at each of the three concerned universities. Most of the students enrolled at UKIM were Macedonians, while the ethnic Albanian students dominated in the other two universities. According to the concept and structure of the joint study program, students from all three universities attended the two joint compulsory courses at each of the universities, while the choice of elective courses was from the offered list of courses at the faculty where they were enrolled. As a result, the study process and implementation of study program has been taking place in the classrooms of all these three universities. English was the only language of instruction within the program.

Table 1: Numbers of enrolled students in the first accreditation period (2010-2015)

Academic year	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Faculty of Philosophy (UKIM)	20	20	7	7	6
Faculty of Law (SUT)	12	9	16	/	/
Faculty of Law (SEEU)	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The trends of interest observed through numbers of enrolled students at UKIM in the first accreditation period (academic 2010/11 to 2014/15) show a serious and evident decline. The decrease of the number of enrolled students starting from 2012 largely interfere lack of funding for free scholarship, i.e., the students were required to pay for scholarship by themselves.² However, despite the positive experiences of students and the academic staff of all three universities during the program's first accreditation period (2010-2014), the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje is the only institution that re-accredited the study program and it is still ongoing in 2022.

Even sporadic, the experiences with this joint study program are significant in several respects. The study program has shown that students and academic staff from different universities and from different ethnicities can effectively collaborate and can build partnerships based on mutual respect and trust. By providing students with a positive, constructive, and less polarized environment to discuss, to get involved and to study international relations with specialization in three different modules, the project has impacted the breaking down of traditional barriers (prejudices and stereotypes) and contributed to promoting the interethnic cooperation.

² According to TEMPUS program's rules, the funds for scholarship (tuition fees) for the first two years of the studies and academic staff costs were covered by the project's budget.

In the absence of monitoring and evaluation process on the effects and results of the implemented study program, for the purposes of this paper informal communication was carried out with some of the participants (lecturers and former students), for their perceptions and attitudes regarding several aspects. In this regard, it can be noticed a dominant positive attitude about the success of the study program in terms of creating better relations both between students and lecturers, with different group (ethnic) identification. Confirmation of that, is their common attitude to increase the number of new friends from another ethnic group, once the implementation of the program began. In addition, the positive attitude prevails among the former students that during the implementation of the program, the teaching staff manifested a significant positive contribution in establishing relations and in providing equal status between students from different ethnic groups. The students have a positive attitude about the experience they gained from relationships and cooperation with colleagues from another ethnic group. According to them, the program enabled a better understanding of the views of colleagues from another ethnic group regarding various topics related to international relations, diplomacy, human rights, and conflict resolution.

The academic staff from the three universities that commonly developed program curriculum and participated in the implementation of the study program, are still active and sustainable, as during and following the project implementation several teams were established to participate in the implementation of different national and international projects. The uniting of students from different ethnic backgrounds, represents an important step forward for the Macedonian society. From today's perspective (October 2022) it can be noted that the project has facilitated promotion of mutually beneficial relations. Unfortunately, such a bottom-up approach didn't provide enough food for thought for government bodies and policy makers in the Macedonian society. Like most pilot solutions involving third parties and funding, including the opportunities for temporary funding of end users (students and teaching staff) and documented good practices and perception by the end users, however, this project activity was not recognized by policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia and was not incorporated within the higher education system.

Conclusion

The conception, legal and institutional set-up in high education in countries with different ethnic and linguistic groups are often a challenging, demanding, and contentious issue, as they should meet different needs and interest of the groups. The engagement of the inter-ethnic and inter-cultural interaction in the high education process in the context of the peacebuilding's transformative role has potential to facilitate the social cohesion, contact, communication and cooperation between groups and peoples, even in divided or (post)conflicted communities. If societies fail to ensure social cohesion and integration between different ethnicities through the educational system and thus do not deal with the consequences of the existing segregation practice, then the connection between education and peacebuilding is lost. In such situations students usually show high level of prejudice and mistrust towards students from different (ethnic, religious, racial, etc.) background. In other hand, integrated education should not be accepted as a technocratic process where simply different students come together when they are usually educated apart. Therefore, (educational) integration should be understood as a multi-faced, long-term, and open-ended process in which all stakeholders come together and benefit from it.

Education is still not perceived by policy makers as a key instrument for peace governance arrangements that could facilitate peacebuilding and create a contact platform between communities. The future of the higher education as a peacebuilding instrument in Macedonian society depends on shared understanding of its mission and its goals if not only on common vision about what it means. In this regard, the main challenge for education system in Macedonian society is the widespread division along ethnic lines. Providing opportunities for studying in mother tongue did not integrate higher education process and its beneficiaries. Therefore, the future focus should be on providing opportunities for interaction between students of all ethnic communities as well on promoting the common ground - development of various skills, finding common interest, values and behaviours through interaction, and finally have to result with an increase of students' participation in the democratic and cohesive society. Moreover, the specific goals of education should be geared towards progress in personal skills and knowledge of the students through the processes of getting to understand and respect of other cultures. Such approach will generate a more significant and sustainable higher education's role in peacebuilding in the Macedonian society.

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Contribution of CEEPUS in fostering cross-border academic cooperation between Serbia and Croatia^{1*2}

Miloš Petrović

Introduction

Article 1: The cooperation among Contracting Parties in the field of higher education and related research, in particular inter-university cooperation and mobility, shall be promoted in accordance with this Agreement.

Agreement concerning the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies ("CEEPUS III"), 2010

The *Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies* (hereinafter: CEEPUS) is a higher-education cross-border mobility program, intended for advancing academic cooperation between the member-countries and their participating institutions from across Central and Southeastern Europe (CEEPUS III Agreement 2010). It ranks among the most recognizable platforms for international higher-education collaboration that is specifically aimed at Central and Eastern European countries (Scheck, Zupan and Schuch 2015: 3). Unlike Erasmus+ that evolved from being an instrument for EU cohesion, that gradually assumed a more international and even global character, the geographic scope of CEEPUS has remained limited to the eastern, or perhaps rather, "non-western" part of the European continent. This paper explores the bestowal of CEEPUS to more proximate collaboration between its two contracting parties, Serbia and Croatia. However, considering the relative unfamiliarity with CEEPUS in the academic literature, the author will firstly briefly present the main features of that program.

1 * The paper presents the findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and Challenges in International Relations in 2022", financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

2 The research was presented at "The International Conference on the Future of Peace: The Role of the Academic Community in the Promotion of Peace", co-organised in August 2022 by the Croatian Association of the Club of Rome, the University of Zagreb and the Inter University Centre Dubrovnik.

The program was officially established in 1993 through signing a CEEPUS (I) Agreement in Budapest by the designated state officials of Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia (Council of Europe – Nordic Council of Ministers 1997: 139). Another legal basis for such cooperation stems from the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, especially its Article 18 (that refers to Obligation not to defeat the object and purpose of a treaty prior to its entry into force) (UN 1969). In 1994, the supranational Central CEEPUS office (hereinafter: CCO) was established in Vienna, as well as respective national CEEPUS offices (hereinafter: NCOs), nominated and supported by each government (Council of Europe – Nordic Council of Ministers 1997: 139). The “CEEPUS enlargement” ensued with Croatia in 1995, Czech Republic in 1996 and numerous other countries as the years passed. Serbia and Montenegro joined the program in 2004, and continued to participate separately once their state union dissolved in 2006 (CEEPUS platform 2022b). Each CEEPUS member country has its own national quota, funding and coverage scope, which is determined by the respective contracting party, that is, the government (Scheck, Zupan and Schuch 2015: 3).

The program has so far enabled over 75,000 academic exchanges and included over 1,800 institutions (CEEPUS platform 2022a). What is interesting is that the expansion of CEEPUS has coincided with these countries’ “return to Europe” through the course of the European integration processes. Since the Thessaloniki summit which recognized the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans (2003), numerous countries from the CEE region have elevated their status both towards the European Union and the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, as Table 1 indicates.

Having in mind the abovementioned, it can be said that the two processes have been complementary, despite the obvious differences between different countries pertaining to fulfilling the EU membership criteria over the observed period. However, the added value of CEEPUS is that it has continued to serve as an academic bridge between the countries which have meanwhile succeeded in joining the European Union, and those that have yet to achieve that strategic goal. What is encouraging in that regard is the fact that at the time CEEPUS had been established, following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, not a single country was a member of the European Union (not even Austria). Although, the two international organisations are indeed organically separate and are largely beyond comparison (considering the wide political, economic and social scope of the EU, on one hand, and a narrow academic focus of CEEPUS, on the other), the overall idea – to deepen the cooperation and enable greater cohesion between countries in several European regions – is similar. Both processes have left deep marks in deepening the cross-border institutional ties in higher-education domain, and assisted the peaceful and cohesive tendencies in the eastern part of the continent that has long been exposed to non-democratic ideologies and occasionally also witnessed un-peaceful tendencies.

*Table 1: Overview of EU and CEEPUS integration processes during the past 3 decades.
Author's own elaborations based on sources (CEEPUS platform 2022b;
European Commission 2022; Univerzitet u Sarajevu 2022)*

Name	CEEPUS accession year	CEEPUS status	EU status	Year of EU accession/latest status change
Austria	1993	NCO CCO (HQ)	EU member	1995
Albania	2005	NCO	Accession negotiations	2022
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2007	NCO	Potential candidate	/
Bulgaria	1993	NCO	EU member	2007
Croatia	1995	NCO	EU member	2013
Czechia	1996	NCO	EU member	2004
Hungary	1993	NCO	EU member	2004
North Macedonia	2005	NCO	Accession negotiations	2022
Moldova	2010	NCO	Candidate	2022
Montenegro	2004	NCO	Accession negotiations	2012
Poland	1993	NCO	EU member	2004
Romania	1998	NCO	EU member	2007
Serbia	2004	NCO	Accession negotiations	2014
Slovakia	1993	NCO	EU member	2004
Slovenia	1993	NCO	EU member	2004
Kosovo1*	/	"CEEPUS contact point" for universities of Priština, Peja, Prizren, etc.	Potential candidate	/

1 * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Considering the aforementioned, the author argues that the importance of initiatives like CEEPUS is not limited to the academic dimension, whose international goals frequently focus on increasing the number of international partnerships. The broader problem nucleus of this paper is situated in the area of examining the evolution of CEEPUS ties between the two member countries – Serbia and Croatia. More specifically, the author aims to investigate the degree to which CEEPUS cooperation has advanced, considering the traditionally challenging relations between Belgrade and Zagreb. The author intends to show that this academic program has achieved significant results, which contrasts with the problematic collaboration between Serbia and Croatia in some other domains. Those considerations are indicative of significant role of the two academic communities, whose collaboration-promoting activities may serve as an example for deepening partnerships in other domains.

Methodological and theoretical considerations

It was found that Erasmus students were more interested in other European countries and in other European peoples and cultures than non-mobile students. The experience of studying in another country made them feel more European.

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Report 2015: 2.4

The research problem derives from a certain paradox. Namely, despite the stagnant and troublesome high-political relations over the last decade between Serbia and Croatia, CEEPUS, as a state-funded program, has yielded significant results when it comes to academic mobility and institutional cooperation between the two countries, reflecting positively both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Accordingly, the author poses a question: how has CEEPUS contributed to upgrading the collaboration between Serbia and Croatia and what are its chief manifestations, especially in the higher-education area?

The author hypothesises that the expansion of CEEPUS cooperation between Serbia and Croatia since 2013/2014 can be traced through increased numbers of institutional networks (and participating units), as well as number of mobility of students and academic staff in both directions. Apart from that, another hypothesis is that the growing cross-border CEEPUS ties between the two neighbouring countries empowers the academic community and gives it greater visibility as promoters of stable, sustainable and peaceful collaboration. Given the linguistic, social and other kinship, the author argues that the elevated ties between Serbia and Croatia have the potential to resonate in the broader context, both bilaterally (across different policy domains) and regionally, in the Western Balkans context. For instance, CEEPUS activities in many networks are carried out in the polycentric language that used to be

called Serbo-Croatian (language varieties used in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro), which not only facilitates lecturing and studying activities, but also represents a favourable feature of the mobility experience *per se*, at least among the respective CEEPUS member countries. Increased cooperation between Serbian and Croatian HEIs poses an example to the other partners to engage more.

The author chiefly applies a comparative analysis method, which relies on the data obtained from the CEEPUS platform (including both its publicly visible segment (front-end) and its back-end part, accessible only to National CEEPUS Offices).³ For instance, the author juxtaposed the available data for incoming mobility in both Serbia and Croatia during certain periods and attempted to explain such trajectories. Apart from that, to a lesser degree, the author used a historical method to argument certain changes, variations and phenomena. As regards the sources, as mentioned above, the author largely relied on the data obtained from the CEEPUS platform. In addition, having in mind the multidisciplinary focus of this subject matter, the author also interpreted various legal and political acts and documents and integrated contributions of academic literature in domain of political sciences and education policies, aiming to highlight the scientific relevance of this domain.

Apart from the aforementioned, the author considers it necessary to delineate and interpret the most basic terms and aspects, starting with the notion of academic mobility. As per a recommendation issued by the Council of Europe in that domain back in 1995, academic mobility stands for cross-border study, teaching or research activities over a limited duration of time, following which the academic member returns back to his/her home country/institution; the concept is not intended to enable or include permanent migrations (as per paragraph I, Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (95) 8). As per the next paragraph, that sort of mobility is carried out through specific exchange programs, like those arranged inter-governmentally, inter-institutionally or in some other way, and may also include individual proposals by students and staff (the so-called “free movers”) (Ibidem). Consequently, CEEPUS represents a classical inter-governmental exchange program that offers multilateral cooperation to institutions and their respective individuals, students and teaching staff alike. Its flexibility, and added value, is illustrated by the fact that it enables many *freemover* exchanges each year, enabling the academic members to realise their stays in institutions that are not directly connected with their home faculties (Foundation Tempus 2022). The author finds that such a form of facilitated mobility (combined with much less paperwork comparing to other academic programs) valuable for CEE/SEE HEIs, that are still lagging behind their Western

3 The author would hereby like to commend the National CEEPUS Office Serbia (Foundation Tempus) for granting access to the data which has been essential for this research. In addition, the author also expresses gratitude to the representatives of the National CEEPUS Office Croatia (Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes) and Central CEEPUS Office in Vienna, for their interest pertaining to this study project.

European neighbours regarding the number of realised exchanges, achieved international projects etc. Programs like CEEPUS are beneficial in efforts to narrow the long-standing gap between the “old” and the “new” democracies in Europe and in achieving a greater degree of cohesion in academic domain.

According to the current CEEPUS work program (2021-2023: 1), the cooperation is realised through the multilateral thematic networks, which number at least three partner higher education institutions (hereinafter: HEI) from at least three member countries. However, in practice, the number of participating HEIs is almost always higher, sometimes considerably. For instance, the network coordinated by the University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Mining and Geology, named “Earth-Science Studies in Central and South-Eastern Europe” ranks among the program’s oldest existing and largest, assembling as many as 18 HEIs from 10 CEEPUS countries, with more than 1500 individual realised academic mobility (CEEPUS platform 2022c; CIII-RS-0038: EURO Geo-Sci 2022). Since the foundation of the program, its disciplinary scope has evolved from primarily technical-sciences domain towards inclusion of all other academic areas (social sciences, arts and humanities, natural sciences, etc.); likewise, the networks themselves have become increasingly multifaceted. As pertains to the actual activities, CEEPUS is primarily aimed at academic staff who conduct lecturing activities, and students across all levels of studies (CEEPUS III Work Programme (2021-2023): 1-2). The academic exchanges primarily take part within the established networks, although a *freemover* option offers a cross-border mobility option independently from the networks, which represents as a very positive feature from the perspective of its end users.

CEEPUS goals are also aligned with the progressive internalisation of higher education, which, among other forms of cross-border cooperation, also encourages greater international academic mobility (Carvalho et al. 2022). As per Teichler (2017: 180-181), who refers to several sources, HE internalisation correlates with 6 key international manifestations: knowledge transfer, physical mobility, cooperation and communication, education and research, reputation, and similarity (which includes aspects like Europeanisation, convergence, globalisation, etc.). It could be argued that CEEPUS tools may apply, to a varying degree, in all of these aspects, including its indirect supportive role for Europeanisation efforts. In Serbia, the internalisation in higher education is still dominantly related to the mobility aspect; consequently, programs like CEEPUS play a major role in that regard (MPNTR 2019: 107). That doesn’t necessarily need to apply to Croatia, considering its more advanced status in different international integrative processes; however, the impact of CEEPUS in that country should not be discarded, especially considering its bilateral and regional dimensions. According to Mitchell (2012: 493), the civic understanding of student exchange is founded on the premise that international programs like Erasmus, by assembling persons from various ethnic and regional backgrounds, are very valuable for promoting a sense of belonging to a common European identity and for Eu-

European integration goals *per se*. Similar logic can be applied to CEEPUS, which, although it focuses on a geographically smaller area than Erasmus (also further: E+), still encompasses a large part of the continent, with the majority of members already in the EU (nine countries), and the rest included in the Union's accession agenda (including Moldova, as of 2022). Actually, CEEPUS is recognised as a supportive instrument in the context of EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR 2020: 22), as one of the macro-regional strategies of the European Union. In that regard, CEEPUS is seen as an indirect contributor to the European integration process.

The 2015 Council of Europe report underlined the two basic contributions of international mobility programs for Europe: the contribution to Europe's economic development and international strength and the promotion of intercultural understanding, including the inter-European identity cohesion and a *vital role in promoting peace, mutual understanding and tolerance...as one of the major goals of European construction* (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Report 2015: 2.4). Although this specific document fails to explicitly mention CEEPUS, but only refers to E+, DAAD and similar initiatives, the author considers CEEPUS to be very conducive in that regard, despite its more modest financial and other means and scope comparing to Erasmus. In addition, insufficient research regarding the contribution of CEEPUS in domain of international cooperation increases the academic input of research such as this one and aims to contribute to increased academic visibility of this program.

Pertaining to the relevance of academic mobility for more inclusive and reliable international cooperation, Snow analyses one of the most prestigious exchange programs – that of William Fulbright. She notes that Fulbright perceived the program fellows as natural candidates for peace-promoting actions, as “*knowledgeable interpreters of societies...equipped and willing to deal with conflict or conflict-producing situations on the basis of an informed determination to solve them peacefully*” (Snow 2021: 2). The mobility, according to Snow, through the means of direct exposure and experience, leads towards empowering the 21st century transcultural individuals (Ibidem). Considering the aforementioned, the fellows who have been subjected to positive, transcultural transformative experiences, may also be perceived as morally obliged to contribute to a more peaceful educational and local surrounding, at least from the viewpoint of that author. Likewise, Vaideanu (1986: 87) analyses the favourable position of HEI to act as peace promoters, due to the fact that: (1) the internationalisation of HE provides additional cross-border space to academics; (2) the disciplinary importance of peace research is increasing; (3) the academic influence and close contacts with the younger generations are frequent and comprehensive (4) the fact that HEI are valued members in most societies, even beyond their academic facilities. The HEIs represent the working space of the academic community, which is defined as “group of professionals and students who work towards the same goal, that is,

the academy: the construction of knowledge by means of dialogue and reflection” (Beltrán 2009: 40).

In other words, HEIs are expected to host and facilitate the dialogue within the academic community, which consists of both students and academic staff. The culture of dialogue, inherent to the academic institutions, should be replicated even outside the amphitheatres, and the responsibility does not solely regard the teaching and research staff, but also the students. Transcultural (including peace-promoting) activities are primarily expected of those members of the academic community who have been subjected to transformative international exchange experiences, and who perceive such initiatives as valuable for achieving a more stable and prosperous region and the continent. By the “region”, the author refers to the Western Balkans as part of both EU and CEEPUS domains (Petrović 2020: 169).⁴ That regional context represents a background for examining the evolution of CEEPUS cooperation between Serbia and Croatia over the preceding decade.

The author aims to show that, considering the post-conflict regional setting, the impact of programs like CEEPUS extends beyond the higher-education matrix, assuming also a qualitative social-political role, which reflects positively even beyond the institutional aspect. An example of political symbolism is the rotating presidency principle, whereby a CEEPUS member country obtains the opportunity to “chair” (host, co-organise and contribute to strategic processes, meetings, events, etc.) (CEEPUS 2022d). Croatia presided over the program three times, the last being between 2017 and 2019, when it passed the presidency to Serbia (2019-2021) for the first time. Instances like this one signal that both Zagreb and Belgrade have also demonstrated a significant high-level interest - and engagement - in the implementation of this program during the past several years. That also includes increased academic bilateral cooperation, as the next segment of this paper aims to show.

Research findings

This section presents the data that show the expansion of cooperation between Serbian and Croatian higher-education institutions over the past decade, by selecting four specific academic years (ideally, each equidistantly apart, however, due to COVID-19, there were some exceptions to that principle). The author will firstly present the upgrade in cooperation in domain of institutional networks, followed by the aspect of individual academic mobility.

4 The author refers to Töglhofer’s 2013 observation that: ‘...Croatia itself now has the right to participate in decision-making in all policy areas, including the EU’s enlargement policy towards the accession candidates in the Western Balkans, whose ranks it so recently left.’ Petrović, M. (2020) Dynamic regional political concepts and the European integration process. In: B. Stojanović and E. Ponomareva (ed.), *Russia and Serbia in the contemporary world: bilateral relations, challenges and opportunities*. 167-185. Belgrade: Institute of International Politics and Economics.

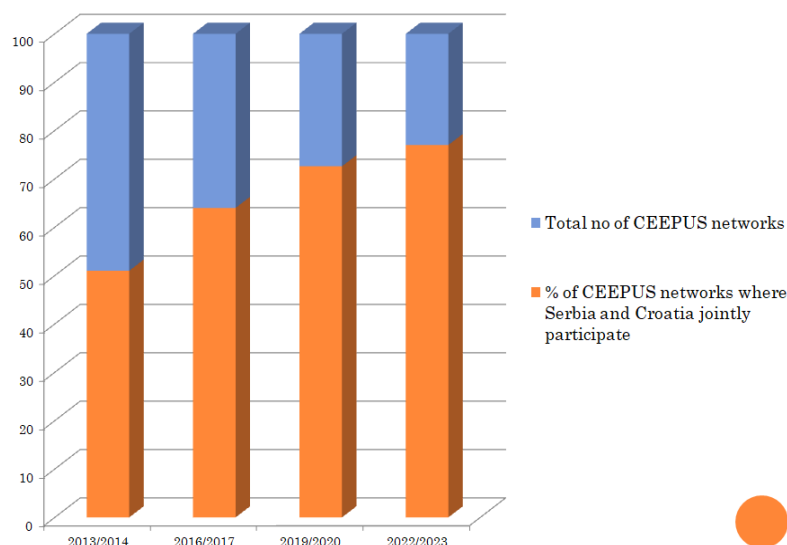
CEEPUS networks from the perspective of Serbo-Croatian cooperation

According to the current working program, CEEPUS networks are institutional consortiums comprising at least three higher education institutions from at least three member countries (CEEPUS III Work Programme (2021-2023): Article 1). Considering that the focus of this research regards the Serbo-Croatian collaboration, the author will focus on those networks where the HEIs from the two countries jointly participate.⁵ In further text these consortiums will be named *jointly-participating-networks* (JPNs). The table below shows the increase of network cooperation during the observed period (from 2013/2014 onwards - four distinct academic years, each 3 years apart).

*Table 2: Overview of increase of CEEPUS institutional networks since 2013/2014 onwards.
Source: CEEPUS platform 2022e (front-end)*

Academic year	Number of totally approved JPNs	Number of all approved networks
2013/2014	41	81
2016/2017	58	90
2019/2020	77	106
2022/2023	91	118

*Figure 1: The rising share of Serbo-Croatian JPNs within all approved CEEPUS networks.
Author's own elaborations based on Table 2*



⁵ CEEPUS networks are by rule multilateral, comprising HEIs from at least 3 countries, according to the current Work Program 2021-2023.

The table above shows that Croatian and Serbian HEIs have significantly increased the potential for mutual cooperation through CEEPUS. While the share of JPNs was around 50% in 2013/2014 (41 networks out of 81 approved networks in total), by 2022/2023 the share increased to 77% (out of 118 totally approved networks, Serbian and Croatian HEIs are joint participants in as many as 91, as the graph above depicts).

While the number of all approved CEEPUS networks “only” enhanced by 46% (from 81 in 2013/2014 to 118 in 2022/2023), the quantity of JPNs rose by as much as 122% (from 41 to 91 over the same period). That means that the Serbian and Croatian universities have been connecting through consortiums on a significantly faster rate in comparison to the growth of networks in total. The increased interest for international bilateral cooperation in the context of network cooperation is favourable both in terms of these countries and CEEPUS as a program whose aim is to increase academic cross-border connectivity.

A model example of mutual cooperation is the VetNEST – Veterinary Network for Student and Staff Transfer that has been in existence for over 15 years (CEEPUS platform 2022f). The network is coordinated by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Zagreb and assembles twelve veterinary institutions from across the Central and Southeast Europe (including those from Tirana, Sarajevo, Wroclaw, Brno, Belgrade, Skopje, etc.) (Ibidem). Academic partnership between Croatian coordinator and the Serbian partner (Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Belgrade), is illustrated by the continuous support of the National CEEPUS Office Serbia for the organisation of veterinary summer school for CEEPUS students in the Balkan Mountains in South-eastern Serbia (FVM 2022). *Inter alia* as a result of individual academic projects like this one, the VetNEST has been awarded the CEEPUS Minister’s Prize for 2022 (an international acknowledgment for best performing networks) (VEF 2022).

Another important marker in domain of evolving Serbo-Croatian CEEPUS cooperation is the participation of HEIs from the two countries in the networks that are coordinated by the “other side” (for instance, the number of Serbian universities in Croatian-coordinated CEEPUS networks). Since 2013/2014 onwards, Croatian coordinators have almost “by default” included Serbian partners into their CEEPUS networks, as the table 3 depicts.

Table 3: Participation of Serbian HEIs in Croatian-coordinated CEEPUS networks.

Source: CEEPUS platform 2022e (front-end)

Academic year	Number of networks coordinated by Croatia	HEIs from Serbia included in how many	Participation share
2013/2014	4	4	100%
2016/2017	5	5	100%
2019/2020	8	8	100%
2022/2023	12	11	92%

However, as the table below shows, Serbian coordinators have started including Croatian partners into (almost) all their consortiums only recently.

Table 4: Participation of Croatian HEIs in Serbian-coordinated CEEPUS networks.

Source: CEEPUS platform 2022e (front-end)

Academic year	Number of networks coordinated by Serbia	HEIs from Croatia represented in how many	Participation share
2013/2014	6	4	67%
2016/2017	9	6	67%
2019/2020	11	9	82%
2022/2023	16	15	94%

The fact that “only” 67% of Serbian coordinators had included Croatian partners back in 2013/2014 contrasted with the situation on the other side, where the Croatian coordinators had included the Serbian HEIs in all their networks. What could that mean? Although, the quantitative aspect is insufficient to draw broader conclusions, several thought-provoking claims could be made here. One would be that the Serbian coordinating universities were occasionally reluctant or insufficiently interested in including the Croatian partners. The other one would be that the Croatian institutions were occasionally reluctant or insufficiently interested to participate in the Serbian-coordinated networks. The third one would be that occasionally both sides showed the lack of interest to cooperate through connecting in the networks coordinated by the other side. The fourth one might comprise any other argument – the lack of contacts at the time, the different disciplinary and other focuses, other difficulties and challenges. Be it as it may, as of 2022/2023, Serbian HEIs participate in almost all Croatia-led networks (11 out of 12) and Croatian universities take part in almost all Serbia-coordinated consortiums (15 out of 16). The increased interest for mutual cooperation through participating in each-others networks, but also in other networks, combined with the increased number of networks per se and the larger growth speed of JPNs, constitute a very convincing argument that the two academic communities are already deeply connected in the context of CEEPUS.

The author has also analysed the institutional collaboration in domain of social sciences. Why? Because the classification of social sciences also includes important peace-studying domains like political sciences, peace and conflict studies, security, human rights, legal, economic and other disciplines. Considering the wide research focus and the lack of appropriate technical filters, and the fact that the projects aimed specifically at safeguarding and advancing peace are only indirectly present (as part of other broader areas), the author will only present general data, retrieved from the front-end of the official CEEPUS database.

*Table 5: The share of social sciences, business and law as part of jointly-participating networks.
Source: CEEPUS platform 2022e (front-end)*

Academic year	No of approved JPNs grouped into “Social sciences, business and law” domain	No of all approved JPNs (all domains)
2013/2014	11	41
2016/2017	14	58
2019/2020	18	77
2022/2023	27	91

As table 5 depicts, the share of *Social sciences, business and law (SSBL)* as important peace-promoting-areas within all JPNs slightly expanded during the observed period, from 27% in 2013/2014, over 24% (2016/2017); 23% (2019/2020) to 30% in 2022/2023. Whereas the quantity of totally approved JPNs increased by 122%, the No of *SSBL* expanded by 145%, meaning that the share of social-sciences JPNs as part of all JPNs is experiencing a rise. However, there might be further room for improvement, and HEIs might use the insufficient network focus in peace-building discipline to collaborate more closely in that specific domain.

CEEPUS mobility from the perspective of Serbo-Croatian cooperation

Approximation between the Croatian and Serbian higher education institutions may also be observed in domain of realised academic exchanges through CEEPUS. The obtained data has been transposed into individual tables (below) for greater comprehensibility. Please note that the national quota of each country is expressed in the so-called “scholarship months” (further also: SM), which designate the awarded period of stay per academic year. The national quota for incoming mobilities varies from one country to another. In case of Serbia, it is 300 scholarship months, and in case of Croatia it is 450 scholarship months (Matijašević Obradović, Carić and Zarubica 2020: 572; AFMEP 2015).

Table 6: The value of awarded CEEPUS scholarship months for Serbian participants at Croatian HEIs. Source: National CEEPUS Office Serbia 2022.

Academic year	Value of awarded CEEPUS SMs for Serbian participants at Croatian HEIs
2013	28,5
2016	60,5
2019	83
2021	89,9

Table 6 (above) shows a striking progression in terms of awarded scholarship months in Croatia for Serbian students and teaching staff during the observed period. Between 2013 and 2021, the quantity of awarded scholarship months rose by 215%. The number of awarded scholarship months is closely tied with the quantity of individual mobilities as such, having in mind that many exchanges are short (for example, academic staff rarely conducts activities for longer than 0.5 or 1 scholarship months; also, many students opt for short-term stays, shorter than 3 months). That means that the increased number of awarded scholarship months also indicates an increased number of realised mobilities as such.

Table 7: The value of awarded CEEPUS scholarship months for Croatian participants at Serbian HEIs. Source: National CEEPUS Office Serbia 2022.

Academic year	Value of awarded CEEPUS SMs for Croatian participants at Serbian HEIs
2013	16
2016	35
2019	49,2
2021	45,5

Table 7 also shows a significant progression in case of awarded exchanges for Croatian members of academic community in Serbia. Between 2013 and 2021, the number of awarded scholarship months increased by 184%, from 16 to 45,5. The decrease between 2019-2021 (from 49,2 down to 45,5) may be attributed to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of that fact, the expansion is significant.

Considering that the annual national CEEPUS quota for incoming participants is 300 scholarship months in case of Serbia and 450 SM in Croatia, it can be said that each National CEEPUS Office, as a scholarship grantor (apart from the HEIs who nominated the respective individuals) highly endorsed the other side, considering that in 2021 Croatia awarded close to 90 scholarship months to Serbian participants,

whereas Serbia allocated 45,5 months to Croatian counterparts. Percentage-wise, the number of awarded scholarships for the other side represents between 15-20% of each country's national quota, which is an exquisite result, considering how many other countries also participate in the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies. Those results illustrate very proximate and dynamic ties between the two academic communities in the context of CEEPUS. Located below are the tables which present more specific data regarding the exchanges in both directions.

Table 8: Incoming CEEPUS mobility from Croatia to Serbia.
Source: National CEEPUS Office Serbia 2022.

Academic year	No of incoming academic staff from CRO to SER	No of incoming students from CRO to SER	Total no of incoming fellows from CRO to SER	Total no of awarded SM for those mobilities
2013/2014	7	7	14	16
2016/2017	28	14	42	35
2019/2020	34	20	54	49,25
2021/2022	30	23	53	45,5

As Table 8 (above) shows, a significant increase of incoming CEEPUS students and teaching staff from Croatia was recorded in Serbia during most of the observed period (from 2013-2020). A slight decrease since 2019/2020 onwards can be attributed to the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused significant disruptions to mobility per se (Petrović 2021: 87). The most frequent exchanges have been ongoing between the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, University of Zagreb and University of Slavonski Brod, as sending institutions, and the University of Novi Sad, higher-education bodies in Subotica and University of Belgrade, as host institutions.

Table 9: Incoming CEEPUS mobility from Serbia to Croatia.
Source: National CEEPUS Office Serbia 2022.

Academic year	No of incoming academic staff from SER to CRO	No of incoming students from SER to CRO	Total no of incoming fellows from SER to CRO	Total no of awarded SM for those mobilities
2013/2014	10	15	25	28,5
2016/2017	33	24	57	60,5
2019/2020	43	24	67	83
2021/2022	66	35	101	89,9

According to the data presented in Table 9, there has been a continuous, albeit uneven, growth of incoming CEEPUS mobility from Serbia to Croatian HEIs throughout the designated timeframe. The rate of increased quantity of academic staff who stayed at Croatian universities between 2019 and 2021 is a bit surprising. The author argues that that increase could perhaps be explained through the compensation of the previously delayed activities as a consequence of the pandemic, although other arguments are also plausible (for instance, some summer schools occasionally gather large numbers of academic staff). The most frequent exchanges have been ongoing between the University of Novi Sad, University of Belgrade and the Polytechnic School Subotica, as sending institutions, and the Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, University of Zagreb, University of Slavonski Brod and University of Rijeka as receiving institutions. In cases of both countries, the average number of awarded scholarship months is below 1 per person, which indicates that most of the stays are of short duration.

On one hand, the limited national quota (and related resources) occasionally also lead to situations that applications have to be turned down due to exhaustion of available scholarship months, having in mind high interest of applicants, not only from Croatia and Serbia, but also in broader terms. However, the fact that a single scholarship month (and related resources) can be used to accommodate 2 or even more individuals, depending on the purpose of stay, represents a favourable feature of CEEPUS, as it allows greater degree of flexibility and more options for the applicants comparing to some other academic programs. That positive feature is especially valuable for Serbia and Croatia that are, among other things, geographic neighbours, so the physical flow of mobilities is frequently carried out in short-term, rather than longer duration.

Conclusion and final remarks

Cooperation between Serbian and Croatian HEIs has witnessed a significant expansion over the past decade, both in terms of participation through JPNs and the quantity of awarded exchanges on both sides. As of 2022/2023, over 90% of networks coordinated by Serbia and Croatia contain mutual partnerships, indicating a significant interest for mutual cooperation. The share of realised mobilities between the two countries takes up between 15-20% of each country's national quota, which shows that the CEEPUS ties between the two academic communities are very extensive, especially when taking into account that the program comprises over a dozen other countries. Although the COVID-19 crisis seems to have affected mobilities during the past several years, the number of JPNs continued to increase by over 10% since 2019/2020 onwards, indicating a sustained interest in collaboration between Serbian and Croatian universities. That also applies to the field of social sciences, whose share within JPNs increased during the past several years.

The author perceives this to be a positive development considering that the social sciences have so far been somewhat underrepresented comparing to other domains like technical sciences, but also from the viewpoint of academic contribution of those disciplines to the subject of peace research. Considering the recent past of the Western Balkans, aspects like peace, stability, Europeanisation, democratisation continue to represent a relevant academic subject, which might lead to expansion of institutional partnerships in that regard.

From the perspective of Serbia, these positive developments might correlate with several factors. Since 2015, a new National CEEPUS Office – Foundation Tempus – was nominated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. Since then, with support of the Ministry, numerous changes have been introduced, ranging from the communication aspect with all the stakeholders, to the aspects like accommodation planning, mobility oversight in liaison with the universities, intensive promotion, informative and other campaigns, proximate international cooperation and frequent contacts with other NCOs (including the Croatian office), and so on. Specific examples include the increase of the national quota (from 150 in 2015/2016 to 300 since 2017/2018 onwards); greater accommodation possibilities in close contact with the dormitories; the increase of scholarship amounts; the increased visibility of the program for the outgoing candidates (electronically, but also physically, as part of the Foundation Tempus Information centre in downtown Belgrade), and other. The long-awaited law confirming the participation of Serbia in CEEPUS was passed in 2017, which constituted part of the preparations to qualify for the presidency over the program that was eventually granted for the period 2019-2021 (CEEPUS III law, 2017). Croatia passed the CEEPUS presidency to Serbia in 2019. During the 2015-2019 period, over 900 students from Serbia realised their mobility abroad (including Croatia), while over 750 students and academic staff from CEEPUS countries, many of whom from Croatia, performed their activities at Serbian HEIs (Fondacija Tempus 2019).

The increased interest for mutual cooperation through participating in each-others networks, but also in other networks, combined with the increased number of networks *per se* and the larger growth speed of JPNs, constitute a very convincing argument that the two academic communities are already deeply associated in the context of CEEPUS. That might have positive implications not only for the two countries and academic societies, but also in the broader context. Expanding institutional ties are beneficial in terms of greater role and visibility of the academic community in promoting a stable, sustainable and peaceful cooperation, both bilaterally and in the Western Balkans context. It should be noted that former Yugoslav republics comprise 40% of all CEEPUS states. Ability to cooperate in mutually intelligible language area is an additional benefit of CEEPUS program that is being widely used by Croatian and Serbian participants and it additionally contributes to the feeling of common belonging (on the Central European and broader European

level). Considering the fact that Croatia is an EU member, and that Serbia has been negotiating its accession since 2014, coupled with the fact that the Europeanisation process ranks among the most comprehensive and ambitious transformative developments (including the domain of higher education), CEEPUS cooperation can be perceived as indirectly conducive for the approximation to European standards in that regard. Actually, the potential of CEEPUS to contribute to EU goals has already been recognised by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR 2020).

Whereas each network and mobility can be viewed as positive in terms of cooperation strengthening, there might be an additional space for social sciences institutions which focus specifically on the future of peace or peaceful initiatives as such. Social sciences have always been less represented within CEEPUS comparing to technical sciences, although the situation seems to have been changing during the past several years. Although each collaboration may be viewed as favourable in the peace-promoting context, it could be argued that social sciences, due to their disciplinary focus, might explore that subject more thoroughly and in greater detail and provide more in terms of societal, academic and other dialogue. Apart from the positive Croatian-Serbian experience in domain of approximation between the two academic communities and other stakeholders, there are also some additional indicators that show that the role of CEEPUS surpasses the HE domain and contains a peace-promoting character. The most recent instance includes the support of senior officials of Croatia, Serbia and other member states in March 2022 in formally granting the possibility of participation in CEEPUS exchange to Ukrainian students and academic staff, regardless of the fact that Ukraine is not a member country (AMPEU 2022). Such a symbolical gesture in the context of the military assault on Ukraine represents an additional illustration on how mobility programs like CEEPUS may play a broader social-political role which extends beyond the boundaries of higher-education collaboration.

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Carpathian Basin – Hungarian Narratives of Re-integration and Neighbourhood¹

Zoltán Hajdú and James W. Scott

Introduction

Regionalisation projects between states have constituted a major political effort to both broaden and consolidate European integration since the 1990s. As has been well documented, cross-border and regional cooperation have been promoted within the framework of numerous initiatives and funded, among others, by several different Cohesion Policy instruments (see Bachtler and MacMaster 2008; Medeiros 2018). Moreover, territorial cooperation and development across borders contribute to “Europeanisation” through the development of common understandings and practices that transcend traditional national orientations. (Allmendinger, Chilla and Sielker 2014; Dühr and Nadin 2007). As Debarbieux, Price and Balsiger (2015) document, “project regions” based on natural landscapes such as mountain ranges have been “institutionalized” in Europe for the purpose of facilitating cooperation in environmental protection and other areas. In this case institutionalisation refers to the process through which regions become socially meaningful, for example as frames for action, identity and territorial referencing, much in the sense of Anssi Paasi’s (1991) geohistorical account of regional emergence. Debarbieux, Price and Balsiger (ibid) hypothesize that project regions, as flexible actor-based constructions, interact with formal administrative regions in ways that are consistent with re-scaling of territorial governance in Europe (see Sielker and Stead 2019). They thus argue that, as part of these regionalisation projects, complex multi-stakeholder networks have emerged that link bioregional with formal territorial perspectives and hence involve both competition and cooperation with formal state actors.

Without question, processes of regionalisation, state re-scaling and flexible governance are influencing territorial cooperation in Europe. Moreover, the emergence of numerous regional initiatives at the macro, meso and micro-level are to a certain degree success stories of European integration. Sustained material support and political benefits have ensured the continuity of these arrangements. At the same

1 This contribution is based on an article produced by the authors for Eurasian Geography and Economics within the context of a Research Colloquium entitled Geopolitical Imaginaries of Regional Cooperation and National Identity: A Central European Perspective (2022).

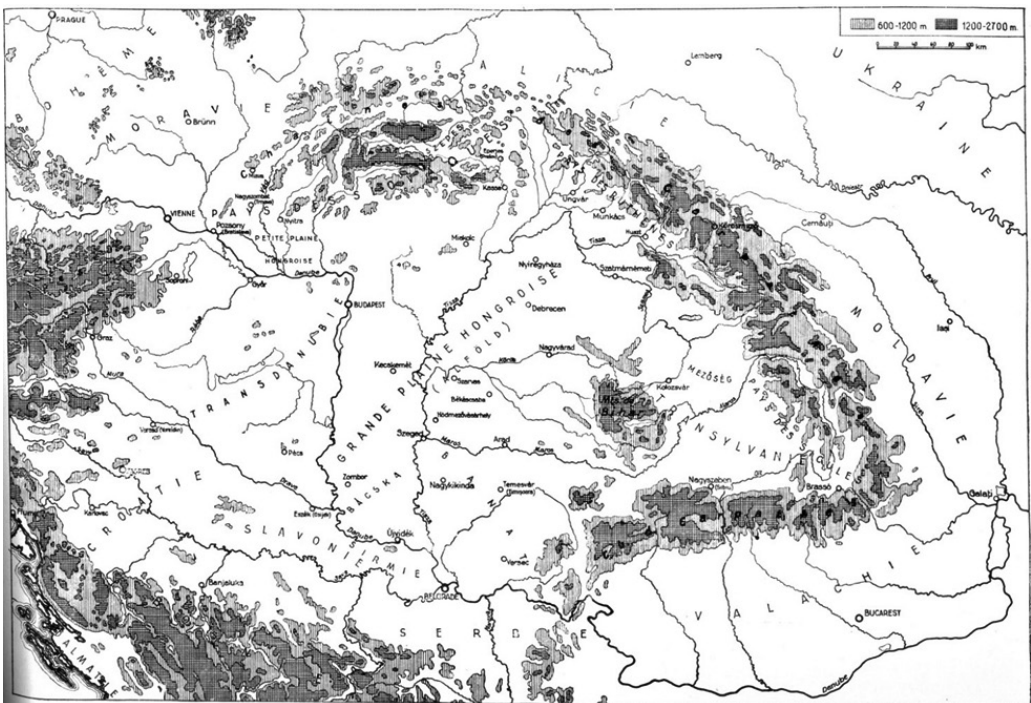
time, however, the delineation of project regions has not proceeded with equal momentum throughout Europe. For example, in the case of attempts to create Balkan contexts for cooperation in Southeast Europe, domestic political pressures and questions of territorial sovereignty have slowed progress despite prospects of EU accession for most non-member states in the region. Another case is the region known, depending on the observer's perspective, as the Carpathian, Danubian or Pannonian Basin, a mesoregional space that encompasses Hungary and Slovakia as well as parts of Croatia, Czechia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine. The term Carpathian Basin (*Kárpát-medence*) is presently used in Hungary as an all-purpose geographical idea that represents an obvious regional neighbourhood if only for the cold facts of location: the country shares borders with seven different countries within this space. However, the Carpathian Basin is also a microcosm of contested regional ideas in Central and Eastern Europe (Hajdú 2018), and its lack of formalisation as a European cooperation space reminds us of the limits to flexible territorial governance. Indeed, regional soft spaces can be notoriously hard as is evidenced by the lasting effects of national interests and borders (Svensson and Balogh 2018; Scott 2018). The central problem in this case is the close relationship between the territoriality of the old Hungarian Crown, the status of sizable Hungarian ethnic minority communities and the “objective” geographical (e.g. geomorphological) definition of the Carpathian Basin. Understood geopolitically, this relationship could be understood to downplay the emergence of new states, Slovakia in particular, challenge Romania's post-WW I territorial legitimacy and suggest a natural Hungarian dominance within the Basin.

This focus on regional cooperation as a contribution to the Cross-Border Review explores how the geographical idea of the Carpathian Basin has been employed in post-1989 Hungarian conceptualisations of regional development and territorial cooperation across state borders. This involves understanding the tensions that have emerged between different and partly competing notions of the Carpathian Basin as a “Hungarian neighbourhood” on the one hand and as a result of the concerns expressed by Hungary's neighbours on the other. The approach is based on the assumption that links between geography, geographical imaginaries and questions of national identity remain highly salient. More specifically, we will consider the consequences of Hungary-centric neighbourhood ideas for territorial cooperation as well as the difficulties involved in the institutionalization of the Carpathian Basin as a project region.

The Carpathian Basin as a geographical idea and neighbourhood

The central assumption that informs our paper is that narratives of what might be termed “regional neighbourhoods” within the European Union reflect tensions between national and European orientations and thus the intertwined nature of politics and scholarship in the generation of regional ideas. While political interpretations of the Carpathian Basin reflect different perspectives on a national “place” in Europe, one common narrative is that of a fragmented but inherent, geographically given, regional unity. As a result, Hungarian understandings of regional neighbourhood have partly mirrored shifts towards to a more “European” perspective in terms of geographically defined (and thus natural) spaces for regional cooperation, “de-bordering” and (re)integration. At the same time, these understandings co-exist with regionalist agendas of an ethno-political nature related to the status of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring states. Ultimately, the strong self-referential nature of the Carpathian Basin idea has complicated dialogue with Hungary’s neighbours who feel either excluded or directly challenged by reference to it. Bridging differences could very much depend on open dialogue based on the shared sense of regional history that the post-1989 “return to Europe” implies.

Figure 1: Bassin des Carpathes: András Rónai’s (1943) classic map of the Carpathian Basin representing a clearly bounded geomorphological space and catchment area.



Locating the nation within a changing Europe has been a longstanding debate in Hungary and source of tension between two major interrelated but conflicting interpretations (Gyurgyák 2007): a “back to our roots” alignment with often foundationalist notions of nation based on historical experience (traditionalism) and an alignment with notions of modernization and “progressive” ideas of material and social progress (modernism). The poet Endre Ady (1905) famously characterized Hungary as a “ferry country”, shifting back and forth from East to West, and thus embodying an “in-betweenness” that for Ady opened the question whether Hungary might succeed in defining itself as a modern European country (Kovács, Horváth and Vidra 2011). For these and other reasons, the Carpathian Basin is highly significant to Hungarian understandings of national orientation within Europe and is expressed in different, often contested, geographical imaginations that have emerged at the interface of scholarship and politics.

The significance of the Carpathian Basin as a geographical concept reflects a long evolutionary process influenced by scientific research, geopolitical framings of nation-state interests and the production of geographic knowledge through education and cartography. During the 19th Century, Central European science contributed to popularizations of morphological notions, such as basin and peninsula based on geology, natural geography, phytogeography, archaeology and other disciplines. These studies gave rise to partly overlapping regional ideas such as the Pannonian, Hungarian and Central Danube Basins as well as the subject at hand, the Carpathian Basin, that were politicized as nation-building proceeded. It was not until the Interwar Period (1920-1944) that the Carpathian Basin emerged as a clear-cut and widely used spatial category (Hajdú 2001). However, it has since remained a fundamental spatial concept in Hungarian understandings, suggesting a geographical unity coterminous with, cultural, linguistic, civilizational and other expressions of historical continuity. Moreover, both implicitly and explicitly, the concept of Carpathian Basin is closely aligned to that of neighbourhood (*szomszédság*) which has been a recurring element of Hungarian scientific and political thinking since the 19th century (Berend and Ring 1986). Specifically for this discussion, the Carpathian Basin (has) emerged as a neighbourhood concept as a result of tumultuous geopolitical shifts. Under the terms of the 1920 Peace Treaty, the Kingdom of Hungary lost more than 70% of its territory and more than 60% of an original population of 20.8 million. This marked a fundamental structural break in the development of the country and decisively influenced post-1920 neighbourhood relations. Within this context, the salience of the Carpathian Basin was, and continues to be, supported by an imperative of reintegrating a fragmented nation and natural space, although this imperative has been interpreted in quite different ways. During the interwar period, a notion of working neighbourhood did not readily emerge after the redrawing of state borders, nor could it, given the political ambitions of Hungarian governments to reincorporate lost territories. It was only within the context of post-socialist

transformation and European integration that the Carpathian Basin was re-established as a widely referenced regional idea in Hungary and geographical reference for neighbourhood relations.

Arguing the Carpathian Basin's organic unity – Interwar debates and political agendas

Hungarian geographic research provided much of the scientific groundwork for arguing the historical and natural geographic unity of the territories of the Hungarian Crown and this was reflected in school textbooks, scientific documents, public discourse, etc. (Hajdú 2018). However, perhaps inevitably, notions of Carpathian Basin landscape unity as suggested by Hungarian academics were called into question by others. This was already the case with Jovan Cvijić's 1918 delimitation of the Balkan Peninsula. Cvijić, a Serbian geographer, insisted that the peninsula in fact stretched deep into the southern reaches of the space referred to as the Carpathian Basin by Hungarian geographers. It bears mentioning that Hungary's neighbours, the newly created states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as well the enlarged Romania, focused regional research in entirely different ways, necessarily shifting focus to the geo-historical contingency of their own national emergence.

Significantly, the redoubled focus of interwar Hungarian geographic research on the Carpathian Basin and its inherent organic unity was underlined by a (geo)deterministic and basically Ratzellian approach that was believed to provide an objective and scientific basis for the restoration of Hungary's original borders (Balogh 2021; Keményfi 2006; 2016; Krasznai 2012). Writing in 1940, for example, Hungarian geographer Béla Bulla (1940: 3) complained that “...*foreign literature tends to hide the original right of Magyars for this area by naming it the Danube Basin (...) though its geographic unity should be regarded as evidence*”. Arguments of geographic unity were exemplified by geomorphology, such as Gyula Prinz's (1936) suggestion that the Carpathian Basin was indeed a microcontinent or “Tisia Massif” that clearly distinguished itself from surrounding areas. Prinz (1938) also suggested that the Basin's orography was the basis of a “Hungarian Mesopotamia”, a civilizational cradle defined by the confluence of the Danube and Tisza rivers. Róbert Keményfi (2006) has documented Prinz's mesopotamic thesis in terms of a mythical core area concept in which Hungarian culture and a Hungarian national idea were able to radiate outwards and consolidate themselves territorially. Natural Hungarian stewardship of the Basin was also argued by referencing the historical longevity of the Hungarian Kingdom's 1000-year borders as well as their coterminous nature with the Carpathian mountain range (Rónai 1943). As a result, Hungarian interwar geography contributed to a widely shared view, reflected, among others, in public school curricula, that the Carpathian Basin's organic unity and the “natural laws” that derive from it, had been violated by arbitrary political decisions (Krasznai 2012). During the interwar era, Hungary tempora-

rily regained some of its lost territories within the Basin; the Vienna Decisions of 1938 and 1941 resulting from Nazi Germany's occupation of dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, respectively, indicated a partial, if pyrrhic, success of Hungary's revisionist focus on the Carpathian Basin. In sum, during the interwar period we thus find highly diverging Central European perspectives with Hungary looking backwards towards the historical Kingdom, newly created states looking to the future and nation-building and Romania to the consolidation of its newly enlarged state territory.

The devastation that World War II brought to Central Europe had lasting effects in terms of neighbourhood relations in Central Europe. The scholarly and political tenor changed abruptly with defeat and the definitive end to Hungary's irredentist ambitions. Revisionist interpretations of the Carpathian Basin gave way to more "conciliatory" regional geographies, such as Bulla and Mendöl's major study published in 1947. These authors argued that the Basin's geographical character is given not only by topography but also by the Hungarian people's labours in transforming and shaping regional landscapes that coincided with the territory of historical Hungary, thus creating an almost all-encompassing unity. On the one hand, Bulla and Mendöl were unequivocal about the Hungarian nature of the manmade landscape and yet they realized, on the other hand, the need for cooperation and mutual understanding with neighbouring peoples in order to effectively manage this politically fragmented regional space. In their conclusion they state:

"A better exploitation of the potential opportunities is guaranteed by the peaceful labour of the peoples populating this area. The discernment of the peoples of the Carpathian Basin will decide if a durable period of peaceful creative labour is on the horizon. We must hope that the future will pave the way of mutual understanding" (Ibid: 588).

After 1948, the political realities of state socialism and Soviet bloc affiliation pre-empted the development of a regionally holistic view as most of the states within the region were forced to re-orient themselves towards the Soviet sphere of influence and national autarchy. As a result, the notion of Carpathian Basin as a political category or co-operation space rapidly lost favour. While the concept continued to be used in the area of geology, hydrology, phytogeography and physical geography, it was no longer the subject of comprehensive analyses or monographs.

Post-1989: A regional idea within a new European context

The transformations unleashed by the collapse of the Cold War order not only necessitated a re-thinking of national positionality within Europe but re-opened debates regarding historical experience and memory as well as national identity that had been largely silenced for almost four decades. Consequently, the production

of geographical, historical, ethnographic, environmental and other analyses of the Carpathian Basin, already underway in the latter part of the 1980s, experienced a significant boom after the end of state socialism. This scholarly work reflected a “pent-up” demand for literature that normalized a sense of Hungarian nation and place in Europe; it also reflected the re-emergence of open ideological debate regarding Hungary’s past and future role as a European state. In the politically and socially charged contexts of post-socialism this body of work contributed to the use of the Carpathian Basin as an everyday concept but it also reflected contested framings of the Carpathian Basin both as a Hungarian social and cultural space and as a neighbourhood for interstate cooperation. As Jeszenszky (2019) states, following the end of the state-socialist order one of Hungary’s greatest challenges was to conceive of its immediate neighbourhood in terms of a new and more productive regional co-existence while at the same time recognizing the expectations of 2.5 million ethnic Hungarians living in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine and other countries in the Carpathian Basin.

The challenges of reconciling ambitions of European integration with those of national consolidation have thus been considerable. Even if irredentist claims are rarely voiced, at least in mainstream academic debate, there is an inherent political contestation due to the very close connection between territory and national identity. The geographic imaginary of the “1000-year borders” continues to derive discursive and symbolic power from the stability and territorial integrity associated with it and the conterminous nature of the borders of the Hungarian Crown with the geographic limits of the Carpathian Basin (see Keményfi 2006). Moreover, the 1000-year borders idea serves as an everyday geopolitical resource that instils a sense of national pride based on images of past greatness and longevity (Antonsich and Szalkai 2014). A reassessment of historical experience and a coming to terms with the reasons for the loss of territory as well as the consequences of Trianon have been unavoidable in the European context of open borders and cooperation. While comparisons with interwar literature are justified only to a limited extent, the narrative of “unity” nevertheless provides a degree of continuity, except for the most radical revisionist sources. The overall tenor of the post-1989 revival of the Carpathian Basin, as a regional idea, has been generally circumspect, and it is supportive of a transnational concept of the Basin in many ways, as a cooperative and shared space (see Banai and Lukács 2010).

At one level, the Carpathian Basin history has been and continues to be written as a means to understand Hungary as a process of settlement and subsequent nation and state-building and to preserve historical memories of Hungary, both as it once was before the Treaty of Trianon and as a space that continues to be defined by a Hungarian presence. In some interpretations, Hungary’s historical role as integrator and structuring force is the central issue, as in Lajos Für’s (2012) framing of the Carpathian Basin as a space of national destiny, a clearly definable geographical area

where Hungarian settlement, culture and civilization were able to emerge and thrive. In seeking to break with Marxist and post-Marxist interpretations of Hungarian history, scholars such as László Gulyás (2012) have argued that the Carpathian Basin's fragmentation was brought about by geopolitical struggles and parallel nation-building projects rather than Hungarian chauvinism. Moreover, the work of Ignác Romsics (2013) has elaborated on the Carpathian Basin as an element of a broader European regional history, analysing great power influence, particularly that of Germany, France and Britain, on Hungarian historical development and interethnic relations within the Basin.

In terms of geographic scholarship, Sándor Frisnyák's (1990) historical geography as well as Károly Kocsis' (1988) geographical study of Hungarian minorities played a significant role in reviving the geographical idea of the Carpathian Basin, as well as framing it in terms of a reintegration project through greater cultural and linguistic autonomies. Horváth's series on the CB elaborated a macroregional perspective based on development indicators (see below). Moreover, a wealth of empirical studies of population dynamics and ethnic-demographic change and more specifically, mappings of Hungarian and other minority communities within the Basin were produced. Kocsis (1990) and Kocsisné Hódosi (1991; 1998) subsequently wrote several essays that documented the situation of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries and in doing so emphasized the significance of kin-state relations as well as the basis for regional autonomies. This was also reflected in Kocsis' (1991) ethnic-religious regionalization of the "Carpatho-Balkan" space is an example of imagining a future European space based on socio-cultural divisions and a means to deal with latent ethnic conflict through regional autonomies for minority groups. Along similar lines, the possibility of a "trans-sovereign" nation-building project has been argued (see Bakk and Öllös 2010) based on a sense of nation beyond territorial sovereignty, but at the same time based on local autonomies and dialogue with neighbouring states].

The Carpathian Basin as a co-operation and development space

Our attention now focuses on appropriations of the Carpathian Basin as a project of regional integration and in particular one of structural, social and cultural development. Re-integration is understood here in two specific ways: as a means to re-establish links between Hungary as a state and ethnic Hungarian community living beyond its borders and as a more inclusive cooperation effort to link the region to wider European development processes and thus addresses grave centre-periphery imbalances. As part of these efforts, a wealth of regional knowledge has been produced in order to provide foundations for different cooperation and development agendas. In terms of academic scholarship, a number of ambitious regional, historical and physical geographical studies of the Carpathian Basin have been elaborat-

ed, such as those either authored or edited by Sándor Frisnyák (1996), Zoltán Dövényi (2012), Frisnyák and Gál (2013; 2016), Gyula Horváth (see below) and others. Moreover, numerous empirical studies of population dynamics and ethnic-demographic change and, more specifically, mappings of Hungarian and other minority communities within the Basin have been produced. Indeed, Károly Kocsis' (1988; 1990) geographical studies of Hungarian minorities played a significant role in reviving the geographical idea of the Carpathian Basin as well as framing it in terms of a reintegration project through greater cultural and linguistic autonomies.

In terms of comprehensive regional analysis, the *Regions of the Carpathian Basin Series* (*A Kárpát-medence régiói*), edited by Gyula Horváth until his death in 2015, deserves specific mention. The series has been published since 2004 and is devoted to understanding socio-spatial, economic and environmental processes and outlining potential for future development of the Basin. Planned as a 16-volume collection, the series is informed by European regional development doctrine based on processes of economic and political decentralization and endogenous development. It thus represents an unequivocal rejection of hierarchical and nationally focused regional development traditions, such as those characterized by state socialism, which in the past had exacerbated the economic fragmentation within the Carpathian Basin and the economic marginalization of many regional centers. Instead, Horváth and his many collaborators sought to provide empirical foundations for a more collaborative, holistic and growth-oriented vision of a networked macroregion. Along these lines, numerous analyses of regional disparities and other spatial development problems have been elaborated for the Carpathian Basin macroregion (see Benedek and Kocziszky 2016; Demeter 2020; Nagy 2016; Pomázi and Szábó 2010).

Consequently, a major concept within this context is that of re-integrating a fragmented Carpathian Basin as part of wider European-level projects of regional development and economic revitalization as well as better neighbourhood relations in Central Europe. This project, supported by scholarly efforts of Hungarian regional studies, has also very much involved the issue of environmental vulnerabilities and sustainability and the role of cross-border cooperation in developing appropriate strategies (Duray et. al. 2010). In this reading, Hungary's role as putative integrator of a fragmented space is legitimized by concern for environmental, economic, infrastructural and administrative issues; such reintegrating might be realized through re-establishing and strengthening functional urban networks that existed before the two world wars. Within this context, urban networks which were truncated by the border changes and nationalism after 1920 are understood as a foundation for integration and cohesion. In particular, Hungarian settlement networks could be major positive factor in the reconstitution of the Carpathian Basin as an integrated economic, cultural and social space under the condition of a greater degree of interstate cooperation (Hardi, Hajdu and Mezei 2009). Characteristic of this perspective as well is the work of Hungarian geographer Béla Baranyi (2006: 151) who has consi-

dered the Carpathian Basin “*a region greatly burdened by historical, political, socio-economic and ethnic tensions*” as well as an extremely fragmented space that requires re-integration”.

Both for geographical and historical reasons, the Carpathian Basin has been understood within the Hungarian context as a logical and predestined space for reintegration and hence, broader cross-border cooperation. In general terms, the Carpathian Basin has been advanced within Hungarian regional studies as a neighbourhood context for realizing potentials of European integration and the exploitation of endogenous potential in order to promote sustainable development and thus overcome peripherality as a common regional problem. Closely linked to this holistic regional development perspective is the issue of what might be termed “Hungarian-Hungarian” cross-border interaction and cooperation which has more specifically ethno-political ramifications. The concept of cross-border Hungarians was institutionalized during József Antall’s government which entered power in 1990 as the first democratically elected in Hungary. By 1992, a Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad was established, the primary objective of which was to improve the situation of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring states.

The latter has logically followed from the possibility to engage in active exchange between different Hungarian-speaking communities and consequently since the 1990s predominantly Hungarian civil society organizations involved in social, economic, cultural and educational cooperation have proliferated. This has also involved the foundation in 2019 of a “Carpathian Basin Business Promotion Chamber” by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce. At the more political level, following Hungary’s accession to EU membership, a Forum of Hungarian Representatives in the Carpathian Basin (KMFK in Hungarian) was established in order to promote Hungarian interests and exploit development opportunities arising from European integration. Regional ethno-political cooperation is currently a framework for macro-regional approaches to development and are embedded in Hungary’s National Development Strategy which targets the promotion of education and scientific cooperation within the Carpathian neighbourhood. One example of this is the National Strategy Research Institute’s call for proposals for the topic regarding a macroregional approach to “community development and strengthening social responsibility.”²

Self-Referentiality and the Carpathian Basin as an Ambivalent Regional Idea

Between 2000 and 2006 (and especially after 2004), Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia received significant amounts of financial aid the EU’s Structural Funds. During this period the INTERREG III B CADSES programme was the most significant spatial policy initiative for the Carpathian Basin and new member states. CADSES

2 Call text (in Hungarian) available at http://nski.hu/efop-1-12-17-2017-00003_hu.html, accessed 27 August 2021.

was a transnational co-operation area comprising regions belonging to 18 countries. Those areas of the Carpathian Basin which joined this co-operative project became part of a vast programme area territory lacking functional sub-units. After 2007, transnational programmes divided the vast CADSES area into two parts, making Hungary simultaneously a part of the Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe regions. Furthermore, Hungarian border areas became eligible to participate in calls for proposals and development projects. In addition to regional development programmes, more specific EU-driven instruments have emerged that represented opportunities for an integrated development approach for the Carpathian Basin. The EU Water Framework Directive (WD) which entered into force in December 2000 represents another platform for regional co-operation focused on improving the quality of surface and underground waters. This was followed by the adoption in 2010 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) within which Hungary played a significant role in its six months of EU Presidency. The Danube area could constitute a key element of the integration of the Carpathian Basin (Central Danube Basin) into Europe, particularly if its special status is preserved in the long run. The priorities of EUDRS are in total accordance with Hungarian interests and involve almost every element of the macro-regional integration of the country (Billo 2011; Borsa et al. 2009).

The Carpathian Basin has a rather ambiguous position in terms of territorial cooperation and governance. Following the European Union's regionalization logics, the Carpathian Basin potentially forms a coherent spatial entity within the South-European macro-region – and it was hoped that as a result of European integration and Croatia's EU membership in 2013 more comprehensive cooperation focused on the Carpathian Basin as a unit would be possible. Theoretically, the links between INTERREG, EUDRS and WD offer a basis for strong environmentally oriented cooperation. However, there exists to date no Carpathian Basin-wide organizations as such and, curiously, the map accompanying the Water Directive does not represent the Carpathian Basin as a single catchment area. What we do find is a Carpathian Convention largely based on the example of the Alpine Convention (Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians) that was established in May 2003 with the participation of the seven countries. The convention, which only affects mountainous areas, does not extend to the Carpathian Basin, nor does it contain any reference to it.

Despite the need to address grave spatial inequalities, Hungarian visions of the Carpathian Basin as a cohesive economic space do not resonate well with non-Hungarian speaking Romanian and Slovak political elites and academics. Fall and Egerer (2004) have pointed to the vicissitudes of delimiting certain INTERREG regions, including the Carpathian space, because of differing national perspectives. Hungary's "borderless" idea of a Carpathian region did not and does not resonate, for example, with Slovakia's insistence in strictly adhering to national borders in the

definition of cooperation areas. In terms of local autonomy for ethnic Hungarian communities, Hungary suggested that linguistic and other political rights could be based on the Swiss federal model of autonomous linguistic Cantons. However, autonomy along such lines was rejected outright by Romania and Slovakia. Furthermore, Hungarian-Hungarian cross-border organizations, have been greeted with scepticism Slovakia and Romania, in particular, appear highly suspicious of any form of legal representation, the KMFK in particular, that might effectively sidestep the sovereignty of their state institutions.

In terms of academic cooperation it has become apparent that the elaboration of common regional geographies of the Carpathian Basin is difficult to achieve. Gyula Horváth's above-mentioned regional monograph series is a case in point. The series succeeded in integrating a large team of Hungarian-speaking researchers within the Carpathian Basin who share common geographical and conceptual understandings. The series nevertheless reflects the ambivalence of regional research on the Carpathian Basin; it has not been translated and does not appear to have contributed to a more general dialogue, for example, with Slovakian geographers, regarding regional development in the Basin. Large regions (according to the EU-defined NUTS-2 level) were meant to serve as the basic analytical framework, an approach that was, however, already abandoned in the first volume on Székely Land (in Romania). In the case of the second volume, only South Slovakia was covered, and "region" referred to the southern part of the country populated by ethnic Hungarians. Hungarian geographers are certainly aware of this dilemma; in order to facilitate a dialogue with neighbouring countries, Kocsis and Tátrai (2013) have in fact suggested the use of more "neutral" spatial categories, such as the Carpathian-Pannon Region. With reference to this geographical term, Kocsis and Tátrai produced a series of detailed maps of changing ethnic patterns.

Despite the fact that Slovakia is situated geographically in the Carpathian Basin, and is in fact the land of the Carpathians according to school textbooks and public opinion, Slovakia's political elites and media flatly reject this regional concept. Former Prime Minister Robert Fico and party leader Ján Slota have declared that Slovakia does not form part of the Carpathian Basin and that this spatial idea only promotes Hungarian revisionism. Secondary school history and geography textbooks published in Slovakia (as well as their Hungarian translations) naturally reproduce the dominant views held by the Slovak majority.³ Meanwhile, Hungarian-speaking members of the Slovak political elite are still inclined to appropriate a Budapest-centric view in the use of "obsolete" geographical terms such as "Upper Hungary" (*Felsővidék*) when referring to Slovakia, implying a lack of consideration for Slovakian

3 Slovak textbooks, particularly of history and geography, refer to Slovakia as a country of the Carpathians but reject the term "Carpathian Basin" and the idea of a shared common neighbourhood associated with the Carpathians.

self-awareness as a sovereign nation. This also applies to the Hungarian category of the “South” (*Délvidék*) which, from a Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian perspective makes little geographical sense.

It is therefore evident that the self-referentiality of the concept of Carpathian Basin – even without politicization – limits its direct applicability as a cooperation space. László Tőkés, an ethnic Hungarian pastor and politician from Romania (Transylvania), has stated (in Banai and Lukacs 2010: 6) “*It is tragicomical that today we are having to argue for the Slovak Academy of Sciences to graciously permit the use of the term Carpathian Basin*”. On the other hand, it would be very difficult politically for Slovakia to accept a regional idea centred on Hungary. In trying to counter such aversions, Prime Minister Orbán has signalled that “*Hungary’s national and economic strengthening (would) not threaten our neighbours but rather presents them an opportunity, signifying as well an enhancement of Central Europe’s importance within the EU.*”⁴ László Fejes (2011) has posed the provocative question whether Hungary is alone in the Carpathian Basin, suggesting that this regional idea is indeed a self-referential “Hungaricum”. He writes: “*We take for granted that the geographical unit within which we live is called the Carpathian Basin. More precisely we call it so. Because we are alone in this. Others call it something else, if they call it anything at all.*” This self-referentiality is due to the significance of the Carpathian Basin as an imaginary that has framed Hungary’s place in Europe, particularly after 1920, and as reflected in the depiction of geography as destiny and hence neighbourhood is often narrated as a space of national destiny.

Conclusion

Despite its lack of formal institutionalisation within European territorial cooperation, the Carpathian Basin, is hardly a “post-national soft space” in the sense of Andreas Faludi (2014). The conflation of geomorphology with the contours of the Hungarian Crown as it existed before 1920 is in many ways a logical frame of reference in ethno-political terms but it does not offer Hungary’s neighbours a sense of mutually shared space. Furthermore, this neighbourhood idea, at least as it has been generally articulated, can be easily construed as a negation of, or at least lack of respect of, the sovereignty of Romania, Slovakia and other countries. If the “organic” development of the Carpathian Basin as a coherent territorial unit within the European Union is to be taken seriously, joint legitimacy on behalf of all constituent states is required. Rather than Budapest-centric scenarios of a natural Hungarian stewardship for the region, alternatives oriented towards multilateralism and a wider regional context needs to be explored more fully.

4 Miniszterelnok.hu, 15 November 2019. “*Tízszáz magyar pártok tudják hatékonyan képviselni a Kárpát-medencei magyarságot*” (Clearly, Hungarian parties can effectively represent the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin). <https://miniszterelnok.hu/tiszzan-magyar-partok-tudjak-hatekonyan-kepviselni-a-karpat-medencei-magyarsagot>, accessed 30 August 2021.

The co-existence of functional, ethno-political and geopolitically oriented integration agendas indicates that there is no single Hungarian vision of regional neighbourhood that might serve as the basis for cross-border cooperation. However, cooperation is the only realistic option for achieving a certain degree of integration within the Carpathian Basin. During the course of the 20th century – and due in part to conflicts (co)generated by Hungary – the Hungarian nation has always emerged as a loser of territorial struggles. EU membership on the other hand provides a realistic platform for cooperation which can also benefit Hungarian-Hungarian relations. Among others, the Danube Strategy, more robust neighbourhood relationships based on reciprocity, cross-border sub-systems as well as cooperation between Hungarian settlement areas could provide building blocks of a more sustainable regional future.

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Stretching the Borders: An Epistemological Battle over Inclusion and Legitimation

Federico Salvati

Introduction:

A world divided and the (perceived) crisis of the liberal order

In the aftermath of the Ukrainian invasion, the international political debate has been riddled with questions about the future of the liberal order. The Ukrainian events have caused a strong polarization within the international arena, to the point that neutrality and inaction are seen as compliance (see Stelzenmüller 2022). Surely the strong reactions towards the 2022 Ukrainian crisis can be explained by arguing that these occurrences have taken place at the threshold of Europe. On the other hand, however, I think that the fearful political response that we have witnessed is also due to the fact that these tragic events are unfolding in a moment of deep perceived fragility for international institutions. A narrative has been established among both scholars and practitioners according to which the western-led international liberal order would be in a crisis. Consequently, Moscow's actions are felt as driving a wedge into the cracks of the current institutional structures.

Whatever might be the empirical relevance of such a narrative, I suggest that it is uncontroversial to say that this has been a recurring theme in western political debates. Consequently, a lot of governments have been reacting to it, taking measures to try to deal with the alleged problem. Over the last few years, in fact, Western liberal countries have tried hard to rekindle support into the political nature of international order. Among such attempts, we can count not only important regional initiatives like the redefinition of strategic visions and priorities from NATO and the European Union but also structural proposals like the 2012 "World forum for democracy" the 2019 "Alliance for multilateralism" or the 2021 US-sponsored "Summit for Democracy" or the 2021 EU "Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme".

We cannot analyse every single case in detail. I think it is safe to state, however, that the underlying logic to these initiatives is to strengthen the baseline regulatory principles of the system in order to have better disciplinary instruments to judge states' decision-making within the international scene. This means, on the one hand,

reaffirming what are the fundamental principles of the international order and on the other dividing the members of the system into prosocial-law-abiding and anti-systemic and problematic ones.

The most interesting aspect which associates all these initiatives is that the strategic goals of the programs are not pursued in the name of national political interests but on behalf of the universal character of liberal values. In other words, the legitimacy claim of these policies does not rest on the sovereignty of the countries proposing them but on the fact that they are supposed to support the existence of the international order as such.

Let us take for instance the recent declaration by EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen:

“Human rights and democracy are a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive development, and essential to addressing global challenges...In whichever way you measure it democracies always outperform other forms of government in the long run.”
(EU, Press release 2021)

According to these points of view, the full realization of human rights and democracy are not particularistic values but necessary conditions to achieve full performative results within the global system itself.

This assumption can be also found at the base of the Franco-German sponsored “Alliance for Multilateralism”. The initiative aspires to the realization of an actual “rule-based international order”. What is prospected by the program is *“to reform and to modernize existing international institutions, in order to make them more inclusive, representative, democratic, transparent [and] accountable.”* (Alliance for Multilateralism 2021)

The vision clearly recalls Western liberal values as guidelines to pursue the development of international law as a governance tool. The general spirit of the program, as exposed by its programmatic documents, does not look at the achievement of this set of morals as the strategic promotion of national or regional interests but as a way to grant resilience and durability to the international order itself (Mass 2021; Alliance for Multilateralism 2021).

A similar universalistic attitude has been displayed by the 2021 US-sponsored “Summit for Democracy”. The initiative is the last reiteration of an attempt by the White House to establish a loose democratic grand alliance. Although on this occasion as well references to the universal nature of liberal values as fundamental cornerstones of international stability were not lacking, the most remarkable feature of the Summit was its clear exclusionary character which willingly left out countries like China and Russia. The participants’ list has been drafted unilaterally by Washington and it included a number of countries with less than stellar performances in terms of democracy and human rights. Ultimately the outcome of the summit was perceived as a rally around the flag of democracy. This seemed to have served the purpose, on

the one hand, of re-establishing democracy (in the western version) as a legitimate factor of the international order, while isolating and pressuring “systemic” rivals like Russia and China.

The attempt to regain control of the institutional nature of the international system can be seen as a reaction of western liberal countries to the perceived fragility of the liberal order (Fied 2022; Sorensen 2017; Lake et al. 2021). This strategy rests, however, on a biased view of international relations, which tends to see the development of international governance intrinsically and necessarily connected with the diffusion and realization of liberal values. My attempt in the paper will be to explain what kind of theoretical assumptions move the Western strategy and where the perceived fragility of liberal governance comes from. In the second part, I will look at how authoritarian and non-liberal actors are resisting the hegemonic universalistic pressure of the liberal world and its attempts of drawing a specific epistemological line which divides the international community into law-abiding-countries and anti-systemic actors.

The liberal view and its influence in the development of international governance

To understand the liberal view of the world is impossible not to start from the work of Immanuel Kant as its archetypical conceptual formulation. Particularly relevant to IR is Kant's work “On perpetual peace” (although the nature of Kant's moral intuitions runs deep into the rest of his philosophy). The basic idea contained in Kant's work is that the rational and moral character of individuals, united with their tendency to pursue self-interest, guarantees the creation of a pacifying international community (Kant 2019). This community is grounded on legalistic bases and rests on the sovereign and free acceptance on the part of all men as it takes care of two major needs in social relations:

- 1) The realization of rational and universal moral values
- 2) The maximization of social freedom and individual autonomy

It is worth noticing that in Kant's idea this kind of community would not be a static process. The Kantian version of democratic peace as Doyle notices “*maintains itself, prevents wars, and steadily expands*” (Doyle 1982: 226). This is because the Kantian project is based on rational universal values and it has consequently a natural tendency towards universalization. This is testified by the fact that Kant's project culminates with the establishment of the so-called “cosmopolitan law” protecting individuals in the quality of human beings rather than as citizens of a single state.

Fast forward to modern times, Kant's message has been eventually codified by liberal scholars in international politics (Brue et al. 1998) along three main factors:

- 1) Democratic values
- 2) Free trade
- 3) International law

Leaving aside the more stringent economic aspect of the “trifactor”, it is clear that this view created a direct relationship between democratic values and law as necessary conditions for the realization of a world that is stable and at peace. Taking up the Kantian vocabulary, for instance, Waldron (2011: 325) says that: “[t]he real purpose of international law and, in my view, of the rule of law in the international realm is not the protection of sovereign states but the protection of the populations committed to their charge. States are not ends in themselves, but means for the nurture, protection, and freedom of those who are ends in themselves.” This means that the development of the rule of law cannot exist or be fully realized if there is no fulfilment of liberal aspirations like human rights and democratic values (Sandholtz 2019). Some liberal authors (Palombella 2009) go so far as to negate that there can be any version of the rule of law that is not supported by liberal values.

According to the mainstream liberal view, democratic regimes are better equipped to cooperate and realize collective goals, as well as they are more prone to respect normative institutions than not democratic ones (Koh 1996). Shai (2022) argues that it is indeed the presence of non-democratic states that creates degenerative tendencies in respecting international law. Consequently, a strong international rule of law cannot tolerate the presence of non-illiberal regimes that work as spoiler factors in the liberal system. Democracies, being moved by deeper and more sincere motivations, retain, consequently, a special legitimacy to act in the international system (Piccone 2008) since their actions are aimed at defending the universal moral bases of the community. Ikenberry and Slaughter (2006) conceptualize even the idea of a democratic international directorate which would work as an informal organization ready to step in when the multilateral system fails to act.

Moved from these assumptions, the end of the Cold War became an incredible opportunity for liberal regimes to aspire to the universal and hegemonic position which would finally lead to the realization of the liberal project. This is very well captured by Marti Koskeniemi (2002) who speaks of a “moralization” of international law. After the Cold War, liberal values gained traction in terms of framing technical normative tools in increasingly moral terms. So much so that Detlev F. Vagts (2001) even spoke of the possibility of the existence of a “hegemonic international law”.

Similarly, Börzel and Zürn (2021) speak about how the disappearance of the Soviet Union transformed the liberal normative structure from an international order to a more intrusive and disciplinary post-national one. Their position may be

said to agree largely with Marie Slaughter's constitutional approach to international law which sees liberal values increasingly forming a set of non-negotiable supreme norms which limit state decision making-power (Slaughter 2004). In practice, this meant that after the 90s liberal rhetoric has been progressively taking over the linguistic structures of the international normative discourse to the extent that liberal vocabulary nowadays constitutes the core semantics in formulating whatever legitimate political and normative discourse on the international scene.

As a concrete example of this, it is possible to take a quick look at the role of international law in supporting international peace and security in the post-Cold War era. Landmark UN resolutions like 1325 (2000) and 2282 (2016) have contributed in time to equate the respect of liberal legal tenets with international stability and security. The UNSC has openly recognized *"that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing"*. Full implementation of liberal principles as a foundational social institution became, consequently, not a governance choice but a security objective in itself. In turn, this implies that straying from liberal tenets is conducive to instability and can lead to insecurity.

A turning point in this matter happened in the year 2000 when the extremely influential Brahimi Report made the case that the pursuit of a more intrusive approach to peacekeeping could have granted longer stability in post-conflict. This is regarded as a milestone in the passage from classical peacekeeping to modern peace-building in the UN (Buchan 2014; Humphreys 2010). According to this new vision, post-conflict societies were not just to be protected through the legitimate use of force but also "corrected" by implementing suitable reforms that would guarantee a prolonged period of political stability and economic growth. The Security Council has further debated "the promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of peace and security" on several occasions. Particularly significant is 2014, Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2014/5) which *"reaffirmed the continued recognition of the need for universal adherence to and implementation of the rule of law. It also underscored that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence between political, security, development, human rights, including gender equality, and rule of law and justice activities."*

These processes have greatly influenced the intervention strategies in the cases of Kosovo and Darfur. As many authors said, these interventions were fostered by the idea that in order to achieve long-term stability armed force was not enough. Society needed to be tinkered with to create the right condition so that functional (liberal) governance structures could be implemented. This structure in turn would grant the achievement of long-term security and political stability (Hehir 2007; Welsh 2003; Pattison 2010; Buchan 2014).

This attitude found its pick, politically, into the so-called Bush doctrine. During the Bush administration, Washington awarded itself as the legitimate enforcer of international law against those regimes which were considered to have anti-social and

illegitimate behaviour. In fact, America's role in the world according to Secretary Rise was to take up:

"The threat of rogue regimes (...) Iraq is the prototype. Saddam Hussein's regime is isolated, his conventional military power has been severely weakened, his people live in poverty and terror, and he has no useful place in international politics."
(Rise 2000: 60)

It must be pointed out that this political doctrine consists of an extreme case which was criticized even by most of America's allies. However, the general idea that persists until nowadays is that adherence to normativity coming from liberal values has an intrinsic value in itself in granting stability and security to the international system. In this sense, liberal values are not just a political vision but they turn into a programmatic set of instructions that promise the realization of structural and long-term social objectives. Consequently, liberal political categories become a legitimacy standard which serves the purpose to distinguish legitimate (and potentially successful) from illegitimate (and dangerous/ unstable) policy-making in international relations.

The reasons behind the crisis of the liberal order and the strategy of non-democratic regimes

The predominant presence of liberal values as a legitimacy threshold in international political discourse after the Cold War fostered the idea that the West (and the US in particular) was living a hegemonic moment within the political international life. Different authors (Geis 2013; Reus-Smit 2005) remark that this kind of legitimization strategy led to the fact that in the contemporary international order only democratic liberal countries really enjoy full membership with all the rights and duties connected to it (first among all the right to use force legitimately). Consequently, it is admissible to wonder, why the liberal world feels so threatened nowadays and how it is possible that liberal values, being so overwhelmingly present within international governance and normativity, are said to be in crisis. In other words: if liberal democratic values are so predominant in normative discourse production how is it that autocracies have not disappeared yet but, on the contrary, seem to be on the rise within the international system?

I argue that the hegemonic aspirations of the West bring within themselves the causes of its (alleged) crisis. As liberal countries acquired a hegemonic status over the international system, showing compliance with certain key semantics became the only way a government could make fully legitimate political statements. This, however, meant that *all kinds of regimes* had to use such semantics if they intended to participate at all in the debate. Consequently, autocracies, after the Cold War, if they wanted to have any part in the political debate, had to adapt to a new reality steered

by the western hegemonic political view (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2006). Adaptation meant learning how to present their own countries in a prosocial way, demonstrating the ability to interact successfully with other members of the system.

In practice, for authoritarian countries, this consisted in shaping their governance strategies after the legitimate democratic ones that were present within the Western hegemonic discourse (Frantz 2018; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). With this, the progressive adoption of relevant linguistic patterns and corresponding institutions that resembled or mimicked Western liberal ones came along.

The advantage that these states had in emulating democratic speech and behavioural patterns was to achieve higher levels of legitimacy in their decision-making activities and to access public goods and resources that would have been hard to obtain on their own (such as international trade networks and economical and technical assistance). Most importantly, though, these countries gained the right to participate effectively in the development of normative structures and normative discourse.¹

This adaptation process, as Levitsky and Way (2010) argue, did not correspond necessarily to higher levels of democratization in autocratic countries. Mimicry strategies managed, nonetheless, to raise the levels of legitimation and resilience of the regimes that pursued this road (Kendall-Taylor and Frantz 2014). In fact, adopting a pro-social stand and legitimate governance solutions corresponded with accessing better support from the international community or at least facing less friction in policy-making (both at home and abroad). This led directly to higher levels of socioeconomic stability which impacted in turn the durability and resilience of the political establishments.

While initial adaptation creates an incentive for mimicking others' social behaviour in order to avoid disciplinary pressure coming from the dominant powers, however, once this strategy lowers the social and economic cost of participating in political life, more socially articulated countries, like China and Russia, are faced with a further problem. After achieving a legitimate position within the international community more socially skilled regimes (such as Moscow and Beijing) are presented with the possibility to make legitimate claims about the nature and the evolution of the regulatory institutions of the system exactly because they are acknowledged as legitimate members of it. As I will explain in the next paragraph, governments like Moscow and China are clearly driven to take advantage of the possibility because the perspective of active influencing framework normative conditions yields potentially higher benefits than just passive adaptation.

1 The other available option would have been Isolation as in the case of North Korea. This strategy has brought the regimes that choose it towards an idiosyncratic position which makes them unable to participate successfully in the political debate.

As such, unlike classical liberal theory holds, I argue that autocratic regimes that do not behave in an idiosyncratic way (like North Korea) do not struggle for being *legibus soluti* and rejecting altogether any kind of ruling that might bind them.

On the contrary, in my view, the objective that countries like Russia and China have is to broaden the spectrum of what is considered to fall within the basic legitimizing categories of the liberal system so that they can associate successfully their own governance practices with such categories. This is testified by the fact that authoritarian countries put forward considerable amounts of normative discourse dealing with fundamental normative principles of the international community and state governance.

As I will explain in the next paragraphs, countries like Russia and China make frequent and proficient use of liberal semantics in order to argue their political position, by doing that, they have the possibility to contribute in shaping the very same idea that they speak about. Autocratic states that do not behave in an idiosyncratic way (like North Korea) struggle to infuse a higher level of ambiguity and open-endedness into liberal regulatory semantic categories while democratic states fight to retain the definitional monopoly of them, narrowing what legitimately falls within them.

The battle on stretching or compressing semantic categories is not observable only today but it belongs intimately to international politics. Examples are well revisable during the Cold War (Breslauer 2021). What is maybe peculiar to our times is the fact that the liberal order had the opportunity to become a global hegemonic ideology shaping the international community in terms of exclusionary and inclusionary dynamics at a scale that was unprecedented in the past. In the next paragraph, I explain from a theoretical perspective why this happens and the misconception that liberal theory usually has about language.

Theoretical explanation: the semantics of governance

Before diving deep into my case study about China's and Russia's diplomatic discourse I would like to give a few hints on the theoretical background that supports my claims. I think this will help to better understand my argumentation.

Many liberal authors understand language as a declaratory mechanism used to describe the state and nature of the word (Habermas 1996; Rawls 1999). Following Lakoff's critique of the liberal neo-Kantian positions, I try to give a different perspective of what is the role of language in the political and social discourse (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Lakoff 1987; 2009).

I propose to look at language first of all as a technical skill that encapsulates achievement and allows the accumulation of social understanding. The second way I pro-

pose to look at language is as an organizational tool rather than a descriptive one. As Fauconnier and Turner (2003: 25-27) put it, language does not describe properties of objects in the world but counterfactual and relational connections within reality. This means that language's main task is not to approximate the nature of objects as they are but to determine how elements of reality interact together and how we interact with them. Relational connections that we express within linguistic structures derive from our worldly experience and they are conveyed through semantic categorization. A set of objects and experiences can be organized along with a certain epistemological order that draws commonalities between them. For our brains the advantage of doing this is that by imposing epistemological/semantic orders to the external world we determine successful interaction strategies with reality, which are able to make our social groups better equipped to carry on complex tasks in an efficient way.

Empirically, this phenomenon is well-studied and reported in multiple fields of social studies. Multiple sources among disciplines (Levi-Strauss 1962; Henrich 2016) for instance study how the categorization of kinship relations determine and regulate organization structures for mutual solidarity. Mutual solidarity in turn creates a certain set of social norms that determine what ought to be considered prosocial behaviour. The adherence to such norms of mutual solidarity, finally, is encouraged and enforced by society as a performative strategy for achieving the group's well-being and successful survival. The role of language in this process is that categorization and the construction of consequent interaction strategies are embedded into the construction of the semantic meaning of words.

This explanation can be used to read the attitude of liberal thinkers and liberal politics towards international normative structures. Liberal semantics and liberal concepts like rule of law, democracy, and human rights do not describe an institutional structure that exists independently in the world. I argue that liberal semantics itself contains bits of information and social knowledge on possible organizational structures along which society should be arranged. The diffusion and the spreading of this information are done through the diffusion of liberal semantics into the political debate. These structures are intended by the liberal community as successful organizational and interaction strategies that can guarantee long-term benefits and the accomplishment of complex tasks in an efficient way (such as political stability, economic growth etc.). Consequently, the deriving social norms are supported and enforced by the system because a deviation from pro-social behaviour is perceived as jeopardizing stability and the chances for long-term success. The end of the Cold War left liberal semantics in a dominant position because this was individualized as the most performative cognitive/epistemological order in the community while the socialist system was crumbling.

The last consideration to take into account is that semantic categories are not stable entities. Unlike scholars like Habermas (referring to Pearson (Habermas 1996: 14-15)) and Dworkin (2013) hint at, social meaning and social knowledge do not tend to stabilize; they live in a constant process of recursive evolution. In this sense, it is possible to think about socio/political discourse as the instrument for adapting and manipulating linguistic categories which indirectly impact socio/organizational arrangements. This is not a problem or an inner weakness of language. The fundamental ambiguity of semantics is the very thing that enables socio-institutional adaptation. In turn, adaptation keeps institutional structures relevant through the changing conditions of the surrounding reality. This means also however that after being introduced into society, the evolution of a certain concept is not perfectly predictable. All the subjects that can legitimately participate in the discourse can use the natural instability of semantics to try to adapt categories and indirectly change normative and organizational standards of society. This kind of manipulation, however, cannot be merely linguistic, but it must correspond (as seen in the kinship case) to some kind of performative organization and institutional strategy that the speaker wishes to associate with the semantic under discussion for the purpose of re-categorization.

Given all of this, I think it is clear how this connects with what I have said before. Thinking about China and Russia as defiant actors of the liberal system we would expect open contestation or rejection of the fundamental ideas of liberal politics. By refusing straight on systemic basic normative concepts, however, Russia and China would have very little to gain besides self-exclusion. Furthermore, the system would try to enforce the norms on them because, as I have mentioned, deviation from the norms is seen as a threat to the success of the community itself.

Since successful adaptation allows legitimate participation in normative discourse production, a much more appealing strategy is to try to take advantage of the open-endedness of semantic categories to expand the boundaries of what is or is not warranted by the system. In my opinion, the advantages that Russia and China would gain by a more ambiguous and comprehensive formulation of international law is preventing targeted enforcement and lowering the social costs of autocratic policymaking, expanding the leeway of what is considered legitimate. Fortunately for these regimes, the proliferation of liberal discourse has codified very clearly through the years what categories to target in order to accomplish that. Consequently, countries like Russia and China have “only” to make an effort in learning how to use the right communication and institutional patterns. This gives them an incentive in employing such patterns to expand the boundaries of liberal normative categories by associating their own institutional organizational structures with liberal semantics.

In the next paragraph, I am going to analyse how Russia’s and China’s diplomatic discourse perpetuate the mechanisms that I just described. Hopefully, I can demon-

strate that the perceived crisis of the liberal order does not stem from an outright rejection or contestation of its fundamental values but the progressive attempts of non-liberal power to make these concepts fuzzier by associating them with political practices that would not be traditionally considered as liberal.

Case study: Russia and China and their use of liberal semantics

Informative examples of what I have discussed earlier are not scarce and can be found numerous in Russia's and China's production of their official diplomatic and legal discourse. For this paper, I use official declarations coming from top-ranking officials, preferably at multilateral forum. On some occasions, I deviate from this when it brings more clarity to the general argument. The first idea I want to concentrate on is multilateralism. References to multilateralism have become a recurring theme in China's political discourse. In particular, Beijing insists on the concept of "true multilateralism" as a fair form for organizing political relations within the international scene. In China's position paper for the 77th UN General Assembly, the country has made a strong endorsement of the idea of "multilateralism":

"The world needs true multilateralism. Multilateralism is a cornerstone of the existing international order (...) There is only one international order, i.e. the international order underpinned by international law." (China MFA 2022)

In the address for the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the Chinese seat in the UN, President Xi also said: "

"We should resolutely uphold the authority and standing of the United Nations, and work together to practice true multilateralism." (Xi 2021)

By the idea of "true multilateralism", China means the right to be recognized in determining rules, thresholds and regulations of the international order. Being liberal values largely overlapping with Western ones, Beijing accuses the West of betraying the idea of multilateralism elevating local interests and local visions to universalistic and global thresholds for political and legal judgment. At the Munich Security Conference, Foreign minister Wang Yi stated:

"We must guard against "pseudo-multilateralism". Sheer talk of returning to multilateralism may hide a real scheme to form small circles and conduct group politics...We have heard talks about the need to uphold the "rules-based international order". The crux of the matter is: What kind of "rules" are being talked about?" (Wang 2021)

In my opinion, the statements are a clear criticism of initiatives like the "alliance for multilateralism" which tend to redefine the world order along the line of a liberal-

values-inspired international law. Similar accusations were moved against the US as the leading power of the international order:

“The principle lying at the core of the existing international system and order is multilateralism. When multilateralism is under attack, chaos breaks out and the law of the jungle returns. The past few years saw unilateralism running unchecked. A superpower had chosen to put its own interests above other things.” (Wang 2021)

As for Russia, Moscow uses the well-known concept of “multipolarity”. The idea was already well analysed by the literature on the topic and going into details with it would be redundant here (Chebankova 2017; Makarychev and Mozorov 2013). It is worth mentioning however that at the base of this concept is a similar assumption as for the Chinese “true multilateralism”, namely Moscow points at the work of Western countries and accuses them of acting unilaterally in claiming their own standards as universal and objective. For example:

“The West’s goal is to oppose the collective efforts of all members of the world community with other rules developed in closed, non-inclusive formats, and then imposed on everyone else.” (Lavrov(a) 2021)

And again in 2022:

“the collective West, led by Washington, is sending intimidating signals to all other countries without exception: anyone who disobeys can be the next in line. One of the consequences of the crusade declared by the West against unwanted regimes is that multilateral institutions are declining at an ever-increasing pace. We are witnessing an assertive push to privatise the UN Secretariat and imbue its work with a neo-liberal discourse, which ignores the cultural and civilisational diversity in today’s world” (Lavrov 2022)

Interestingly, Russia and China make use of these concepts even in mutual bilateral and multilateral relations that do not involve liberal countries as a partner. For instance:

“The international community now faces a major test with choices to be made between multilateralism and unilateralism, openness and seclusion, cooperation and confrontation. we need to uphold multilateralism. Obsession with forming a small circle can only push the world toward division and confrontation.” (Xi SCO 2020)

“They stressed the importance of further deepening cooperation in order to meet the challenges of jointly building an open world economy, consistently strengthening an open, inclusive, transparent, non-discriminatory and rule-based multilateral trading system, as well as preventing any unilateral protectionist measures in trade.” (Mededev 2019)

Foreign minister Lavrov said in a bilateral meeting with China's officials in May 2021,

"We will move towards a multipolar, equitable and democratic world order with you and other like-minded nations...the prospects of the international community's sustainable and predictable development are directly connected with our ability...to exercise collective leadership in order for true multilateralism to prevail."
(Lavrov(a) 2021)

Finally, references to the concept of true multilateralism as well as multipolarity appear within the joint Sino-Russia 2022 declaration on the future of the world order:

"The sides reaffirmed their intention to strengthen foreign policy coordination, pursue true multilateralism, strengthen cooperation on multilateral platforms, defend common interests, support the international and regional balance of power, and improve global governance." (Russia, China 2022)

"The sides call on all States...to protect the United Nations-driven international architecture and the international law-based world order, seek genuine multipolarity with the United Nations and its Security Council playing a central and coordinating role, promote more democratic international relations." (Russia, China 2022)

All of these give the impression that the countries are developing some kind of political convergence in terms of how the future international order should look like. Although, according to my opinion, it is not enough to speak about a concrete political alignment.

Similar arguments can be found in the political discourse of the two countries regarding the concept of democracy and its role as a political value of the international system. Putin in the past did not shy away from associating the idea of democracy as a core value of the Russia society

"Russia has made its choice in favor of democracy. Fourteen years ago, independently, without any pressure from outside, it made that decision...This is our final choice, and we have no way back." (Putin 2005)

Russia never explicitly rejected democracy as a political value. In 2021, Dimitry Peskov (2021) even said that *"Russia is an absolutely democratic country and very strong, very proud and very free people live in Russia."* I do not want to get into the details of the Russian idea of democracy since it has also been examined at length by the literature (Casula 2013; Gerrits 2010; Wood 2022). It is worth noticing, however, that the Kremlin has worked hard for redefining the idea of democracy in terms of Russia's national governance practices and political values (let us just think about the very famous idea of Russia's "sovereign democracy"). With this in mind, it is possible to better understand the recent backlash that Moscow has unleashed against western

attempts to exclude the country from the ranks of democratic regimes. For instance, Minister Lavrov has harshly criticized Western policies on the issue by saying:

“US President Joe Biden, who is convening a Summit for Democracy, has made up a list of 110 countries in a totally arbitrary way. The list raises numerous questions, as does the very idea of the Summit for Democracy, which implies the United States’ right to decide who is a democracy and who isn’t.” (Lavrov 2021, TASS)

“New ambitious initiatives to create narrow partnerships are emerging all the time within the Alliance for Multilateralism... The “rules-based order” envisions neither democracy, nor pluralism even within the “collective West.” The case in point is the revival of tough bloc discipline and an unconditional submission of the “allies” to Washington’s diktat” (Lavrov 2022)

In a similar way, China has been also active in appealing democracy as a common value of the international community:

“Democracy is not a special right reserved to an individual country, but a right for the people of all countries to enjoy” (Xi 2021)

The Chinese government, just like the Russian one, has also given grandiose statements recently that the country enjoys a “true” democratic regime and its citizens have wide access to participatory and deliberative processes.

Given this premises it is not a surprise that Beijing as well has reacted very harshly to America’s democratic initiative:

“Recently, the United States held a so-called “Summit for Democracy”, drawing the ideological line and turning democracy into a tool and a weapon... The US is not a “beacon of democracy”, and the American-style democracy has deviated from the essence of democracy.” (Wang 2021)

Finally, like in the case of multilateralism, some explicit references to democracy are also present in the already quoted 2022 joint declaration in which can be read:

“The sides share the understanding that democracy is a universal human value, rather than a privilege of a limited number of States... There is no one-size-fits-all template to guide countries in establishing democracy” (Russia, China 2022)

Once again, the main intention behind this rhetoric is that the West has no monopoly on defining the demarcation line on what democracy is and what is not. As a legitimacy standard of the liberal order, China and Russia want to have access to it by associating their own governance practices with the concept.

Finally, this review would not be complete without spending some words on the attitude of Moscow and Beijing towards human rights. Also in this case, the countries

do not reject the concept per se but attack the West accusing it of particularism and unilateralism:

“The promotion and protection of human rights is a shared responsibility of the international community”, but both China and Russia “believe that the advocacy of democracy and human rights must not be used to put pressure on other countries.” (Joint Declaration 2022)

President Xi, during the 50th anniversary of the reinstitution of the country’s UN seat, has claimed that China:

“has blazed a path of human rights development that is consistent with the trend of the times and carries distinct Chinese features, thus making major contribution to human rights progress in China and the international human rights cause.”(Xi 2021a)

Minister Lavrov defended the role of Russia and attacked the West unilateralism at the 44th meeting of the UN Human Rights Council by saying:

“Human rights are a universal constant. They cannot be dependent on the self-serving ambitions of a narrow “select circle” seeking to rewrite the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, distort it to their liking, and replace the current consensus underlying all our work with their “rules.” (Lavrov 2021b)

When Russia was voted out of the Human Rights Council in 2022 (as a result of the Ukraine crisis) the Kremlin claimed that the Council was being *“monopolized and exploited by one group of states. These states, which position themselves as beacons of human rights, are directly participating in, or abetting, flagrant mass human rights violations.”* (Russian MFA 2022)

China on this occasion strongly disapproved of the action saying that:

“Dealing with the membership of the Human Rights Council in such a way will set a new dangerous precedent, further intensify confrontation in the field of human rights, bringing a greater impact on the UN governance system, and produce serious consequences.” (Zhang 2022)

More interestingly, however both Russia and China have been very active in the UN Council for Human Rights (at least until Russia has been kicked out).

Russia has supported China’s res A/HRC/43/L.31/Rev.1 which on one hand insists on human rights as a universal value, but on the other hand it leaves the responsibility to the state to develop and implement the right path to carry on this universal duty. Moscow has also supported China’s res A/HRC/RES/46/5 which explicitly *“rejects all attempts to introduce unilateral coercive measures, and the increasing trend in this direction, including through the enactment of laws with extraterritorial application.”* Moreover, Russia has finally endorsed Pakistan’s and Belarus’s joint statements on dismissing the

western accusation of human rights abuses on Xinjiang (UNHRC Pakistan 2021; Kumakura 2021).

Given the fact that both Russia and China have an abysmal record when it comes to human rights, it is bizarre to look at their activism in the field. The only possible explanation is that the intention of the government is not to contribute to the upholding of these institutions per se but to broaden the spectrum of what is the legitimacy standard when employing these ideas in mutual political debate.

Conclusions

I have exposed how the discussion on the semantics of fundamental regulatory ideas constitutes the centre of a fierce political battle for influencing the future of the liberal system. Autocratic countries like Russia and China, while they clearly do not line up with liberal values per se, do not reject them straight up either. On the contrary, they try very hard to move their epistemological and linguistic boundaries to be included within the ranks of countries whose behaviour can be considered not only legitimate but even reflect the evolving nature of the international order.

It emerges from my analysis, all the narratives articulated by China and Russia are done in the name of unspecified pluralism. This is in itself a core value of the liberal system and it works as an entry point for Moscow and Beijing in manipulating successfully the semantic ideas they discuss. This is a good example of how authoritarian countries that are more socially articulated are able to learn, use and develop key semantics that allows legitimate interaction with the other members.

Given my results, I think there is no paradox in saying that China and Russia do not reject liberal values. By doing it they would only self-isolate. On the contrary, Moscow and Beijing use liberal semantics proficiently in order to try to create connections between them and their governance practices. This is done in order to construct legitimacy claims about their own political decision-making processes which otherwise would fall outside liberal regulatory categories. This would be disadvantageous for Russia and China because it would raise the political cost of participation in the international debate, making at the same time harder to access collective goods and the support of the rest of the community.

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Transatlantic Territorialities: Transforming Territory and Identity through Crossing Borders

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Introduction

Haitian literature in the twentieth century is a literature of resistance; a literature that is dedicated to the Haitian society and written in the name of Haiti. Recognizable themes are that of migration, (self-)exile, displacement and separation, as well as reconnecting with African traditions and Haiti's cultural and national identity. Thus, it marks its *raison d'être* as a way of handing down historical identity in writing. Haitian authors like Jacques Stephen Alexis, Jacques Roumain, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, and Edwidge Danticat construct and retell stories of displacement, transforming Haitian citizens into émigrés of the Caribbean, North America and Europe, while the authors anchor themselves in these territories as intellectual critics. It is through these written stories in which a reprocessing of the past as well as a reflection of the present is taking place. As much as the problems of Haiti have changed over the time, its substantial factor of forced or voluntary migration finds itself persisting. Haitian people in transit become diaspora, while the Atlantic Ocean serves as a temporary homeland. Such topics are what Edwidge Danticat is recognized for tackling. Her oeuvre challenges the standardised canon of Haiti's foreign perception, as she writes about Haitian and Haitian-American diaspora experiences.

This paper examines transatlantic territoriality and diasporic place-making in Edwidge Danticat's Haitian short story "Children of the Sea" of her publication *Krik? Krak!.* Through the concepts of diaspora and the wake it argues that diasporic place-making is a process of positioning and transformation which marks a space of the in-between, that Danticat defines, locates, and claims in her short story as floating homeland. The focus on Haitian diaspora is analysed with the help of Stuart Hall's essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" and Danticat's concept of the floating homeland. The focus on the wake in the Haitian diaspora and on Haiti is analysed with the help of Christina Sharpe's 2016 publication *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.* Aspects of transatlantic territoriality and diasporic placemaking are discussed through Sharpe's concept of the wake. This paper starts with a theoretical approach on Hall and Sharpe and then moves on to discuss Danticat's publication as a short

story cycle that stands in close connection with Haitian ancestry. In the following sections it introduces the concepts of the wake and the floating homeland, as well as the topics of *dyaspora* as a fundamental part of the Haitian mother country. In the final section, this paper concludes with observations regarding place-making and identity construction as reflected in border-crossing literatures. Here, it is the idea of the floating homeland that transforms former Haitian citizens into that of the Haitian dyaspora.

Transatlantic territorialities: Theoretical approaches

On Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall's essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", deals with the various formations and influences on cultural identities. Its main focus lies in the differentiation between an essentialist approach and a positional one. The essentialist approach claims "*one shared culture which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common.*" (Hall 1990: 223) This cultural identity creates a homogeneous understanding of "oneness", which can be powerful, as it operates as one united force, representing one united power. In contrast, it fails to reflect on the hybridity of cultural identities and thus visualises a rather one-dimensional outlook, leaving significant differences among a group or people unnoticed. Opposing this understanding, a cultural identity is to be understood as one that is multifaceted and thus, positional. The positioning of a cultural identity emerges from historic events, that "[continue] to speak" (Hall 1990: 226). Hall exemplifies this through the Afro-Caribbean diaspora and "*the traumatic character of the colonial experience*" (Hall 1990: 225). It is not Africa, the continent which is identity-establishing in the Caribbean, but "*a 'new' Africa of the New World [which is] grounded in an 'old' Africa*" (Hall 1990: 231). This "new" Africa is imagined and stands as a metaphor, contrasting the 'old' territorial Africa. This metaphor which Hall calls *Presence Africaine* establishes together with the *Presence Europeenne* and *Presence Americaine* (New World/Terra Incognita) a new Caribbean cultural identity. Through the influences of the three presences, the newly emerged identity is per se multicultural. It is "*subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power*" (Hall 1990: 225). Its birthplace is Terra Incognita - "*the beginning of diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference*" (Hall 1990: 235), which, according to Hall, "*makes Afro-Caribbean people already people of a diaspora*" (Hall 1990: 235).

The multiculturalism of Terra Incognita hence is lived hybridity, which sparks for example through creolisation and new spiritual forms of belief such as Haitian Vodun. Therefore, the real existing "old" Africa is no longer a place that the diaspora can go back to as they have emancipated themselves from it. In contrast, *Presence Africaine* "*remains the unspoken, unspeakable 'presence' in Caribbean culture [that] ... is ... the 'Africa' that 'is alive and well in the diaspora'*" (Hall 1990: 230). It is through "constantly

producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference ... that [the Afro-Caribbean diaspora] has created itself and keeps itself in existence" (Hall 1990: 235, 237). A return to the homeland Africa and thus to an 'essential' core of cultural identity is inconceivable.

On Christina Sharpe

An echo of Hall's work can be found in Christina Sharpe's book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, in which she docks on his conception of cultural identity and diaspora. Ideological similarities such as understanding the colonial experience as a trigger for the past that continuously ruptures the present (Sharpe 2016) resound Hall's discourse. However, while Hall builds the framework for a new Black cultural identity by taking the colonial past as a starting point, Sharpe goes into the depths of that identity and explores the present day problems that Black lives face as a result of their colonial past. By adding the aspect of care, or wake work as she defines it, Sharpe deviates from Hall and focuses, through an afro-pessimist lens, on the ways in which the Atlantic chattel slavery continues to leave a presence and a mark on Black lives living in post-slavery USA. Sharpe calls this positioning (to be in) the wake. The wake, among many other definitions, is understood as "*the track left on the water's surface by a ship*" (Sharpe 2016: 3). While the 'ship' is a reference to slave ships and thus to Black ancestry, the 'track' is the in-between position in which the Black diaspora in North America is situated and from where they manage their presence. This presence proves to be a haunting inheritance as Sharpe argues that the US American culture and legal system has not fully emancipated itself from slavery (Sharpe 2016: 5). Thus, "*the very notion of justice ... produces and requires Black exclusion and death as normative*" (Sharpe 2016: 7). It is this normativity that functions as "*the conceptual frame of and for living blackness in the diaspora*" (Sharpe 2016: 2). In conclusion, wakes are also processes through which one thinks about the dead and the relations one has/had to them (Sharpe 2016: 60). Out of this concept, that Black lives live in the wake of slavery, Sharpe establishes the concept of wake work. As wake work stretches over various definitions, its main aim is to be in a constant state of consciousness of the transatlantic slave trade, and in a state of wakefulness upon its lingering impact on present Black lives. Further notions of the wake contain "*grief, celebration, memory, [mourning the dead]*" (Sharpe 2016: 11) and many more. Moreover, Sharpe argues that care/wake work is strongly needed to build a community of cohesion, emphasising that wake work gives Black lives the power and voice to position themselves against US American anti-blackness. It is this dual function of wake work that helps Black lives to reflect on the past and act on the current system. As a result, Sharpe insists on reading the wake and wake work together, since thinking of the past requires care while "*thinking and care need to stay in the wake*" (Sharpe 2016: 5).

When I say Krik? you say Krak!

"Stories make events come alive" says Danticat in an interview with Meridians (Horn 2001: 20), and indeed, it is the oral storytelling tradition of Haiti through which personal and collective histories are transmitted, as it is *"a way of fostering imaginative communities and developing identities"* (Davis 2001: 65). However, due to political conflicts and violence in Haiti, Haitian *"storytellers ... have been silenced and their stories are being forgotten"* (Sarhou 2010: 103). In the light of that it is important to reclaim and preserve these stories to recover history, as well as to keep the cultural heritage of the oral storytelling tradition alive. That said, oral histories are what Danticat turns into written stories and shares with her readers in the interwoven short story cycle *Krik? Krak!*. It is no coincidence that this expression is the title of her 1995 publication, as it refers to the practice of *"the Caribbean storyteller's rhetorical call and response"* (Nesbit 2013: 75). *"Krik? she calls out to us"* (Nesbit 2013: 75), while we, the reader, answer Krak! showing participation and affirmation to *"allow the storyteller to begin the cycle... of supple interaction of elements within and between various stories"* (Nesbit 2013: 75). In a total of nine short stories, the cycle *"maintain[s] a balance between the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit"* (Davis 2001:65), thus, *Krik? Krak!* demands a careful reader, who pays attention to the subtle connections in-between the stories, as well as a reader who relates the stories to the historical past and the present now. In addition, *Krik? Krak!* calls the reader to bear witness to Haiti and its people as they face *"contemporary dilemmas of social injustice in [a] period of expanding global imperialism"* (Nesbit 2013: 74).

Another key element indicated through the title is that the publication becomes personified into an anonymous storyteller and voice. This storyteller needs to be recognized as a gifted storyteller [who is]

... "not speaking in place of others, but voicing the intersubjected experience of a community of diverse, singular beings, testifying to the absence and voicelessness of those who have passed on, [who have been] ... eliminated, [or who have] ... not yet found the means or courage to speak their singular experiences" (Nesbit 2013:76)

Hence, *Krik? Krak!* can be read as the voice of Haitian ancestors, through which it opens up a space of the past. Danticat, as the author of *Krik? Krak!* becomes a transmitter of testimonials as her book carries the stories in the name of the dead. These stories are not Danticat's, but the experiences of the ancestors, who speak through her. *"They tell the story that Danticat cannot tell as her own because she did not live it"* (Ortiz 2001: 66). Based on the idea that *"Here I am because there she was"* (Ortiz 2001: 66), Danticat is only able to express ancestral history and pass it on because she is alive. In that sense *Krik? Krak!* is the product that carries the cyclical and dialogical relationship she has with the Haitian ancestors, while simultaneously transmitting oral histories and testimonials. Her book proves that *"memory lives on through the ancestors"*

... as well as through the stories we tell, which serve as cautionary tales and as bridges connecting the living and the dead” (Rossi 2005: 212). An example of that is the opening story of *Krik? Krak!* called “Children of the Sea”. It addresses the oceanic journey of thirty-six Haitian refugees migrating towards Miami, USA. The short story is narrated via epistolary diary entries in which a young couple documents their time being separated from each other. While the female protagonist writes her diary entries in Haiti, the male protagonist writes his on the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the short story is written on the basis of parallel narratives. With that Danticat shows the redemptive power that lies in writing as it becomes the protagonist’s vigilantism. Similar to Jewish slaves in Babylon writing the Old Testament to preserve the stories (and thus their religion), or Anne Frank writing her diary entries – writing becomes the only possible way to survive, to resist, to be remembered and resurrected, as well as to locate oneself in history. Hence, writing creates spaces and places. This way, Haitian histories become an important part of the histories of the world, while the protagonists set themselves in subject position.

Writing becomes a form of storytelling which is “*a medium of self-inscription and ... an instrument for dialogue*” (Davis 2001: 68). And indeed, the epistolary diary entries of “Children of the Sea” that stand in the shadow of migration are written as a form of ‘exiled dialogue’, in which the oral aspect of a dialogue is exiled into the written form. Especially those seemingly lost, and thus disconnected entries of the male protagonist are an “*expression of internal exile*” (Dash 2013: 32). Writing therefore makes an invisible internal space visible. As a result of the subject position, the male protagonist’s writing gains incredible depth and authenticity while it empowers him. The subject position is a way of taking care of the narrative and the history that is passed on through stories. However, as the male protagonist’s ship starts to leak, he has to throw any excess weight into the sea in order to have a chance to survive. His diary disappears onto the ocean floor. The loss of the diary equals the loss of stories, and as the ship leaks more and more the refugees lose their lives as well. In the end, nothing and nobody survives this oceanic journey if it would not be Danticat re-writing it and thus creating “*a literature of testimony*” (Dash 2013: 33). *Krik? Krak!* resurrects the diary of the male protagonist and proves, that the ancestral voice is a survivor of Haitian lives, stories and histories. Hence, the publication itself is a symbol of resistance and survival.

The storyteller of *Krik? Krak!* unfolds the ancestral wisdom of the dead, and the brutal violence they have witnessed. Rehabilitating the stories through the written word brings Haitian oral histories back to life. Thus, *Krik? Krak!* is an “*insistence on existing*” (Sharpe 2016: 11) and a means of caring. It is a means to do justice; to “*defend the dead*” (Sharpe 2016:10) and the living. It makes way to bring back a seemingly lost sense of Haitian cultural identity by taking care of it, by owning it, by re-telling it through stories, by staying conscious of the past that reaches into the present, and by making it accessible to a wider public to generate awareness. Hence, Danticat

mentions in an interview with Callaloo that her aim in writing *Krik? Krak!* is to “*introduce people to Haiti in a way that they might not regularly encounter in their lives, and then hopefully inspire them to go further, to learn more outside the frame of this book*” (Mirabal 2007:33). In other words, “*Danticat transmits and translates ... silenced and marginalised histories as social and collective memory to a global community of readers, with ... little to no knowledge of such histories*” (Clitandre 2018: 54). Reviving silenced stories of Haiti and distributing them in written form is Danticat’s way of practising wake work and care for the Haitian community. Adding to that, Danticat animates the reader to be actively involved with her stories. The narrative of “*Children of the Sea*” unfolds through a back and forth of reading the two separate diary entries only revealed to the reader. Consequently, the task is to weave each diary entry into context to unite the dual realities of the couple. By orally re-telling the story as one coherent and inter-related story, the reader becomes an important link in the transmission of Haitian histories and helps these stories to stay in the wake. The reader takes over the function of a space ‘in-between’, a transmitter who is the link between the diary entry on land and the diary entry on the sea. He/she becomes another storyteller that speaks and delivers to an audience by filling the silence in-between the protagonists.

The Wake: a place in-between

“Children of the Sea” is a short story mediating various states of an in-between. Geographically the story is set in-between Europe, America and Africa – namely the Atlantic Ocean. Bordering these three continents the Atlantic, as a body of water, has politically no state rights, no governance and no sovereignty (Proelss et al. 2017). Officially defined by the United Nations as a “common heritage of mankind”, the Atlantic is not directly governed by any state power and is, starting 200 nautical miles from the coast of a country, accepted as international waters which belongs to no one and everyone equally (Proelss et al. 2017). Legally, this is backed up by the Law of the Seas. However, the Law of the Seas also draws borders and divides the oceans into four zones, thereby conferring governmental rights over parts of the Atlantic (Proelss et al. 2017). That way, the Atlantic Ocean is treated like an unbound body of water and as part of a sovereign state alike. Hence, it is a hybrid in its territorial form, as its dual state of being creates a territory of an in-between.

Danticat reflects on this hybridity of the Atlantic Ocean in “Children of the Sea”. The short story draws the reader into a refugee narrative that is about the migration of thirty-six Haitian people on a little boat across the Atlantic Ocean. On their way from Haiti to the United States, the ocean as they know it - a body of water that separates and connects at the same time - transforms into water and land alike. It is this territory that becomes dual, an in-between and a hybrid through the journey of crossing borders. At first Danticat maps the Atlantic Ocean as a body of water (“*I don’t know how long we will be at sea. ... At times I wonder if there is really land on the other side of the sea*” (Danticat 1995:3, 15), but then, however, she transforms the body

of water into a temporary and ideological territory of land. For an undefined time the boat becomes a home while the Atlantic transforms into an ideological land inhabited by this home and its thirty-six people. On this home/land songs are sung, stories are told (“*some of the women sing and tell stories to each other*” (Danticat 1995: 9)), dreams are dreamt (“*I keep on daydreaming*” (Danticat 1995: 11)), children are born (“*Célianne had a girl baby*” (Danticat 1995: 20)), and death is encountered (“*She threw [the baby] overboard*” (Danticat 1995: 26)). On these simple terms, life on the home/land is simulating an every-day life in a nation-state. It is “*ordinary in [its] extraordinariness*” (Sharpe 2016: 172).

Due to the hybridity of the home/land, the reader gets to experience how the in-between status of the ocean also transforms the status of the refugee characters at sea. Their identity starts to transform into a hybrid one as the path of migration starts to question their Haitian identity. As Hall claims, “*in the diaspora situation identities become multiple*” (Hall 1999: 2). From there on life “*is a matter of becoming and being*” (Hall 1999: 225). The refugees stand in-between being Haitian and becoming a citizen of the unnamed boat (home) of the undefined territory (land). They “*live in the in-between space and locale of cultural displacement*” (Clitandre 2018: 10), “*Sometimes, I forget where I am*” (Danticat 1969: 11) writes the protagonist in his diary, unable to locate himself in the vast ocean which has “*no borderlines on the sea*” as the “*whole thing looks like one*” (Danticat 1995: 6). Unable to ground, he finds himself in a state of transition. In the end, the protagonist imagines that the boat is “*sailing for Africa*” (Danticat 1995: 14) only to conclude that “*yes, I am finally an African*” (Danticat 1995: 11). As Hall claims, “*everyone in the Caribbean ... must sooner or later come to terms with this African presence*” (Hall 1999: 231). By connecting and identifying himself and his journey with that of his ancestors, the protagonist sees himself and his flight as an extension of the African slaves of the Middle Passage. The history of transatlantic slavery becomes an analogy to his story. This identification represents a life lived in the wake of slavery, in which the sea, the in-between space, represents what Sharpe calls “the ‘forgotten space’ of blackness” (Sharpe 2016: 29), while the protagonist finds himself in “*the position of the unthought*” (Sharpe 2016: 30). Through these identifications, Danticat relocates the silenced histories of the ancestors into the present experience of displacement. By interrelating these two experiences, she politicises recurring topics of “*non-belonging and ... liminality*” (Clitandre 2018:10) in the contemporary context of displacement, exile and migration. In view of that, Danticat comments on the lives lived in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade by showing that they are “*multilocal, multihistorical [and] multinational*” (Clitandre 2018: 2). Adding to that, Danticat maps the ocean by showing how history and the present flow into each other “*to mark the ways the slave and Black occupy*” (Sharpe 2016: 30). This clash of past and present shows that the wake is and has been existing at all times in which “*being Black has always been [the] excess*” (Sharpe 2016: 30) which resulted and results for many in migration, (self-)exile, displacement, and even death. Thus, the protagono-

nist's only place that belongs to him, the only territory that will stay with him is his own body, as anything else drowns in uncertainty.

For Haitians, migrating by boat the wake unfolds itself around the late 1900's as a gateway to death. "Children of the Sea" is based on these real life events. Similar to the male protagonist, Haitian refugees who migrated by water were referred to as 'boat-people'. A term coined by "*anti-immigrant sentiments ... in the 1980's ... [which] developed through media coverage of Haitian emigrants entering the United States by boat*" (Clitandre 2018: 43). Due to changes in the immigration policies in the 1960's in the Bahamas, many Haitians started to migrate to South Florida, taking on a "*700-mile sea journey ... in small rickety boats*" (Clitandre 2018: 44). The arrival of 40,000 Haitians on the shores of Florida "*led to the idea of Haiti as an unsafe place*" (Ibid.). Indeed, "*deepening poverty, famine, progressive deforestation, violence, instability, and human rights violations ... during the 1970's and 1980's*" (Ibid.) gave reason for Haitians to leave their country. Compared to Cuban migrants who were, due to the Castro regime and thus the United State's anticommunist sentiments, welcomed as political asylum seekers, Haitian's asylum plea was not accepted – their flight from the Duvalier dictatorship was classified as economic (Ibid.).

Subsequently, "*Ronald Reagan ... established a harsh policy of interdiction at sea. Between 1981 and 1990 ... 22,940 Haitians were interdicted at sea, and only 11 Haitians qualified for asylum*" (Clitandre 2018: 45). Many died along their way to the USA, just like the male protagonist of "Children of the Sea". In the short story the protagonist identifies with the dead, which foreshadows the dangers of the journey across the Atlantic as a geographic, legal, and historical space. Just like the real events of the 1980's, the protagonist on the rickety boat passes through the same hardships. Through stories told by older passengers the protagonist learns that being Haitian leaves him predestined for experiencing racial violence. His sunburned skin will not mistake him for a Cuban (Danticat 1995: 8), leaving him with little chances to seek political asylum in the US. Later on he learns that the Bahamas "*treat Haitians like dogs ... even though [they] had the same African fathers who probably crossed these same seas together*" (Danticat 1995: 14). The ethnic differences among the Caribbean Islands create the problem of the colour line, which draws a merciless line between life and death. Being Haitian means being 'othered'. Being Haitian for the protagonist means to be in ultimate danger as he has "*no state or nation to protect [him and is] with no citizenship bound to be respected*" (Sharpe 2016: 22). Being Haitian means having no identity on the sea, but to be Black. To be Black means to be African and to be African eventually means to be a 'non/being' and thus stateless. Facing death, his only option is to "*position [himself] in the modalities of Black life lived in, as, under, despite Black death: to think and be and act from there*" (Sharpe 2016: 22). From being positioned by "*the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power*" (Hall 1990: 225), he now has to position himself to gain a sense of identity within the realms of the present in-between – the wake – to overcome the status of the "*non-being*" (Sharpe 2016: 15). This act of resilience is a fundamental part of Haitian cultural identity.

Connecting the Floating Homeland and the Diaspora

From starting the most successful slave revolt in the history of mankind, to being reduced to “*the poorest nation of the western hemisphere*” (Munro 2007: 247), to fighting the problem of the colour line, and harbouring an undiplomatic relationship and history with its neighbouring countries, most importantly with the Dominican Republic, Haitians have developed a strong sense of community and cultural identity as they live and have lived in the wake of traumatic events. “*Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of [their] everyday Black existence*” (Sharpe 2016: 15). In consequence to the wake, Haitians have drawn close ties to each other as a people which is conveyed in the concept of the floating homeland – a concept of Haitian place-making and belongingness. This concept represents an imagined, ideological part of Haiti. In *The Butterfly’s Way* Danticat explains: “*Haiti has nine geographical departments and the tenth was the floating homeland ... which joined all Haitians living in the diaspora*” (Danticat 2011: xiv). By annexing the floating homeland to the sovereign state of Haiti, Danticat transforms the floating homeland into an ideological nation-state, and by distinguishing the inhabitants of the floating homeland as a specifically Haitian community, Danticat gives the Haitian diaspora a cultural identity. In relation to “Children of the Sea”, this means that the literally speaking ‘floating’ home/land on which the protagonist lives is identified by the Haitians on the motherland as a fundamental part of the Haitian nation-state, while the thirty-six migrants are claimed as Haitians. Thus, the ‘floating homeland’ gives voice to a concept of ideological place-making in transatlantic territory. Furthermore, being/becoming the diaspora is positioned by the Haitian people on the motherland Haiti. It is a way of creating a sense of belongingness for the displaced and exiled.

“In Benedict Anderson’s understanding ... the nation, as imagined community, is part of an organised cultural system that relies on a national imaginary. Such an imaginary produces and reproduces set images and practises tied to a particular understanding to ... unifying the nation and its people through fixed ideas of cultural roots, land, home, blood ties, fraternity, and kinship” (Clitandre 2018: 8)

Taking Anderson’s (1983) concept as a starting point, the concept of the floating homeland “*allows for the reconsideration of the boundaries of the nation and the breakdown of binaries such as inside/outside, self/other, [and] centre/periphery*” (Clitandre 2018: 10), which makes the identification and unification with Haiti and with being Haitian fluid. The refugees are no longer bound to “*the sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return*” (Hall 1999: 235), to the contrary, “*the diaspora experience is defined ... by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity*” (Hall 1999: 325) Through displacement the protagonist has become a subject of the diaspora and thus stands in a space, which “*Homi Bhabha describes ... as the ‘third space’*” (Clitandre 2018:10). This ‘third space’ is what Haitians have defined as diaspora. This term is specifically used in Creole

which writes diaspora with the letter y. Danticat uses the term dyaspora “*to identify the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in many countries of the world*” (Danticat 2011: xvi), while the term ‘country’ here is broadly defined, including imagined/ideological communities.

“Danticat “organize[s] diaspora as a collective unit ... that can contain ... national and diasporic histories, as well as old and new narratives of homeland and articulations of home as ... geographical spaces that can be mapped and symbolic places that are imagined” (Clitandre 2018:14)

Nevertheless, the term *dyaspora* is also used as a way of self-description and self-positioning of the Haitian immigrant community “*to invoke a new collective identity and political consciousness that muddled traditional notions of nation and ethnicity*” (Clitandre 2018: 21). Especially in the USA, the Haitian dyaspora “*claim this position to articulate the many issues they face collectively as a marginalised group*” (ibid.). In that sense, dyaspora also bears the notion of caring and cohesion. Throughout history Haitians have created a way of caring for their people across borders, giving the dyaspora a sense of self. These strong ties help the dyaspora to “*position [themselves] within the narratives of the past*” (Hall 1999: 225), as well as the present. In conclusion, and literally speaking, the protagonist at sea finds himself on a ‘floating’ home/land, while he has become the dyaspora of Haiti as he is positioned by the Haitians on the motherland. In view of that he now is able to position himself and frame his journey according to being/becoming a part of the dyaspora.

Conclusion

“Children of the Sea” tells a story of Haitian place-making in the midst of migration and displacement. This paper draws on Sharpe’s the wake, Hall’s notion of diaspora and hybridity, and Danticat’s concept of the floating homeland to locate Black lives in the wake of present global imperialism. This notion is furthered by drawing parallels to the Middle Passage and connecting it with the present day diaspora experience. Haitian’s fall victim of “*national violence[s that] determin[e] transnational voyages*” (DeLourghrey 2001: 45) and thus become modern day refugees. The conjunction with the Middle Passage aims to make the past visible in the present, while showing that Black lives are still oppressed and unfree, as they still share the same space. This space is an in-between space, identified by Sharpe as the wake.

In “Children of the Sea” this space is embodied by the Atlantic Ocean. The space/place that the Atlantic Ocean marks is in constant transformation. It is space, place and home, as well as water and land, as well as history - it is all simultaneously. While the sea also symbolises a place of migration and crossings, its history of the Middle Passage opens up a room of violence that lingers on the waters and impacts the male protagonist’s flight, as it seems to him that history repeats itself. The short

story tells the reader about refugee life's on the path from Haiti to the USA – a life that is mostly lived in invisibility. It aims to show how migration transforms identity and how new identities emerge due to that.

One concept that is fundamental in place-making and identity construction is the floating homeland that transforms former Haitian citizens into that of the Haitian diaspora. The concept of the diaspora opens up the violent space of history on sea – the Middle Passage. The male protagonist shares the same fate as some of his forefathers and foremothers who were deported from West African countries into the New World – he tragically dies at sea. While the fate of the Black person on the waters – whether slave or refugee – mostly ends deadly, Danticat finds a solution for the dead to live on through her publication of *Krik? Krak!* which is a way of place-making too. It manifests stories into the written word to keep them in the present. All in all, this paper visualises the transformative nature of spaces in the Haitian diaspora context.

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The lived experiences of diverse migrant groups in three European cities – assessed through community mapping and community reporting

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Introduction

European societies are becoming increasingly diverse; immigration itself is a source of diversity. International immigrants (23.7 million non-EU citizens living in the EU on 1 January 2021, 5,3% of European inhabitants), together with the groups covered by the term “European citizens with migrant backgrounds” (13.7 million union citizens living in one of the EU Member States) now form a social group characterized by a larger diversity than ever in Europe (Eurostat 2022). The geographical spread of immigrants among countries and types of areas is unbalanced, and the political approaches of countries and areas for the integration of immigrants and people with migrant backgrounds are also various. The European Commission has been adapting its immigration policies and priorities on the different levels and segments of European societies by expressing the need for an integrated approach of inclusion, and the active involvement of immigrants and citizens with migrant backgrounds in policy-making and integrative actions. For example, the Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 (EC 2020) highlights new elements:

- 1) reconsidering the diversity of migrant groups by extending the target group to “migrants and citizens with immigrant backgrounds”, and by expressing their strong added value to local societies;
- 2) identifying 4 fields of intervention for integration policies (education, housing, services and employment);
- 3) adapting policies in light of the most recent challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its direct effects on the target groups;
- 4) acknowledging the diversity of localities, in which migrant inclusion policies need to become a priority of local policies.

In answer to this EU Agenda, the transnational project “INCLUDEDATE – Educating for Inclusion” promotes inclusive societies by empowering migrant associations in Europe and supporting public actors in their policy-making for inclusive, multicultural cities. INCLUDEDATE will utilize tools of community reporting and storytelling to boost community voices and learn about the experiences of migrants living in Budapest, Copenhagen, Gdynia, Palermo, and Berlin. Now that the stories have been collected, the project will seek to mirror themes and issues addressed by the residents of migrant backgrounds back to stakeholders on local, national, and European Level. By the end of the project, each participating city will produce action plans and recommendations for more inclusive policies in all participating cities. INCLUDEDATE aims to support:

- **Migrants and migrant associations** in making an impact on their own future
- **Cities and other municipalities** to integrate migrant needs into policies
- **NGOs** in collecting and spreading the needs from people of diverse backgrounds to institutions

INCLUDEDATE is a European project in the field of Adult education supported with the funds of the Erasmus Plus programme and implemented by two municipalities and five European NGOs, including two migrant associations:

- CRN - Comparative Research Network e.V. (Germany)
- Per Esemplio (Italy)
- Crossing Borders (Denmark)
- Polnischer Sozialrat e.V (Germany)
- Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej w Gdyni (Poland)
- ALDA - ASSOCIATION DES AGENCES DE LA DEMOCRATIE LOCALE (France)
- Főváros IX. Kerület Ferencváros Önkormányzata (Hungary)

Based on the views and opinions shared by 10 participants of migrant background living in each city, insight reports have been created by the consortium members. Three of these reports have been edited and contextualised for this article in order to reflect the EU’s agenda for inclusion of diverse migrant groups.

Methods

Community Reporting, developed by Peoples Voice Media (PVM), combines the representation of different voices and experiences in an accessible way. Community Reporting uses technology-based peer-to-peer approaches to support people to tell their own stories, and connect with groups and organisations, with the intention to use the insights to make positive social change. According to PVM Community Reporting has three distinct components – story gathering, story curation and story

mobilisation – based around the Cynefin decision-making framework for complex environments (Snowden 1999; PVM 2020). The method in the present study utilises story gathering and curation – or in other words short narrations and their analysis through the so-called “sensemaking”-process.

In the community reporting events, we invited residents of selected neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, Palermo and Gdynia to share their experiences of living there through short uninterrupted narrations as response to the broad question “What is life like where you live?”. The narrations are exchanged and analysed in pairs of participants. So the community members interview each other rather than the researcher as an outside entity. The narrations are recorded and analysed utilizing standardised sensemaking templates by the participants themselves. Putting the migrant participants in charge of extracting meaning from the stories of their peers is beneficial for the research process and the produced results on several levels:

- Members of the same community contextualise their analysis in the shared life worlds, in this case that of migrants living in the same city or neighbourhood.
- The results are not filtered through the assumptions of an interviewer from outside of the community.
- The participants trust members of their own community more than a researcher seen as an outsider.
- It reduces the language barrier that usually prevents migrants of diverse background in the same study, because we only need a pair of same language speakers to conduct the interviews and the sensemaking with each other. The resulting sensemaking sheet can easily be translated, if neither participant is able to fill it out in English or domestic language. The recorded narrations serve as a backup to check the results.

In these ways, community reporting, as a form of participatory needs assessment, makes essential contributions towards inclusive research methodologies for vulnerable groups. Moreover, due to its dialogue format, community reporting can already open the door to discussing measures and policies that answer to issues in the shared experience – as needed for the next step of the INCLUDE project process towards inclusive city policies.

While storytelling is powerful in letting the interviewed citizens set the focus, we needed to ensure to gain insights into the four policy areas of education, housing, services, and employment. For this purpose, we combined community reporting with community mapping, which we based on the map me happy approach (<https://mapmehappy.com/en/>). Here we invited the participants of migrant backgrounds to share places, facilities, and institutions from education, housing, services and employment they had positive and negative experiences within their neighbour-

hoods or cities. So rather than reproducing community reporting as developed by PVM and *mapmehappy* as developed by Anastasiya Ponomaryova, Petronela Bordeianu and Niels Grootjans the INCLUDE consortium has merged the two approaches to combine the open and inclusive benefits of storytelling with the visualising strength of community mapping to gain insights into the lived experiences of migrant residents.

By adopting this new approach, we were able to conduct a narration based, yet topic focused needs assessment – enabling us to hear the marginalised voices of migrant communities in an immediate way. In the project INCLUDE, these results are the basis for wider dialogues between different stakeholders (i.e. citizens, including those from migrant communities, professionals, local governance and policy-makers) to effect change towards inclusive European cities.

We here present the results of this community mapping and reporting in three very distinct European cities, Copenhagen, Denmark; Gdynia, Poland and Palermo, Italy. They are an extract and adaptation from the forthcoming INCLUDE Publication Migrant Voices from European Cities, that will map and analyse the structure of local communities, the role of migrant groups within the local society, the specific needs, capacities, expectations, and challenges these groups are facing when living in the local areas.

Case 1: Gdynia, Poland

The lived experiences of diverse migrant groups

Description of the community

The number of migrants currently living in Gdynia is difficult to estimate due to the lack of an exhaustive and up-to-date register. The data is scattered amongst various municipal institutions, and some people residing in the country or city do not legalize their stay. Based on official data regarding the number of declarations of intention to entrust work to a foreigner and work permits in Gdynia, it can be estimated that in 2021 the number of migrants in Gdynia was no less than 15,000 (per 244,000 inhabitants). The citizens of Ukraine were the dominating migrant group amongst them. The turning point – in terms of the number of migrants staying both in Poland and in Gdynia – was the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. According to the data of the Border Guard, in mid-October 2022 the border with Poland was crossed by 6.93 million Ukrainian citizens fleeing the hostilities. In the history of contemporary Poland, no situation of a migration crisis on such a large scale, or one that was caused by armed conflict in a neighbouring country, has occurred so far. Many cities in Poland faced the refugee crisis. Gdynia, as an important communication point in the north of the country (ferry connec-

tions with Scandinavia, numerous railway connections and the agglomeration nature of the Tri-City) was among the main Polish cities of the influx of Ukrainian citizens. It is estimated that no less than 25 thousand people in the refugee crisis came to Gdynia and the total number of migrants residing in the city has more than doubled over several months.

Community mapping

A diverse group of immigrants participated in our community mapping workshops. The group was purposefully selected to showcase a broader cross-section of the migration experience. Workshop participants lived in both small and large cities in their homelands. Some of the surveyed people lived in other places in Poland before they came to Gdynia. The most interesting insights are within their experiences and opinion on why they wanted to arrange their life in the city of the "sea and dreams". The group consisted of people who have lived in Poland for periods ranging from several months to 8 years (including two people from Ukraine - war refugees who arrived after February 24). The age profile of the group is 25-60 years old, they are people of various origins (Ukraine, Belarus, Romania). 10 people took part in the mapping workshop.

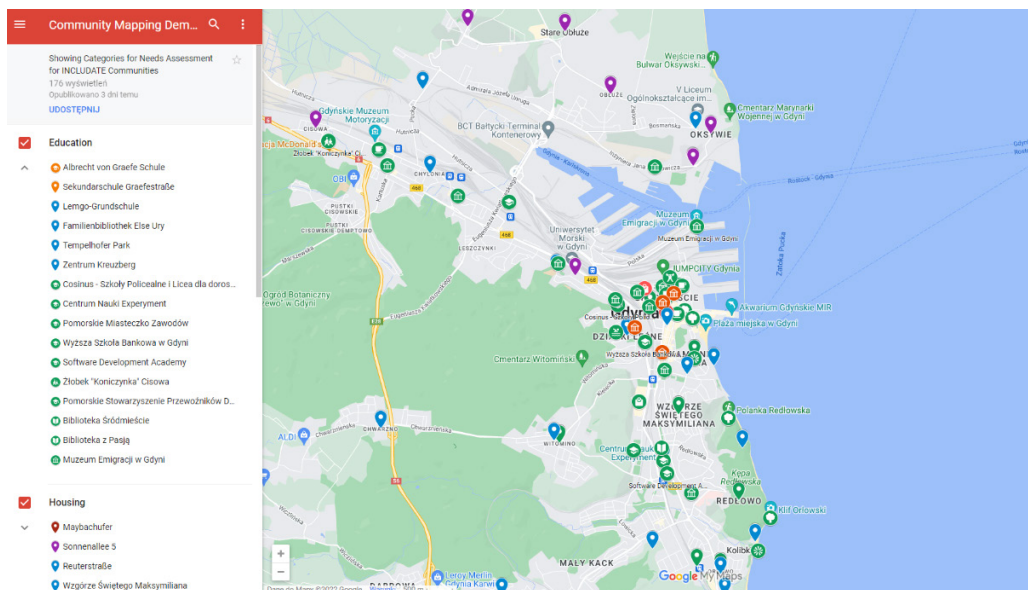
Mapping workshop participants indicated positive and negative places in Gdynia in: education, housing, public and private services, city administration. The map was complemented by the so-called happy places. In education, 10 places were indicated. Their diverse nature is noteworthy. The respondents indicated both entities from the public and private sectors, with a different profile of activity (care and education, educational and cultural or recreational, or aimed at developing interests or improving professional competences), having a narrow offer (such as specific vocational courses) or broadly profiled (such as libraries), as well as addressed to various groups of recipients (from infants to adults, from people looking for a free time offer to people looking for a specific type of course or training). Most of the opinions emphasized: high quality of the offer, commitment of the staff or personnel, friendly atmosphere of places. One negative comment was noted regarding the quality of the course and its price.

In housing, a total of 30 places were indicated (10 places each of the respondents' current residence and places where they would like and would not like to live). Positive assessments most often emphasized: convenient location or good public transport to the city centre or a workplace, the proximity and accessibility of public facilities (such as schools, kindergartens, shops, medical centres) or recreational and sports places (such as bicycle or walking paths, parks, swimming pools and gyms). Negative opinions were associated with two main issues: problems with finding a flat for rent and high rents. Most places that the respondents indicated as the ones they would like to live in have a common denominator: the location in the city cen-

tre or its close proximity, and the attractiveness of the area in terms of tourism and recreation (pier, parks, sea, boulevard). The assessments of places where the respondents would not like to live in reflect the above - most often they concern districts located relatively far from the centre, but near the industrial and shipbuilding area of the city, with the dominance of dense or compact architectural development.

10 places indicated as public services are most often recreational ones (a pier and a cliff in a seaside district, parks, clearings) and/or open social spaces (the so-called Gdynia neighbourhood centres, i.e. local community meeting places, intended for all residents, regardless of age or place residence, for establishing relationships or developing interests). All of them were rated positively. The same places of recreation (green areas, boulevards, bicycles and walking paths) were most often indicated as a happy place. Private services are specific only to services provided by sports facilities (gym, swimming pool), catering facilities (restaurants, cafés, pubs) or commercial facilities (shopping centers, local stores). With the exception of two, all places were rated positively. In the administration, there are differences in opinions (six positives, four negatives) resulting from the assessment of the time and clarity of administrative procedures, feedback, and customer service. The more unclear - in the opinion of the respondents - the procedures, the longer the waiting time for a decision, the less complete feedback, the lower the level of empathy or individualization of the official's approach, the lower the overall rating of a given institution.

Figure 1. The interactive map used in Gdynia



The mapping assessments indicate that respondents use a wide range of public and private services, have good knowledge about the city's available resources, and use them according to their own needs or interests. There were more positive than negative opinions which applies to all analysed categories. A positive aspect that was often emphasized, both in housing and public services, was the availability of recreational and sports areas/facilities and places to develop interests. The biggest polarization of opinions can be seen in the administration, which is largely determined by the assessment of the clarity and time of procedures and customer service. Most of the respondents also considered high rental prices and problems with finding housing to be a barrier.

Community Reporting: Insight Report

The report analyses the experiences of immigrants in their daily life in the place where they live. The report includes stories of immigrants from all walks of life, the group is slightly different from the mapping group. The group consists of 10 people and includes people from Ukraine, Belarus, and Romania (including 2 war refugees from Ukraine who came to Poland after February 24). The age profile of the group is 25-60 years old. Workshop participants lived in both small and large cities in their homelands. Some of the respondents lived in other places in Poland before coming to Gdynia. Some migrants have been forced to leave their country due to political persecution or war and do not feel safe. They are happy to share their stories, but for security reasons, some of them have only agreed to the audio recording.

For some migrants, the value of migration and residence outside the home country is equated with a sense of security understood as no physical threat. *"I am happy that my family is safe"*. In this sense, migration is associated with securing a fundamental need, which is the protection of health or life, on which the further process of integration with the local community will take place and further social and living needs related to housing, employment, or education will be satisfied. It is worth mentioning that the above applies not only to war refugees but also to those foreigners who decided to leave their home country due to political reasons.

The kindness and positive attitude of the locals have an impact on the process of integration of migrants into the local community and social inclusion. It can be one of the factors of assimilation, preventing "ghettoization" or the emergence of hermetic migrant groups, closed in their own cultural or language circle. *"In general, I like Poland and Poles as a whole and I like the city in which I live. I believe that Gdynia is a city where you can find great opportunities when it comes to work and self-realization"*.

It can also overcome negative perceptions about a given country or nation. *"Having lived in Poland for some time, I changed my opinion about this country for the better"*. Positive daily social contacts between migrants and the natives, including employees of public institutions, have an influence on a positive self-assessment of the life situation

and the willingness of migrants to use the city's resources, including institutional ones. *"I came to Gdynia by accident, I was going to Gdansk [but I stayed] (...) I would not change my place of residence". „I am grateful to Poland and Gdynia for having warmly and well welcomed me and my family".* Similarly, negative experiences in interpersonal contacts, including with employees of public institutions, may influence a reluctance to make institutional contact and/or to fully participate in the life of the local community.

"Lots of immigrants face the fact that they do not know where to go and what to do in the offices": Language and administration procedures difficulties

Difficulty in communicating and understanding the function or specific of public institutions are the most frequently defined barriers at the initial stage of migration. In the first aspect, it is related to the limited possibilities of communication due to the existing language barrier that hinders the daily contacts of migrants with the native speakers. This barrier also has a significant impact on the accessibility of migrants to the open labour market, as detailed in the following quote:

"When moving to Gdynia, I encountered a language barrier. It was very hard for me (...). When I addressed the offices, no one spoke English well enough of the officials to explain everything to me"; "No free translation of documents possible".

Difficulties in understanding the function or specificity of public institutions is related to the lack of sufficient knowledge of what procedures should be completed in the matter of legalization of stay or employment ("what to do"), as well as to which institution to go to and where ("where to go") "The procedures are not clear [to a lots of immigrants]. Lack of complete information in administrative units - what procedures must apply to immigrants who come". Polish administrative procedures were often considered lengthy or unclear:

"There is a lot of bureaucracy in the offices and it takes a long time to issue some documents or decisions". "It takes a long time to settle formal matters and residence cards. Bureaucracy."

The dispersion of competences and scopes of activities of public institutions were found to be particularly difficult.

"It would be very useful for a guide for foreigners in an online version and in various languages to know what formalities need to be done step by step: get a PESEL [polish identification number], make a registration, etc."

Access to and understanding the public health care system were also hard for participants.

"There are very long queues to see the doctors"; "It's hard to see a doctor. There is a very long waiting period."

Migrants have difficulty finding employment on their own and have limited access to the labour market. The above should be mainly related to the language barrier, which forces the necessity to look for a job through private employment agencies. The result of this is usually that migrants end up in precarious working conditions: They accept low-paid employment, forcing them to take several jobs at the same time or to work overtime.

“People who come, migrants are forced to work a lot, even 12 hours a day.”

“To start work, I would have to spend 12-14 hours a day for it. My earnings are not enough”.

The importance of this issue should also be seen in the context of the migrants' independence in the country of settlement, including the possibility of meeting the basic social and living needs, such as renting a flat. It is worth to notice that high rental prices and problems with finding a flat were identified as one of the main barriers in community mapping.

“We are renting the house, but we have already bought our own. It is very difficult to buy a flat”. “I would like to buy my own apartment because I am currently renting it and unfortunately renting is expensive”.

Key findings

The key learnings from the stories are:

- **Social Support:** In the process of social integration, kindness and a positive attitude from the natives are very important. Positive experiences in everyday contacts with the natives, also with employees of public institutions, have an influence on the migrants' willingness to establish institutional contact and/or participate in the life of the local community.
- **First Steps:** In the first stage of migration, the language barrier and understanding of administrative procedures in public institutions in the country of residence are the most difficult.
- **Job Difficulties:** Due to the lack of knowledge about the rules of functioning of public institutions and legal procedures as well as the language barrier, migrants often take up employment through private.

Case 2: Palermo, Italy

The lived experiences of diverse migrant groups

Description of the community

Palermo is the main and biggest city of the Italian island Sicily and counts about 670 thousand people, out of which over 25 thousand are foreigners. People living in Palermo come from about 132 countries, but the biggest groups are from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Romania, Ghana, Philippines and Tunisia. According to a study conducted in 2019 by the Municipality of Palermo, the majority of migrants are between 30 and 44 years old (about 33,5%), while young people up to the age of 17 account for 19% and people between 18 and 29 for 13,8% of the total. However, compared to other Italian regions, Sicily is the one that has the most unaccompanied minors (29% in Italy). Looking at gender, the percent changes depending on the country of origin: People coming from Bangladesh, Ghana, Gambia and Mali are predominantly males, while for example from Romania, Poland or Ukraine it is mostly a women-based community. While instead Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Philippines are a lot more balanced between males and females, because these are mostly families.

Considering the richness of cultures and migrant communities that exist in Palermo, we conducted two mapping and reporting workshops with different types of groups; one in July, which involved younger migrants, and one in October with a more family-oriented group. The workshop in July involved six participants, all between the age of 16 and 30 and who are currently either studying, working or volunteering. They have been in Palermo for varying amounts of time, some of them have been in Palermo for several years, while others have only been there for a few months. They come from Gambia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Guinea, and Ukraine. While the second workshop involved a different demographic group, with five Tunisian women who are all mothers bringing up their children in Palermo.

Community Mapping

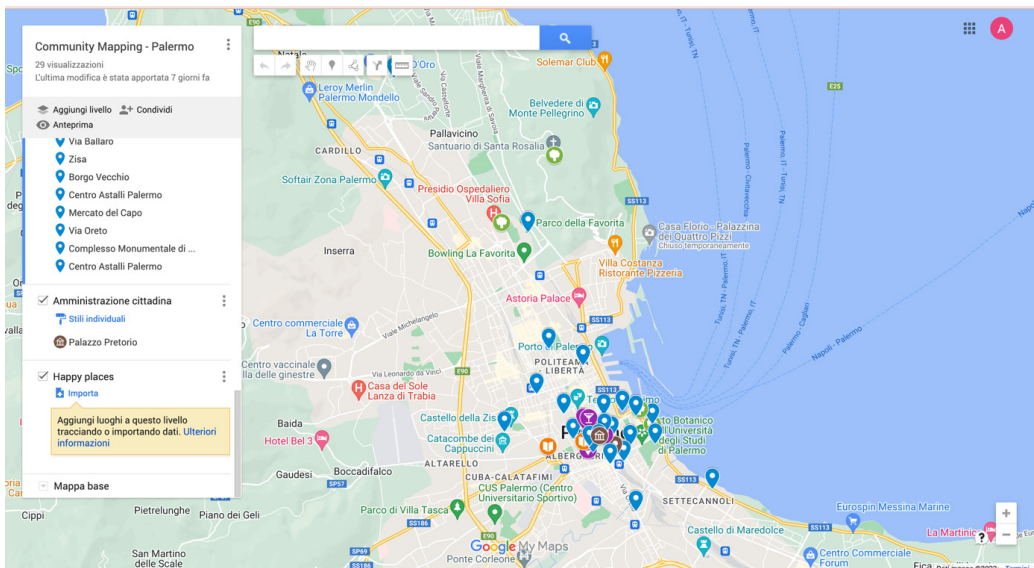
Regardless of the age differences, all participants spent most of their time in the historic city centre of Palermo. The places the participants identified more easily are public spaces, which are mostly parks, beaches, squares or streets that are free and accessible to all, but also some private services, most are restaurants or bars. Some “positive places”, that have been mentioned by all or most of all participants are:

- Foro Italico (park): because it's a place where people of all ages can go and play sports, socialise, children can play, etc. It is a very popular place among migrants;

- **Moltivolti:** co-working ethnic restaurant; it is an important meeting space and point of reference for people living in Palermo (migrants but also Palermitans, especially living in the Ballarò neighbourhood).

“Negative” spaces have mostly been identified with institutions that deal with their documents and permits, such as the civil registry office and the immigration office. It makes them feel more precarious, when they have to wait for a long time to get the necessary documents. In addition, they are not always treated well in these bureaucratic places and the language barrier can be a problem.

Figure 2: Mapping Palermo



Education places are part of “happy places”, such as Itastra or Santa Chiara, because they are places in which they not only learn Italian, but can also meet new people, socialise, and be helped with matters that go beyond the language. As for housing, participants mentioned that the Ballarò neighbourhood (considered a working-class area) has become too expensive for the people that live there, due to “tourists prices” which are higher. In the other areas of Palermo (Zisa, Borgo Vecchio, Zen) it is not always easy to live: They are cheaper, but are further away from the centre and the socio-economic conditions are not good.

Community Reporting

“This is our country too”: life in Palermo through the eyes of migrants

4 main themes emerged from stories of the participants, which relate to the difficulty for migrants to find jobs, the lack of attention by the state and the municipality to second generations and to public spaces, and the importance to valorise Palermo’s multiculturalism.

“It is difficult to find a job even if you have higher education”: lack of security and consistency

Participants reflected on the challenges of finding a stable and suitable job. They often face more difficulties than natives due to the language barrier and also because migrants often have to redo their studies once they arrive in Palermo, so they will enter the job market later than their peers from Palermo.

“The first I would do is to help migrants to find job. Some have studied at university and have degrees but they still struggle to find jobs”.

Another challenge is that migrants might not know where to go or where to find the right information about jobs or other formative opportunities. Therefore, there is a need for better and more accessible information.

“Second generations must keep their roots, but build their new culture on top of them”: lack of attention to second generation children!

Participants discussed the need for more activities and projects that specifically target second generation children, who are often neglected both by the Italian government and society. Second generation children need to combine the roots of their parents’ culture with Palermo’s culture, which is not always an easy task.

“My son will not be like me and he will not be fully Italian either, but he will be a mix of the two and he needs to grow and embrace both of his cultures”.

At school, some children are picked on due to their origins and participants ask for more accountability from schools when such events occur and for a better intercultural education for young people.

“Palermo should have more care and look after the public spaces in the city”: need for better maintenance of public spaces.

It is important that green spaces in the city are taken better care of. These public places are very valuable because they can be sites of relaxation and leisure for families, a meeting place for friends, and they are not taken care of as much as they should be. Participants also highlighted the importance of opening more meeting points

such as co-working areas, parks, and other spaces, because shared spaces can help people to better integrate and actively participate in Palermo's social and civic life.

"Palermo knows what multiculturalism is, but needs to valorise it more" – The history of multiculturalism in Palermo is seen an advantage for migrants integration today.

Participants appreciate the rich history of Palermo, a city that has always been inhabited by communities from different places and cultures.

"I was positively surprised to see the normalisation of cultures that come from different places but live here".

Palermo gives the opportunity to meet and get to know other people from many different cultures. The fact that there are many communities that enrich the socio-economic fabric of Palermo's society is felt by the participants and due to Palermo's multiculturalism, many participants feel that integration is not too difficult.

"For me Palermo is comfortable, it is relevantly easy to integrate. In the beginning it can be a little bit hard, because of the language, but slowly you will learn".

However, they recognise the fact that it is not always an easy journey to feel and be seen as a *"Palermitan"* by others, so integration and multiculturalism needs to be encouraged.

Key findings

From participants stories 4 main themes emerged, which relate to the difficulty for migrants to find jobs, the lack of attention the state and the municipality pay to second generations and to public spaces, and the importance to valorise Palermo's multiculturalism. Participants reflected on the challenges of finding a stable and suitable job. They often face more difficulties than natives due to the language barrier and also because migrants often have to redo their studies once they arrive in Palermo, so they will enter the job market later than their peers from Palermo. Another challenge is that migrants might not know where to go or where to find the right information about jobs or other formative opportunities. Therefore, there is a need for better and more accessible information.

Participants also discussed the need for more activities and projects that specifically target second generation children, who are often neglected both by the Italian government and society. Second generation children need to combine the roots of their parents' culture with Palermo's culture, which is not always an easy task.

The key findings from the stories are:

- Job difficulties: migrants feel that they are disadvantaged compared to others because even if they have studied and degrees/certificates it is still difficult for them to find stable and appropriate jobs;
- Need for more attention to second generations: second generation children are neglected and migrants demand that they should be cared for more, as they will be the future of the country as much as native Italians;
- Lack of maintenance to public spaces: public spaces are of vital importance for the wellbeing of people and for their active engagement to the city's civic and social life;
- Palermo's multiculturalism: participants think Palermo is at a good starting point because it has embraced many migrant communities and cultures through its history, but there is definitely space for improvement of integration processes.

Case 3: Copenhagen, Denmark

The lived experiences of diverse migrant groups

Description of the community

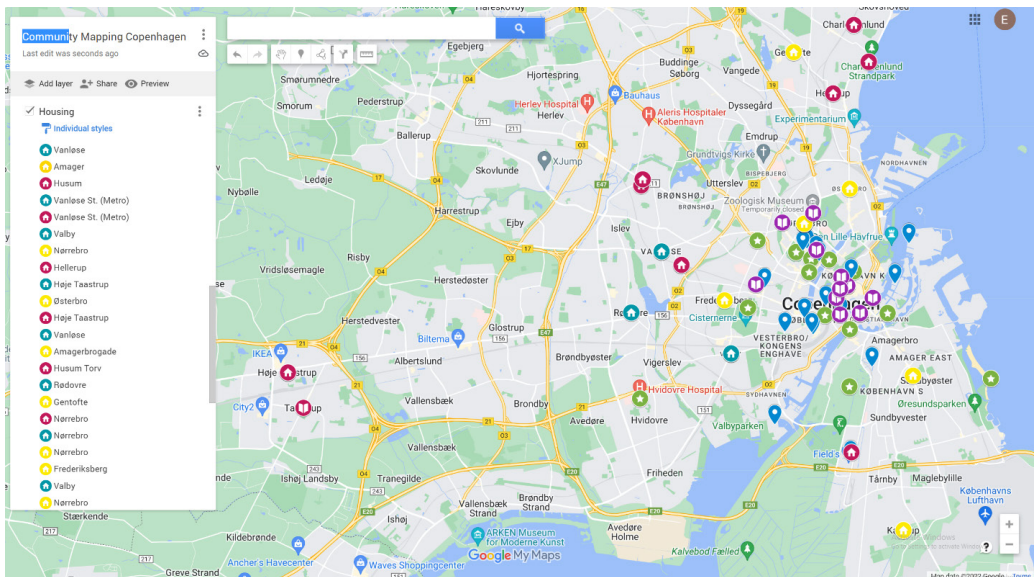
Copenhagen is the capital city of Denmark, and out of the country's 5.8 million inhabitants, roughly 1.3 million people call Copenhagen home. This number includes people from a variety of different backgrounds, which will serve as the main topic that context will be provided to in the following report. Of the 1.3 million people living in Copenhagen, data from the population register of 2019 shows that 305,588 people living in Copenhagen are of migrant background. This makes up 22.9% of the total population of Copenhagen. The largest immigrant-origin groups in Copenhagen are the following, Turkey (31,340), Pakistan (21,646), Iraq (13,619), Poland (12,469), and Germany (9558). This has changed considerably in the past 40 years, in 1980 the top immigrant-origin groups were Sweden, Germany, Pakistan, Norway, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. The changes in composition of the Copenhagen migrant population stems from varying migrant streams that came from conflicts regions, streams of asylum seekers, and streams of immigrants from Eastern Europe who were able to access the Danish labour market after the increase of countries to the European Union.

Community mapping

Through Community Mapping we were able to survey a number of migrants who live in Copenhagen, we learned about the context of their lives in the city through the places that they like, dislike, and are most familiar with. The age group stemmed from the ages of 21-65, though the mode age range in the data set was 25-35. In terms of background, the following nationalities were represented in our event: Turkish, Polish, Ukrainian, Jamaican, English, German, Greek, Mauritanian, Ugandan, and Italian. None of the groups were born in Copenhagen, most of them having moved to the city in the past 10 years, and but there were a few who had been living in the city for most of their lives. There was no specific consideration in the nationalities, as the main wish of the event was for it to be open to all migrants in Copenhagen, however we did make a concerted effort to include two members of the Ukrainian migrant community to reflect the most current migration crisis impacting the country.

The main areas where challenges were revealed through the mapping were in the fields of housing, education, and private services. These challenges, as well as the positive discoveries through the mapping, will be discussed in the Mapping Results section below, using the data gained from the mapping activities.

Figure 3. Community mapping in Copenhagen



Housing was consistently the area where the most challenges presented themselves, which was expected based on the background research done before the mapping. Copenhagen is currently dealing with a high level of residential segregation of minorities, this is a topic that takes up a large portion of political rhetoric in Denmark. Typically, migrants have difficulty accessing housing in urban areas, and when they do have access to them, they largely find housing easier in social housing and disadvantaged areas. This has led to a clear trend of migrant groups living in disadvantaged areas, while the ethnically Danish population occupies the nicer areas of the city. The mapping clearly reflects this, each participant was asked to indicate the following: where they live, where they would like to live, and where they would not like to live. Out of all the participants who took part, only one of the participants lived in an area that they also would like to live in, and the rest of the participants lived either on the outskirts of the city, in rural areas, or in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Interestingly, the majority of the participants indicated that they would like to live in a neighbourhood called Nørrebro, which is known both for its proximity to the city centre, and its acceptance of migrant communities and businesses.

A challenge was identified in education, as many of the migrant communities were not aware of, or had not been able to access many educational services. The majority of answers surrounded libraries and Danish language schools, however many of the participants struggled to even think of these and stated that they didn't feel that they had as much access to educational opportunities as they would have liked. Private Services brought another challenge to light, which is the cost of living in Copenhagen. Many of the participants indicated that 'Netto', which is a low-budget supermarket chain, was a private service they are grateful for. In a similar manner, many participants noted that they only shop for clothing in charity shops, and second-hand shops, and avoid retail shops due to their high costs. When discussing the private services that they enjoyed, participants often mentioned that restaurants, bars, coffees, and theatres are a once-in-a-while occasion for them and that they can't afford them on a regular basis.

One of the big positives identified was the easy access to nature, over 50% of the locations that came up with 'Public Services' were parks, gardens, or outdoor areas with access to nature, indicating that this is something that the migrant population of Copenhagen connects to, appreciates, and makes use of.

To summarize, the community mapping process indicated that the main issues migrant communities in Copenhagen struggle with are the lack of accessible housing in good locations, a lack of knowledge of or access to educational services, and an extremely high cost associated with recreational activities, private services, restaurants, bars, and clothes shops. However, the participants thoroughly enjoy the city's public services, easy transport options, and the close connection that the city has to nature.

Community reporting

As one participant related:

“On its best day Copenhagen is heaven, and on its worst I feel like all its doors are closing on me.”

Similarly to the case of Gdynia and Palermo, the Copenhagen community report focused on the lives of people of migrant backgrounds living in the city. The report summarizes the main themes gathered from stories told by migrants between the ages of 21-65. In terms of background, the following nationalities were represented in our event: Turkish, Polish, Ukrainian, Jamaican, English, German, Greek, Mauritanian, Ugandan, and Italian. None of the group were born in Copenhagen, most of them having moved to the city in the past 10 years, and but there were a few who had been living in the city for most of their lives.

The content of the stories confirmed many of the issues that are already recognized as problems in Copenhagen, such as housing issues and segregation of migrants, but it also brought some interesting and positive new findings, such as a strong appreciation from the migrant community of the diversity and nature that Copenhagen has to offer.

Key findings

“I see people of all backgrounds and within the crowd of diversity, I feel like I truly belong.” (A sense of belonging in a crowd of diversity)

The first key theme that arose through the stories was the topic of diversity. It was mentioned by storytellers in almost every interview, and always with a sense of positivity. Although, as mentioned previously, the population of Copenhagen is 22% of migrant background, it is still not widely thought of as a diverse city. However, according to the results of the storytelling sessions, the diversity within Copenhagen is noticed and appreciated by those of migrant backgrounds. One storyteller mentioned that being able to access diverse communities made them feel understood *“I can find whatever community I want here, I can connect with people who look like myself, and with people who understand me.”* Another storyteller talked about the impact of people on their lives, and about the role that diversity plays for them *“I get attached to the people, and the ideas, of a place rather than physical objects or landmarks. I see the diversity of the ideas and of the people here, and it makes me feel more attached to Copenhagen”*. It is clear that the topics of belonging, feeling understood, and being able to relate to the people around them are important to migrants, and this is something that Copenhagen can provide.

“There is a special feeling that comes when you leave your hometown and move to

another place, you never truly feel like you belong in your new city, but you also feel like you don't belong in your hometown. But for me, living in a place with diverse people makes me feel like I at least fit in somewhere."

"Copenhagen is safe, green, and beautiful." (Copenhagen's proximity to nature)

Similar to the topic of diversity, the subject of nature came up in almost every storytelling session. The consensus is that Copenhagen is a beautiful place to live, that provides access to nature, green areas, and outdoor activities almost anywhere in the city. For many participants, this is something they had never experienced before, *"My hometown is not like this, we don't have parks and beaches that are so beautiful and clean, everything is busy and dirty, here there is nature and it feels calm and serene."* The access to nature is following Copenhagen Municipality's "Five Finger Plan", which was a map of urban planning and design that took the shape of a handprint around Copenhagen, where all the areas within the handprint had access to nature. These areas are where the majority of the population now lives, meaning there is a park, lake, or beach close to almost everyone who lives in the city. The impact of the proximity to nature can be clearly seen on the participants, one storyteller talked about the role of Copenhagen nature on her mental health *"I wasn't aware of how much I could be impacted by nature until I moved here, and then I experienced the fresh air, the trees, and how nice they are to walk in, and I realized how happy I could be here"* Another storyteller spoke about how the nature makes up for some of the negative aspects of Copenhagen living *"Things are very expensive here, very expensive, and that means I don't always have the money for activities, but when the nature is around me there is always something to do"*.

"I love this city, but I don't feel like I really live in it. I am longing to live in the 'real' Copenhagen." (Rural living for migrant communities)

Access to housing is a huge issue for migrants in Copenhagen. This largely stems from the fact that most apartments in Copenhagen are owned and lived in by Danish people, leaving apartments in less attractive and more rural areas to the migrant community. Out of the participants who told their story, only 1 of the 12 was living in a sought-after, 'popular' neighbourhood, all others were living on the outskirts of Copenhagen, or at least 30 minutes bus journey from the city center. This naturally impacts their social lives, their work lives, and their access to the benefits that the city has to offer. One storyteller talked about how much they enjoy their life in Copenhagen, but how being so far away is something that impacts their life negatively *"I think sometimes I miss a little bit the culture around the corner like a good bar or a cinema or something like that you can easily go to and don't have to bike half an hour to get there. That is what I am missing."* Another storyteller talks about how their living situation is something they feel like they have no say in. *"I didn't get to choose where I lived when I first came here, and now I am stuck in a place far away from the places I enjoy in Copenhagen. It is so difficult to find a nice apartment in a good location as a foreigner"*. The current situation of the housing

market is difficult for all Copenhagen residents, but this statement is particularly true for migrants without access to the network, connections, and intel that Danish people might be privy to. Although, many migrants enjoy their lives in Copenhagen, they sometimes feel as though they don't truly live in the city and spend a lot of time going in and out on public transport *"I want to walk out the door and see Copenhagen, not the outskirts, but the real city."*

The key findings from the stories are:

- **Diversity:** Migrants gain confidence, security, and a sense of belonging when they can see and hear others who are from migrant backgrounds in their daily lives. This can provide people of migrant backgrounds with a special sense of belonging.
- **Nature:** Being connected to nature is an important contributing factor to mental health and happiness for the migrants who shared their stories with us. The infrastructure of Copenhagen in terms of urban planning and the connection to nature is something that many migrants noticed and appreciated.
- **Housing issues:** People of migrant backgrounds in Copenhagen struggle to access the same housing opportunities as Danish citizens, it is a struggle to find a place to live, and it is an even bigger struggle to find a place in an attractive neighbourhood. As a result, many people of migrant background feel that they don't live in the real Copenhagen.

Conclusions

With these results we aimed to get an insight into the needs of migrants and people of migrant backgrounds in the areas of education, housing, services and employment. For this purpose the presented case reports of lived experiences from three European cities demonstrate a diversity of living contexts and the associated issues for residents of migrant background. The groups participating in each of the local assessments are diverse not only in country of origin, but also in age, gender and duration of stay. In all groups at least two Ukrainian are included to ensure a reflection on the issues of the recent war refugees in the study. Special care was also taken to create safe spaces for women to share their experiences – either by an extra event for migrant mothers (Palermo), close contact to the conducting social workers (Gdynia) or by recruiting from trusted circles from other activities of the conducting, migrant run organisation.

When conducting these studies with vulnerable groups we recommend trauma awareness or ideally trauma counselling training. Sharing your story was perceived by many as empowering, but it can also reawaken traumatic, formerly suppressed experiences. Supplying the participants with support in these cases is therefore the responsible approach.

The results shown above cover a multitude of issues situated at different phases of the migrant experiences in the cities – as participants' duration of stay varied from a few weeks to over 10 years. The key findings of the three European cities in this study on issues regarding education, housing, services and employment overlap in the following way: Both Copenhagen and Gdynia's migrants emphasise security as important for their everyday lives. While Copenhagen's polled migrants link the feeling of security with the large migrant community, the refugees and migrants in Gdynia rather focus on the importance of being welcomed by the domestic population.

Copenhagen and Palermo's results have public spaces like parks and squares as important meeting places for the migrant population in common. The big difference here is that the maintenance of design of public spaces in Denmark is appreciated, while in Italy it is criticised as insufficient. On the other hand Copenhagen's residents complain about the high prices associated with most activities in the Danish capital – creating exclusion based on social economic differences between domestic and migrant populations. Gdynia and Palermo's studies both show issues in the area of employment – as migrants – especially women – report having to work long hours and multiple jobs to earn a living for themselves and their families.

Lastly, in all three cities housing for migrants is connected to two central issues: finding a flat for rent and high rents. Due to a combination of high rents and unwillingness of domestic landlords to rent to them, the respondents often do not live in their favoured areas, which are rather in the centre and/ or close to desirable public spaces and facilities.

Beyond the insights on issues at hand, the migrant participants in all five local community reporting and mapping events have started discussions on policies that could effectively address them, enrich their lives and make them feel more included. With these results and the following actions, we are promoting the active participation of migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background in policy and decision-making processes. In line with the EU action plan, this serves multiple purposes:

1. Supporting the empowerment of migrants and people of migrant backgrounds
2. Making the voices of marginalised groups heard
3. Ensuring that integration and inclusion policies reflect the real needs of the affected people

The needs assessment from 5 migrant communities, we presented an extract from here, will be channelled into dialogue events, where residents and stakeholders from the policy areas of education, housing, services and employment meet in each city to discuss changes and a path towards a more inclusive city. You can follow this process and read reports from all five cities at www.includateproject.eu.

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Intercultural dialogue in a participatory game – The case of EURBANITIES

Krisztina Keresztély

Citizen participation is a scene of intercultural dialogue. Although this statement seems self-evident, it cannot always be taken for granted when participatory processes are on the agenda of local authorities. The reason for this is not necessarily linked to a discriminative policy, rather to the difficulty to bring on board all groups of the local societies facing very different issues and challenges of public participation. As the groups represent themselves with high diversity, these challenges and their roots are variable as well, starting from simple time management problems till the deeper constraints linked to cultural, educational and value issues. Whereas challenges as time management linked to the time schedules of different groups (young families with children versus elderly pensioners) can be resolved with a simple organisational intervention, deeper problems linked to the lack of access to the information, lack of understanding of the main goals and topics of participation, or even, the lack of general interest of participation, need more sensitive actions, tailored to the specific issues of the specific social groups. This is where intercultural dialogue comes on stage, but not only this.

Involving all groups into the participatory processes means ensuring them the opportunity for equal access to participation – let it be about timing, technical and physical conditions (online and offline tools, accessible spaces, etc.), and also and foremost, about equal access to information. This latter condition is in the same time the most difficult to achieve, as it depends on many diverse elements; for instance, on the availability of the persons to get informed, on the way how the information is presented (what is the channel of information, what are the words are used, etc.), on the education background of the persons who are informed; on the type of additional knowledge needed for understanding the topic of the participation or the process itself. This is the point where civic education has an important role to play: it may provide citizens with relevant knowledge about the main topics linked to participation (urban development, the needs in the neighbourhood, the main facts of public administration, the general competencies of municipalities, etc.) and, of course, on the process of citizen participation itself, by presenting the potential impact citizens can play on local policy making and the different forms of these processes. Civic education might of course target citizens on the first level; but it also might target community leaders, NGO representatives working with citizen,

as well as public servants, municipal employees and decision makers, on a second level. On all levels, intercultural dialogue needs to be part of the education, empowering all groups to better understand each other's needs and motivations.

The acknowledgement of the importance of civic education and intercultural dialogue for reinforcing equal participation of different social and professional groups by providing them the possibility to find a common ground in the process of participation has fortunately been already identified as a priority by many cities. Just as an example, in Montréal the “Statement on Diversity and its Participation in City Life”, a policy document containing 9 recommendations for reinforcing diverse and inclusive urban citizenship is a proof of this approach. The 3 main challenges of citizen participation formulated in this document are as follows: a) a general and pervasive unfamiliarity within the population of what the city does and how it functions (administrative and political governance); b) the observable democratic deficit and lack of legitimacy of Montréal's public institutions and c) the lack of capacities to handling the issue itself within Montréal's administrative institutions raising the need to institutionalize a concerted approach to improve the city's management of diversity.¹

The important role of civic education for strengthening equality and accessibility in citizen participation being acknowledged, it still seems difficult to find ways to involve people in learning processes. How to explain the complexity of participation to them, and how to adjust the information provided to the people with different social, cultural, educational and knowledge backgrounds? And how to set up a learning process in a way to be informative but also appealing for the citizens who might need to use their leisure time for the expected learning process?

One of the possible ways to provide a solution to these dilemmas is by using gamification and game-based learning that are the more and more frequently used terms in different teaching and learning environments. Game based learning is not only a solution for making the learning content more understandable, more accessible and fun; it is also a very good method for strengthening the intercultural skills of the learners.

What is game based learning exactly about? *“Games and playing games are as old as civilization itself and at some stage in life, be it adult or child, we have all played games. Whether this is playing football in the park, a board game at home or simple word games on a long journey, playing games is part of what makes us human. The ‘gamification’ of learning allows us to take the concepts of games, with the associated fun and enjoyment and combine this with the instruction,*

1 https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/conseil_interc_fr/media/documents/avis_participation_montrealais_issu_diversite_vie_municipale_en.pdf

practice and feedback that is necessary for effective learning to occur. Such gamification results in learners becoming more engaged and importantly in them enjoying the learning process.”²

Learning through gaming and playing is not a new feature either: teachers and educators willing to create a more informal and motivating learning environment have always been using gaming – consciously or unconsciously - in their curricula.

Three terms need clarification here: gamification, game-based learning (GBL) and serious game. They are strongly interlinked and their relationship could be illustrated as follows:

Gamification is a process when someone applies game mechanisms on originally non game entities. In teaching it may happen every day, when a teacher uses ordinary objects for gaming. Gamification is also widely applied outside the teaching environment: it can be used for facilitating community activities as participative planning, realizing surveys, calling people’s attention to some social or environmental issues, etc.

Game based learning is a process when teaching is based on a concrete game, let it be a table game, a role play or a digital game. Serious games are part of game-based learning: these games are created specifically for teaching. Their most important goal is to transfer a specific knowledge or message; thus, they often give less emphasis on the effective gaming elements. Gamification has been already used in several cities for enhancing participation in urban planning, especially, in the form of role games or strategic games. Sometimes existing games are used for the purposes of urban design: for instance, Lego in the physical, or Minecraft, in the digital space.³ In Helsinki for instance, the 2021 OmaStadi participatory budgeting process had been preceded by a preparation phase including different learning and sensibilisation activities designated towards the different social groups (within schools, NGOs, etc.), as well as to the city administrators, gamification having been one of the leading tools during the process. The most interesting of these games is the Helsinki participatory game, a board game destined for municipal employees and civil servants in order to teach them how the operations and services could be planned in even better co-operation with the residents.⁴

Eurbanities and Eurbanities 2.0 have been implemented based on an approach coupling the importance of intercultural dialogue, education and gamification on urban participation. The two consecutive adult education projects were running between

2 The Gamification of Learning. www.3plearning.com/uk

3 Gamification in Urban Planning: Participation Through Minecraft Laura Puttkamer | November 3rd 2020 | Smart & Digital Development, Youth & Gender, participation, [smart city](https://www.urbanet.info/gamification-in-urban-planning-participation-through-minecraft/), <https://www.urbanet.info/gamification-in-urban-planning-participation-through-minecraft/>

4 <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/participate/channels/participation-model/participation-game/> and <https://omastadi.hel.fi/processes/osbu-2020/f/183/?locale=en>

2015-2018 and 2019-2022 in the frame of the Erasmus + KA2 programme⁵. Their main objective was to empower citizens and NGOs working with them by providing them basic knowledge on the main objectives and tools of citizen participation, as well as on the way how participatory processes are going on in cities and how citizens can make their voices heard and later, collaborate with local authorities and stakeholders for achieving a sustainable local development of urban neighbourhoods.

Diversity and intercultural dialogue were an essential part of both projects at several levels: through the partners' activities, the methods used, as well as in the complexity of the final outputs including 30 case study analysis, 2 training curricula, 2 online games and a list of policy recommendations.

In the following pages, this article will present and analyse how interculturality and intercultural dialogue was included in the Eurbanities projects, through the partners' work, the tools and methods used and the main results achieved.

EUrbanities – 2 models of participation

Eurbanities and Eurbanities 2.0 were conceived to empower citizens, civic organisations and educators supporting citizen participation by providing them with knowledge about the tools and methods of citizen participation in urban planning and neighbourhood development, through the creation of a game-based learning tool. While Eurbanities approached citizen participation as a power-based process based on the interaction between local decision makers (local authorities and economic leaders) and the civil society (local inhabitants and small scale stakeholders), Eurbanities 2.0 was designed to empower citizens to acknowledge and adopt the constantly developing tools of participation that are used more and more in local decision making processes, in order to envisage the sustainable development of cities in the European context. The expected outcomes of both projects were similar: the creation of a complex pedagogical method and toolkit empowering citizens to actively participate in urban planning and acting as co-creators of their own neighbourhoods. This toolkit contains:

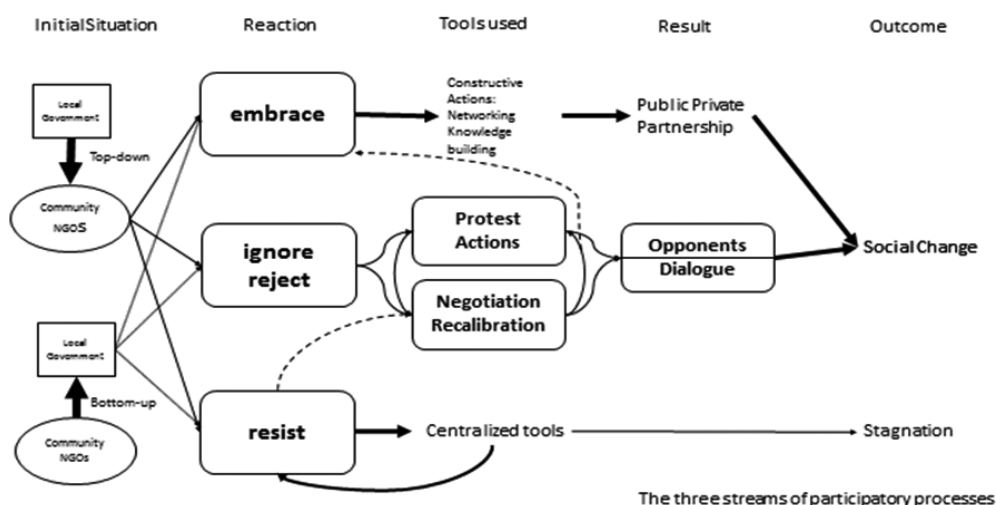
- a) 2 handbooks on Innovative Practices with a theoretical introduction of the context, containing altogether 30 good practices of citizen participation, participatory planning and co-creation of neighbourhoods, and a summary of the tools and methods involved in smart participatory planning;
- b) 2 online games following a scenario and storyboard based on the real cases of participation analysed in the handbooks and
- c) 2 learning curricula embedding each game.

⁵ Erasmus+ KA2 2015-1-DE02-KA204-002434 and 2019-1-DE02-KA204-006159

The Eurbanities toolkit forms a complex game-based system ready to be used for teaching participation, whilst each of their elements can also be used as individual tools.

Eurbanities and Eurbanities 2.0 represent two consecutive stages of citizen participation: together they form a complex story of a neighbourhood where citizens manage to form a community in order to represent their interests, are accepted as partners by the local authority and the local stakeholders and can also maintain their community on the long run, in spite of the difficulties that overcome for temporarily weakening them. The 2 projects and the 2 online games rehearse the continuous story of citizen participation in a neighbourhood, but, in the same time, they also rest on two different approaches, representing the evolution of the conceptual and practical fundamentals of participation in cities between the 2 periods the projects have been running.

Figure 1. The scenario of participation according to Eurbanities' first phase⁶



The first phase of Eurbanities identified 4 main states of play of participation that are the combination of two major parameters: the initiator and the purpose of the project. According to this, the process can be bottom-up, or top-down according to the initiator; proactive or reactive according to the purpose. Based on this approach, the scenarios of participation are described as the interaction of two main actors: the local authorities on the one hand and the civil society (including citizens and their NGOs) on the other. Any other actors (public, private...) and their interaction with the local processes are considered in this context as only external factors that

6 Our Neighbourhood Heroes, *Stories on Citizen Participation in Local Development in European Cities* (2017) ed. Judit Keller, Krisztina Keresztély and Tünde Virág, Comparative Research Network, Erasmus + , ISBN 978-39-4683-2010

although might substantially change the direction of the participatory process, but will never be integral part of it. According to this approach the participatory dialogue is conceived as a two-sided dialogue between civil society and local authorities.

The second project was launched at a moment when citizen participation has become a more or less adopted form of decision making in European cities. The 2010s have seen a permanent improvement of participatory methods in cities. The different forms of citizen participation are hence integrated parts of local policies in most European cities. Of course, these processes often do not exceed the level of information providing or false participation; however, the roles and rights of citizens to express their needs and expectations regarding local development policies have become an increasingly accepted fact in the case of most European cities.

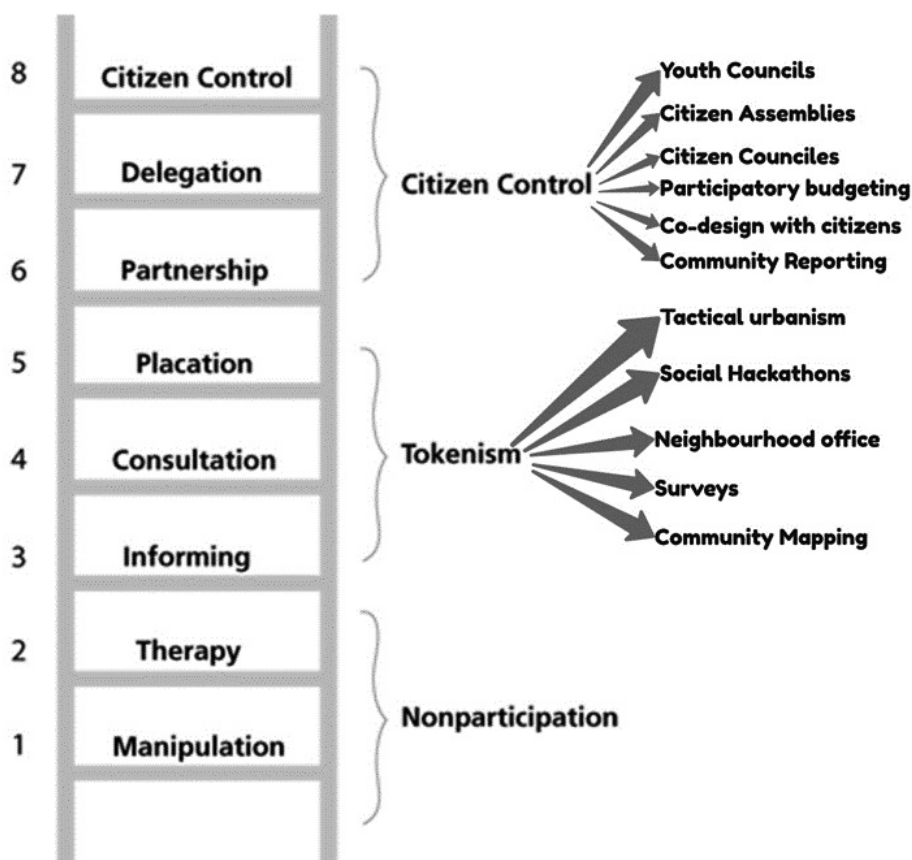
Moreover, participation has been acknowledged by European policies as a process strongly linked to intercultural dialogue. This has not only been reflected in the specific policies appearing in some cities as described at the beginning of this article, but also in some more general guidance and policy documents, such as the Leipzig Charter. *“Public participation in urban development processes should engage all urban actors, which also strengthens local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organizations and private enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful delivery of a high-quality built environment.”*⁷

Within this overall context, the specific aim of the second phase of Eurbanities was rather to show the forms and methods of potential collaboration between citizens and local authorities and to help the learners navigate through the large diversity and variability of tools, objectives, actors and topics linked to citizen participation. This second phase was therefore more complex than the first, and more challenging to be described by just one model: here participation has been conceived as a process based on a diversity of local interactions linking different actors representing different interests and objectives. The different forms of participation were analysed according to the way and level of citizen engagement represented by them, based on Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation⁸. For this purpose, this second project interculturality has already been identified as a leading factor of participatory processes.

7 New Leipzig Charter, The Transformative Power of Cities for the Common Good, p.6
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2020/12/12-08-2020-new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good

8 The Citizens Handbook <https://www.citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html>

Figure 2. Participatory methods according to the Jane Arnstein's Ladder of Participation
(© Eurbanities 2.0)⁹



Tools and methodology embracing intercultural dialogue

Parallel to the opening of the conceptual background of the two projects from a bipolar approach on citizen participation towards a multi-actor one, the methodology and the tools used for the creation of the main outcomes of the projects were also the more and more focusing on activities that were designed for highlighting the diversity of local needs and local solutions.

⁹ Welcome back to Eurbanity - Curriculum for playing participation. Part 2., Comparative research Network

a) Storytelling techniques for getting closer to local communities and their needs

The overall principle of both Eurbanities projects was to base the game and the curriculum on some real experiences of participation, either implemented by the partners themselves or observed by them in their close environment. The presentation of these good practices was done in both projects based on a commonly agreed structure and methods.

In the first phase, each partner brought at least 2 cases that were analysed and presented in the form of storytelling. The cases were described as series of events, composed by sequences of participatory actions that at certain moments, interrupted by external or internal events. These turning points cutting the flow of events are moments when the direction of the processes, the role and interaction of the participants are changing and raising new challenges and the need for new solutions.

The selection of case studies in Eurbanities 2.0. was prepared by a needs assessment process. The needs assessment was created by a narrative process, called “empathy mapping”. In this method, narrative storytelling is used in an interview context, when interviewees express their thoughts, ideas and stories by answering to a simple question. By transmitting the results of the interviews into an empathy map, interviewers could identify the key thoughts, observations and feelings of the citizens regarding urban participation. Based on the empathy maps, partners summarised the main needs of the citizens for being actively involved into local participatory processes. As a following step, the good practices were selected based on the results of this needs assessment.

Storytelling was therefore used in both projects as a main approach for supporting the entire process of analysing local participatory processes and citizens’ needs. This narrative approach, providing a large space for the expression of individual opinions, stories, and needs, was also a way to understand and describe urban participation as a process based on a diversity of voices and intercultural relations.

b) Co-creation and co-design

The second method emphasising the intercultural aspect of the project was co-design or co-creation. Although, co-design and co-creation have become a method used in a widening circle of activities and is linked to increasingly popular methodologies such as design thinking, participatory design, etc. In *Eurbanities*, the co-creation was rather understood as a general approach of the partners towards the creation of the project results. In *Eurbanities*' first phase it was a mostly unconscious process based on the collaboration of the partners in the implementation of the project results. For instance, the scenario of the game was created in the form of a co-creation process when all partners contributed to the drawing of the main scenes, the identification of the types of the characters, their roles in the story, the main phases of the story of the game, etc.

In *Eurbanities 2.0* co-creation and co-design became a consciously developed element of the project methodology, taking place all along the project implementation, and also involving participants external to the partnership. The most appealing example to this was the Online Game hackathon held for the identification of the game structure and the mini games to be included into the online game.

Hackathons in general are organised for finding a creative way to solve a problem by integrating a large diversity of solutions/voices. Their objective is to focus on hacking, exploring best practices, new ideas and creating innovative systems to fence the challenge. Hackathons are therefore usually more or less large community events, including participants with a diversity of social and professional backgrounds. The events are facilitated by external moderators whose role is to give a word to all participants. Hackathons are usually divided into two parts. During the first phase participants learn something new about a specific topic, and during the second they create new contents out of what they learned in the first phase.

The aim of the *Eurbanities 2.0* Hackathon was, on the one hand, to strengthen the participants' knowledge of gaming, gamification and game design, and on the other hand, to incorporate the main lessons learned from the evaluation of the good practices into the formulation of the main goals, outcomes and game elements of the future *Eurbanities 2.0* game. In order to involve a larger public for providing inputs into the game, the circle of participants was extended by local stakeholders and activists/citizens invited by the partners' organizations, as well as a group of students involved into a game design course.¹⁰ Due to the current restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemics, the Hackathon needed to be held online, with the use of different platforms: Discord and MIRO. The use of both tools was highly appreciated by the participants of the partners and the students.

10 Students involved were delegated by the Indie Game Developer Programme of the University of Boden in Sweden, run by one of the project partners: Changemaker.

In the flow of the development of Eurbanities, co-creation became a more and more conscious and integral part of the project, and permitting to explore the better and better the different forms of intercultural dialogue in the frame of the project making.

c) Everyone teaches everyone else

A third important aspect of interculturality in Eurbanities can be found in the pedagogical concept of the Eurbanities and Eurbanities 2.0 training curricula.

Based on the main concepts of non-formal education, the main objective of both curricula is to help learners and trainers to go through an intensive and creative learning process and to achieve, at the end of the training some new skills and knowledge. Therefore, the curricula are engaged to create learning outcomes on different levels such as:

- the factual level, providing knowledge about citizen participation, the relevant institutional and legal backgrounds and the fields where citizen participation can intervene in the city;
- the methodological level, by teaching methods and tools helping the learners to build their own participatory strategies/processes;
- on the “meta” or “human” level, by offering a general vision on participation and active engagement in the society.

Both curricula are built on the general concept that learning is not a one-way process: learners and trainers are all holders of a large diversity of knowledge. The aim of the trainings is therefore to provide methodological and human support to bring up and share this knowledge between the participants, and to support them to learn from each other’s experiences, approaches and ideas. Following this principle, Eurbanities curricula supports the idea of “each one teaches one”, which is based on intercultural dialogue and understanding in the frame of the training context.

Interculturality in the projects' results: Eurbania game and curriculum

The main results of both Eurbanities projects were the online game and a blended curriculum embedding the game. Both results reflect the key role of intercultural dialogue in participatory processes. The Eurbania games¹¹ embrace the story of a local community living in the peripheral neighbourhood of the imaginary city called "Eurbania". The neighbourhood reflects the typical features of a semi suburban area: abandoned empty green spaces, diversity of local inhabitants, the lack of a conscious local policy and strategy on behalf of the local government, including an attempt to place the private investors' interests before the citizens' needs. The community of inhabitants, centered on the local bar (named "Amin's bar" referring to the multicultural character of the neighbourhood), uses actively one of the abandoned green spaces, and get slowly aware of the potential this place means to them. As a result, they start organising themselves and providing a proposition to the local municipality for upgrading the area into a park. However, little time after, they learn that an investor also got into an agreement with the local government for building a large mall on this abandoned land. Some of the most active citizens, led by Anna, the protagonist and in the same time, player character, decide to launch a protest movement. The game teaches the player on how to write a petition and convince citizens to sign it, how to organise a demonstration, how to use social media and other channels for mobilising people to join their cause. If he/she manages to gather a large number of supporters, the player will manage to convince the local Mayor to abandon the plan of the mall, and to start a participatory planning process together with the citizens and the stakeholders.

The second game is played on the same scene but several years later. The community of Eurbania is increased and diversified: the protagonists represent a diversity of social, age, gender, ethnical etc. groups. The story is also getting more complex: the main protagonist is the player him/herself, who comes back to the neighbourhood in order to take over the management of the abandoned neighbourhood centre inherited from his/her grandparents passed away recently. The player meets the inhabitants of Eurbania: some of them being the same people but a bit older, others being newly settled inhabitants. The characters are conceived in a way to show the multiculturalism of the neighbourhood: their stories, their wishes, their actions reflect their cultural and social backgrounds. During the discussions in the first part of the game the player understands that the community is in danger: the community centre is abandoned with no functions, and the new mayor threatens the community to sell the building of their centre to a private investor. In order to reshape the centre and make of it again a centre of the community, the protagonist

11 Both games (Eurbania, and Eurbania 2.0) can be downloaded from the Eurbanities platform: <https://www.eurbanities.org>

has to go around the neighbourhood, meet and talk to the inhabitants, understand their wishes and launch actions that correspond to their needs. He/She also has to play a “fight-debate” with the local municipality by bringing in good arguments, represented by the majority of the community, in order to stop the selling of the centre.

Intercultural dialogue is at the centre of both games. In the first game, the player has to find arguments to convince the inhabitants to join their cause. In the second, more complex game, the communication is going in the other direction: instead of convincing the neighbours, the protagonist has to understand them, and respond their needs in order to bring them on his/her side.

The two consecutive Eurbanities curricula are both based on the spirit of the game, and are constructed in a way to embed the game in between the sessions. The curricula have been designed in a way to be usable for the main direct and indirect target groups of Eurbanities, as follows:

1. To experienced trainers and NGO activists working with citizens for supporting them in being more active in their neighbourhoods.
2. To citizens with no experience in local participatory processes.
3. To experts, university students and educators in the formal education system, who might embed parts of the curriculum and the game into their own learning and teaching programs.

The aim of both curricula is to provide support to citizens on how to set up and follow successful local participatory actions. The sessions are in both cases divided into the following main parts:

1. Understanding and analysing the initial situation and the needs of local inhabitants and stakeholders.
2. Finding and mobilizing the local stakeholders and citizens and through this strengthening the local community.
3. Creating an action plan or strategy for achieving the main goal by using different participatory, analytical and communication tools and techniques.

Communication and dialogue are in the core of the sessions constituting the curricula. The Eurbanities trainings are based on a game-based learning approach, with a double level of gaming. On the first level, Eurbania game is embedded in-between the sessions, and learners are regularly playing it during the training. On the second level, during the sessions learners are working on the analysis and action plan for an imaginary or existing case; the sessions following each other are based on a role play, where learners implement the different activities in groups, by occupying imaginary roles or positions.

Figure 3. Design element from the first game @Eurbanities



During the sessions they experience the use of different analytical and communication tools permitting themselves to improve among others their intercultural skills that is unavoidable for the successful implementation of participatory processes.

Conclusions

Eurbanities is an innovative game-based learning toolkit aiming at empowering citizens and NGOs by providing them basic knowledge on the main objectives and tools of citizen participation in neighbourhoods. The main elements of the tool-kit are a series of cases studies on citizen participation, 2 online games and 2 learning curricula, that are the results of 2 transnational cooperation in the frame of the Erasmus + programme running between 2015-2018 and 2019-2022.

The Eurbanities projects were created as a response to a need that has also been acknowledged by a large number of cities and NGOs supporting deliberative and participatory processes as well as by the European Commission: the empowerment of people for active citizenship and active participation with the help of education and knowledge transfer. The Eurbanities projects and their main result, the Eurbanities toolkit, highlight at all levels the importance of intercultural dialogue, not only as an important value, but also and foremost, as a necessary tool of participatory processes.

In Eurbanities, intercultural dialogue has been a main element of the project at several levels:

- On the level of the activities and the tools used, including co-creation, storytelling, needs assessment.
- On the level of the games, both representing the human interactions in a typical intercultural urban environment.
- And also on the level of the Eurbanities curricula containing learning sessions that are all based on the use and teaching of different methods and activities based on intercultural dialogue and communication.

Last but not least, interculturality is an inevitable aspect of gaming and gamification, the core element of the Eurbanities project's inner workings.

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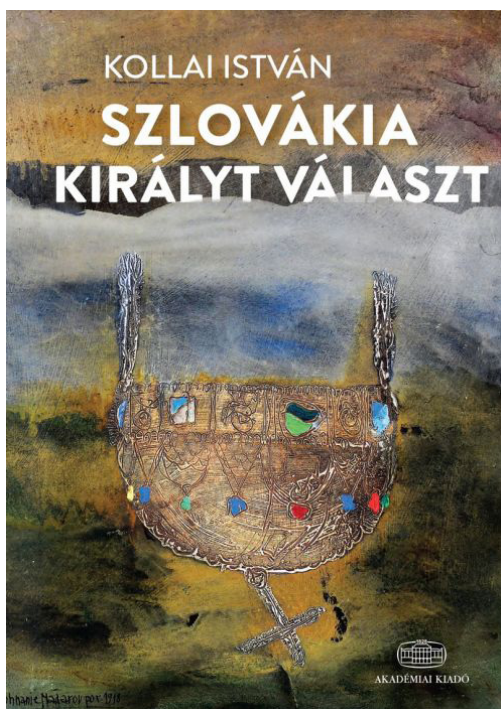
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Book Review

István Kollai (2021): *Szlovákia királyt választ* ('Slovakia elects a king'). Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, p. 257



A very interesting book was published by István Kollai, titled '*Szlovákia királyt választ*'. The book was published in Hungarian language in 2021. The title of the book can be translated into English language into '*Slovakia elects a king*'. The book attempts to look at the Slovak and Hungarian interpretations of history and it goes through the history of the two nations from the period of Great Moravia till nowadays. The more than one thousand period of history is divided into six basic chapters.

The first chapter analysis the issues, like Great Moravia, Scythians, the Morva-Hungarian wars and the beginning of the interactions between the Slovak and Hungarian nations. The second chapter looks at the period of remnants of Great Moravia, the organization of the new Hungarian Kingdom, the double cross and the crown. The third chapter describes the evolution of relationship within the Kingdom during the Middle Ages, the rule of the Anjou House, King Matthias Corvinus and the Kuruc period. The fourth chapter deals with the events in the 19th century, Kossuth-Štúr phenomenon, assimilation and emigration. The fifth chapter works with the period after the end of the Kingdom and the era of the Czechoslovak Republic, namely the Beneš decrees, the First Vienna Award or forced displacement. And, the last chapter analysis linguistic issues, like "Felvidék", "Ugor" or "Pressburg".

Duality and the 'trap of simplicity'

Edward W. Said notes in his Afterword to *Orientalism* the following: "as the struggle for control over territory is part of that history, so too is the struggle over historical and social meaning." History is a question of narration (e.g. see Anderson 1991) and social meaning, this

means that history can be interpreted in different ways and from multiple points of view. However, the real problem is that interpretation of history and perceptions have been profoundly simplified. We have been living in an extremely accelerated and complex society. As Manuel Castells (1996) terms it, this is an information age; although, this age has been reaching a limit where we have been receiving too much information and we have been struggling to process it (e.g. see Žižek 2013). Subsequently, a desire for oversimplification is profoundly present in our overcomplicated society, where the issues are explained in a very simplified mode, but the simplified explanations usually contain numerous shortcomings, misinterpretations and distortions. Consequently, this establishes a dangerous phenomenon, namely 'trap of simplicity'.

This latent paradigm of 'trap of simplicity' was already articulated by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, namely 'simplex sigillum veri ist', essentially meaning 'simplicity is a mark of truth.' This means that the simplest explanation is needed since the masses are not willing to accept complicated truths that require time and willingness to make effort to understand the reality. This means that the Slovak and Hungarian relationship is extremely colourful, interlinked at multiple, multi-layered family and cultural levels; however, the ruling historical interpretation promotes a very simplified and easily understandable dichotomy, 'oppressive Hungarian' vs. 'ordinary Slovak'. Thus, we return to the ideas of Said (2002: 260-261) when he aptly writes, "*The worst thing ethically*

and politically is to let separatism simply go on, without understanding the opposite of separatism, which is connectedness."

A tense dichotomy exists within the Slovak narration of history. In this dichotomy, two profoundly different approaches clash with each other and there is a zero-sum game between them. One is the oversimplified narration of oppression, a 'thousand years of slavery' of the Slovaks by the Hungarians. This narration has become widespread and dominant during the 19-20th century, which is often characterized as a century of national awakening and national self-consciousness. The 19th-20th century understanding of national identity introduced a very simplified and one-dimensional interpretation with powerful emotional tones. The previous multi-layered and mutual cultural, linguistic and ethnic interactions were overshadowed with the simplified relationship that is principally driven by 'us and them' duality. The emerging national awakening constructed very strict cultural border lines and they threw away any idea that supported the common and joint cultural, ethnic and historian heritage. As a result, simplified constructions of the pasts started to face with each other. The real danger is that this idea usually applies also the phenomenon of 'tempocentrism' (see e.g. Hobson 2002), like extrapolation of present into the past, hence fully forgetting that 'present' is always embedded within a specific socio-temporal context and the 19th century socio-temporal context cannot be extrapolated back to the Middle Ages since it generates isomor-

phic illusion and constant fight fuelled by emotions with no end in sight.

On the other side, always existed Slovak interpretations that underlined coexistence and co-influence. Unfortunately, these approaches have gained fewer attention and they have been overshadowed by the easy narration of conflict. This approach highlights a more complex picture of history that is capable of highlighting and reflecting situational dependence (peaceful or sometimes tense) between linguistic and cultural groups. This means that the Slovak people participated on the everyday life of the Kingdom for centuries, but at the same time they preserved their own ethnicity, thus there is a historical basis for a reasoning of fulfilling the Slovak needs. Subsequently, these two approaches reflect that the two distinct images of the past face with each other. One image narrates a ceaseless conflict, while the other portrays coexistence. These interpretations are substantially different and they contradict each other, hence establishing a zero-sum game logic.

Simplicity of national interpretations and emotions

Duality and the 'trap of simplicity' are easily visible, for example in the case of a historical figure, Juraj Jánošík. Jánošík emerges within the Slovak collective memory as the poor Slovak guy who represents the oppressed Slovaks. He is narrated as an outlaw figure, similar to Robin Hood. This archetype of Jánošík has been strongly inbuilt within the Slovak historical psyche. The collective psyche identified itself with Jánošík without explicit evidence that Jánošík

identified himself as a Slovak or member of the Slovak community, rather he was member of the Kuruc army, member of the emperor's army and later he became an outlaw bandit who robbed the rich lords. The question arises, why has Jánošík become the fundamental figure of the national public memory?

Other figures could have been also chosen as a building block of collective memory, like those historical persons who consciously nurtured the Slovak linguistic heritage and culture. For example, a priest Juraj Tranovský who was the author of the first Slovak songbook; a priest Benedek Szöllősi who published his book in 1655 and he encouraged the Slovaks to nurture the Moravian cultural heritage; Jakob Jakobenus who was the first who wrote history on the upper Hungary and termed the region 'Sclavonia', as the land inhabited by the Slovaks. Nevertheless, the masses could only hardly identify themselves with the 'homo academicus'. These historical persons worked in an environment that was driven by multi-cultural and multi-ethnic approach which could be a more appropriate ground for a collective psyche that could promote appropriate space for cooperation; nevertheless, they were far away from the collective psyche of ordinary and everyday people. It was hard to grab their academic, religious and linguistic works, thus their work is rather forgotten and overshadowed. On the other hand, the simplicity of identification with a poor guy who chases the rich with his axe and/or who cooks goulash in a pot is much closer to masses, thus falling into the 'trap of simplicity'.

The missing contact battles

The book brilliantly underlines the fact that unspoken Slovak and Hungarian animosity and tensions, have existed without any serious conflict and war between the two nations. This means that tensions have been built up on the back of other conflicts, in the shadow of geopolitical events of great powers. If we look at the history since the 19th century, which has introduced the national homogeneity paradigm and subsequently the bipolarity between the two nations, we can enumerate the serious clashes, like the 1848-49 revolution, where the Slovak legionnaires were part of the army of the emperor which was in war with the Hungarian army; nevertheless, the Slovak legionaries were auxiliary forces and primarily were responsible for maintaining order instead of real contact situations and battles with the Hungarian army; the Slovak army entered into the Hungarian territories after the First World War without any resistance from the Hungarian side and the attack of the Hungarian army was halted because of negotiations with the great powers; the anti-Hungarian sentiment after the First World War and the anti-Hungarian bureaucratic measures were directed from Prague and not from the Slovak territory; the First Vienna Award and the anti-Hungarian persecutions were also implemented under the direction of the European great powers. In other words, there is a real possibility to deconstruct the tension, probably that requires several decades, but there is a possibility for that since the missing direct clashes did not build up irreconcilable emotions.

Fresh breeze of new narrations

The fall of socialism in 1989, the separation of the Czechoslovak Republic and the subsequent declaration of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993 introduced significant impulses into the domain of narration of history and past events (e.g. see Kusá — Findor 1999). It might seem that the Slovak interpretation of history and identity structures, which are usually based on the conflict with the Hungarians, is not over yet. The idea of the conflict is still present and it deeply resonates within the collective memory; although, a space for a new interpretation of history, based on coexistence instead of ceaseless conflict, has been opened and we can identify some significant elements within this shift since 1993.

This positive (understanding of history through the prism of coexistence) shift can be characterized by the view of two Slovak statesmen. One statesman is Pavol Hrušovský, who was the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic between 2002-2006 and 2011-2012. He gave a Speaker's speech on the first of January in 2003. This year is highly important because it was the year for the intensive final effort of implementing two basic strategic goals of the Slovak foreign policy, specifically the entry of the Slovak Republic into the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. These foreign policy goals represent a symbolic completion after an era of transition from a totalitarian society to democracy. The speech and importance of it should be understood

within the frames of these significant foreign policy and society shifts. Moreover, the speech was a message into the New Year and it addressed the tenth anniversary of an independent Slovakia.

The speech summarized the main developments of the past decade and it focused predominantly on history. The Speaker expressed that the tenth anniversary of the Republic is a suitable occasion to look at the face of Slovakia and to discover ourselves, i.e. the one thousand years period (from the 9th to 19th century) and at the same time the existence of the Hungarian Kingdom was presented as an organic part of the Slovak history, specifically 'Slovakia (its territory) became part of the Kingdom that shaped the history of Central Europe for nine hundred years (...) therefore, for eight hundred years, Slovakia (its territory) was not the object, but the subject of history of the Hungarian Kingdom'. (Hrušovský in Kollai 2021: 9-10) The speech and the given overview of history clearly and explicitly represented a clash with the dominant narration of the Slovak history that glorifies the era of Great Moravia and the national awakening of the 19th century, but thousand year between the two events are expressed as an era without history and/or as a period of oppression. Simply, the Speaker articulated that the Slovak territory played an integral and organic role within the life of the Kingdom, thus opening up symbolic space for cooperation in the realm of history.

After 17 years of the speech of the Speaker, the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Igor Matovič, continued

this approach in 2020, and he expressed the following, 'historical Hungary was also ours (...) let us dare to say that Hungarian history is our common history. That the Hungarian kings were our common kings.' (Matovič in Kollai 2021: 10)

Bottom-up trends

This author describes that there is a palpable discrepancy between the official interpretation (top-down) and local interpretation (bottom-up) of history in Slovakia. The former is the official interpretation which easily leans to conflictual interpretation that was established during the 19th - 20th centuries, while the latter broadens the scope and it portrays a history which is much closer to cooperation and coexistence. This discrepancy is explicitly visible in the case of the Middle Ages.

The Slovak historical perception does not take too much emphasis to the period ruled by the House of Árpád. It is often labelled as an eventless period; although, the Hungarian historical perception gives a serious attention to that period (e.g. Lamentations of Mary which is the oldest existing Hungarian poem; Buda during the rule of King Sigismund of Luxembourg and/or King Matthias; Bibliotheca Corviniana which was one of the most renowned libraries of the Renaissance world or the Fifth Crusade to Jerusalem led by the Hungarian King Andrew II). During the first Czechoslovak period, the era of the Árpáds was interpreted as a curse on the Slovaks; the Slovak State (1939-1945) underlined this period in a way that the Slovaks

were positioned within the crossroad of cultures, thus they had certain role of a bridge; during the second Czechoslovak period the negativity was lessened, but it still remained as the main interpretation and narration. This means that the Árpáds were portrayed with a historical tone in strong contrast to the positive role of the House of Anjou. After 1993, the official interpretation did not change a lot; however, it is hard not to see a fresh bottom-up trend, where the Slovak local historians, researchers and local patriots rediscover local history of their environment, hence the Árpáds suddenly emerge with a way positive contours within the bottom-up approach. They underline the cult of Stephen I of Hungary, of Ladislaus I of Hungary and the cult of the saints from the House of Árpád. Subsequently, numerous statues were erected in Slovakia that honour the individual Kings from the House of Árpád, e.g. the statue of Andrew II of Hungary and the statue of Andrew III of Hungary in the vicinity of Zvolen or the statue of Béla IV of Hungary in Banská Bystrica. Moreover, a private university, Saint Elizabeth College of Health and Social Work, was established in Bratislava and is named after Elizabeth of Hungary from the House of Árpád who was a daughter of Andrew II of Hungary.

Another significant element of the bottom-up trend is renovation of the Middle Ages castles in Slovakia. Castles were built during a period which is not very attractive for the official interpretation of history in Slovakia, thus this period simply withers away; nevertheless, when

we read touristic publications, local history and publications of local civil associations we receive a significantly different picture, as they eagerly underline the importance of the forgotten period. Moreover, castle renovation movement has been experiencing its boom in Slovakia, which means that there are any major castles that have not been taken care by some civic castle renovation initiative.

This local (bottom-up) rethinking is continued by the capital city itself, Bratislava. Bratislava was a multilingual, multi-ethnic, multicultural city during the Kingdom. The Czechoslovak period promoted a homogeneity approach, hence the city moved towards a more ethnic, linguistic, national monogamy. Nevertheless, regime change, nominating the city as capital and linking the city itself into the network of capital cities have generated a shift, namely the city currently aims to rediscover its multicultural roots and origins. Brilliant example is the sculpture of Maria Theresa that was destroyed in 1921 with severe anti-Hungarian sentiments. The statue sculpture was remade without any significant disagreement from the society and the destruction was condemned as a barbaric act of the past period. Furthermore, the Bratislava coronation celebrations have been performing every year since 2003. It is one of the most important cultural events held in Central Europe and it belongs to the top events of the cultural summer of Bratislava. The Bratislava coronation celebrations are held to commemorate the coronation of Maria Theresa who was the ruler of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1740 and 1780 and

the celebrations are done with the copy of the Holy Crown of Hungary.

In other words, the local (bottom-up) interpretation of history is much closer to coexistence and it might generate space for common and shared understanding between the two nations. And, as David Harvey (2011: 133) notes, *“Changing beliefs and values are (...) what really matters. Change the discourses, it is sometimes said, and the world will change, too”*.

Common points for cooperation

The book also gives some ideas where the Slovak and Hungarian narrations of history could find good shared experiences and appropriate ground for narration of history of coexistence instead of narration of history of conflict. To mention some ideas, for example, King Matthias is one of the greatest kings of the Middle Ages in the Hungarian interpretation, but King Matthias had a very unique and positive understanding for centuries in the Slovak interpretation and this was present even in the 19th century, too. King Matthias embodied a period when the Kingdom was ethnically mixed and when the Kingdom was an important geopolitical entity on the chessboard of Europe, thus those Slovak intellectuals who emphasized the positive role of the King Matthias tried to promote the idea of cooperation and coexistence between the two nations. Unfortunately, the wave of national awakening after all ignored these kind of potential moments for cooperation and coexistence around King Matthias.

Other possible points of coexistence could be the following ones, the role of Francis II Rákóczi, who led the uprising in which the Slovaks also participated; Matthias Bel polymath was from a Slovak wealthy peasant family and he became a significant Slovak explorer and at the same time he wrote about the old Hungarian script and he described himself as *‘lingua Slavus, natione Hungarus, eruditione Germanus’*; John Amos Comenius, whose name is mirrored by the oldest and most respected university in Slovakia, fulfilled his task in numerous regions of the Kingdom, like Czech, Moravian, Transylvanian and at the same time he maintained very good relationship with the ruling Hungarian estates of the realm; the Vizsoly Bible which is the first Bible in Hungarian language and which was printed by a pressman who moved to upper part of Hungary and had Slovak (Polish) origins. Simply, the common and joint history offers numerous possible interactions that may emphasize joint and positive history; however, the homogenizing black and white national dichotomy and the ‘trap of simplicity’ do not prefer these kind of colourful and shared elements of coexistence.

Conclusion

We consider this book as a very valuable literature that builds on serious research work from both Hungarian and Slovak narratives of history. The value of the book is profoundly increased by the fact that the author knows both languages, hence he has the possibilities to look at both interpretations and to look for the common ground and collisions. The

whole book is written in the spirit that could be summarized in a sentence of the author, 'the debates about history can be really seemed as futile if the goal is to convince the other one; however, if the goal is to present "my own point of view", then these debates are not unproductive' (Kollai, 2021: 83).

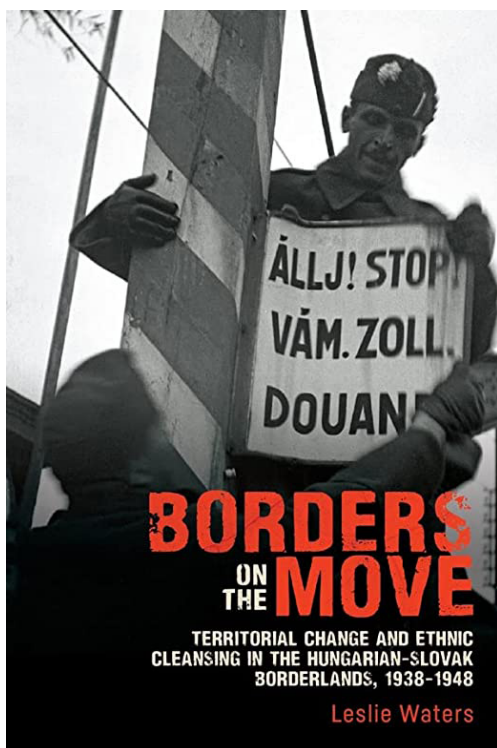
The book is primarily recommended for the academic community, historians, students of political sciences, international relations, history and for those readers who are interested in the topics of Slovak-Hungarian relationship, issues of Central Europe and Self-Other nexus. Simply, the book is a real missing research literature and the Slovak and Hungarian historical interpretations are in heavy need for other similar studies like this one.

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Leslie Waters (2020) *Borders on the Move. Territorial Change and Ethnic Cleansing in the Hungarian-Slovak Borderlands, 1938-1948*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, p. 234



There are two reasons why the review of this excellent, strikingly unbiased book with a balanced tone was so hard to write. One of them is more *everyday*, one that has had an impact on all of our lives in these past weeks, at the end of February 2022. I started writing the recension when the Russian-Ukrainian war broke out. With the media being full of dramatic news and tragic pictures, it was especially hard to focus on a text in the background that endeavours to clarify the same issues that lie behind this sorrowful fratricidal war.

Unfortunately, the interstate discord revolving around border disputes and the ordeal of the population of the regions involved in the fighting are too many times accompanied by personal and social tragedies at times when the borders (and armies...) are “starting to move.” This is why it is timely and educational to learn about the historical draft springing up from this book.

The other reason is far more *personal*. The historical peripeteia discussed in the book are also part of my family's history. Or the other way round: an important part of our family's history is connected to the historical chain of events which this book pursues to present. For that, I was not able to ignore the question which immediately arose in me reading the title, *before* even reading the book itself. Can the stories which “we”, that is, my predecessors lived through and later many times recalled be found in this book *as well*? Can “we” *be found* in in this book as well? After all, the changes in the borders and their impacts, which this book deals with, deeply and inevitably affected *almost all* of my then living relatives.

Well, my answer after reading and thoroughly analysing the book is a bit uncertain. For example, I am almost entirely certain that many of my ancestors might have personally known the leading character, a policeman of Galanta town,

of the grotesque administrative confirmation procedure detailed in pages 93-96. Surely most people attending to their routine chores in the town thought of the policeman walking on the main street as a familiar face. In fact, one of my great grandfathers might have even been acquainted with the “leftist” figure who has played a hypocritical role in the administrative procedure against the “national loyalty” of the policeman. The world can be comfortably “small” in its ordinariness...

At the same time, the bulk of the stories they experienced and recalled are not reflected in the book at all. What is presented as the leading principle and as a correctly traced chain of events is at most a “tangential” part of the family narratives giving a *credible* frame to the *background*. The prospects interestingly and readably keep alternating: throughout the dynamic changing between the broader “tableau” with a more general outlook that creates the historical frame and the recollections of the eyewitnesses which are able to present such stories from a “lower” perspective, only at certain points was I able to realise that these stories “are also about us” and that they happened to “us” as well.

To the readers of this review, this observation may seem bitter, but I do not believe so. It is exactly our family’s “recollection stories” which taught me that the comprehensive, self-interpreting narratives of larger communities and the insufficiently preserved and passed-down twists of the family memory built up from the relationships and experiences of the everyday person both

move forward along inevitably divergent threads. The only thing that may sadden me is that we will not forget the “long” memory of an era when neither of the above two were amongst the stories that could have been openly “recalled” and passed down. We had to remain silent, or instead of the shame of the lies forced upon us from *above*, tell other stories. For example, about the forever unchangeable borders...

I’ve observed the most definite sign of this unique absence in the fact that the author—detailing the events of the Czechoslovak–Hungarian population exchange in the 6th chapter of the book—calls the population arriving to Hungary “resettled” and the whole process is termed as a “resettlement” (Leslie 2020: 203, 207, 208). Naturally, there is no problem with the expression *per se*. If interpreted correctly and from a neutral standpoint, the word choice is perfect. I, however, cannot remain silent about one of my most critical memories and preserved impressions related to this story. My ancestors, when someone in their presence benevolently but naïvely referred to them or their fellows as “resettled”, *always* corrected these people if the situation allowed it: they are *not* resettled, but deported! Based on their discussions with each other, my impression was that deep inside this superficiality without any differentiation whatsoever is what has pained them the most. It might be even safe to say that they have experienced it as an irremediable shame that they always had to explain to the residents of their new homes, or anybody else, that they had not left their “true” homes wil-

lingly and involuntarily, but instead had had to leave as a punishment. Naturally, this minute detail and my personal experiences do not detract from the merits of the book.

I believe, I am also able to name three legitimate reasons why I feel something is missing. One of them is an important matter of *principle*, one which the author is also aware of. However, the subtitle of his books fails to regard this impartially existing issue—an issue whose existence is also acknowledged by the author. The story of the “border regions” and the moving of the borders does not simply start as consequences of the First Vienna Award of 1938. For every single resident affected in the border regions, it begins in 1920 after WW1, when the Czechoslovak Republic was formed. Undeniably, the author is also aware of this fact, as in the introduction, he correctly and thoroughly details story of the “birth” and creation of the Czechoslovak–Hungarian state border, along with the different interpretations of the process’ narratives (Leslie 2020: 3-9). This is why it feels strange that the book—as opposed to the above—*only* deals with the period of 1938-48, as it is stated in the subtitle. Everything that occurred in 1938 had a *precedent* 20 years earlier.

The second reason might be even more important and is completely legitimate. It correlates with the author’s most essential aims, how the whole research and the book’s structure are built up. As the author admits, the book *primarily* and most profoundly deals with the tragedy of the Jewish population of the border region in WW2 and with the horrendous details

of the Holocaust (Leslie 2020: 23-24). (In fact, maybe within the framework of the *original* research, it focuses on the Eastern Central European roots of the welfare state and the role of the confiscation of property of the region’s Jewish population played in this process.) Undoubtedly, these are the most important parts of the book, and they can be seen as presenters of *new scientific evidence*, if only because of the fact that this specific topic is relatively uncovered.

Finally, the third reason is a logical consequence of the previous one: it has to do with the book’s *structure*. The 3rd chapter (“War and radicalization”) of the five-chapter work deals over 40 pages with the consequences of WW2, having broken out one year after the “peaceful” border change, regarding the two states concerned and particularly of the population of the border region. Even this chapter’s nearly 60% is about the increasingly worsening situation of the accelerating persecution of the Jewish population in these two states, as well as about the first deportation, and the refugees themselves. The 4th chapter, in its 34-page long entirety (“The Holocaust in the Borderland”), focuses on the tragedy of the Jewish (and tangentially the Romani) population. These two chapters make up more than a third of the entire text and more than 40% of the main bodies. On the contrary, the 5th chapter, as conclusion to the undertaken time period, discusses the circumstances and migration in the border region between 1945 and 1948 in 30 pages altogether (the lowest page count in the book). In my opinion, this unquestionably proves

that the work *primarily* focuses on the Holocaust in the region, and only deals with the history of the whole period as a background frame. Accordingly, it only presents the details of the state “management” of the border changes as a part of the road culminating in the tragedy of the Holocaust. In addition, the almost complete deportation and annihilation of the Jewish population, meaning the radical transformation of region’s ethnic situation, is only defined as the antecedent and harbinger of the consequences of WW2. In this sense, the “population exchange” is a legitimate consequence of the politics of the Holocaust: it properly illustrates where the fallacy of “ethnic engineering” leads to. Due to this, however, the book only *tangentially* deals with the “historical solution” that has affected hundreds of thousands and forced them to permanently leave or “change” their homes, shattered their ethnic identity and in some way degraded basically everyone affected, all of which were extorted between 1945 and 1948. The historical “lower perspective” that was dwelled at length at other places is sadly hardly prevalent in this chapter. Naturally, these could have been caused by structural reasons and limitations of space.

Finally, I would like to make two smaller, but in my opinion necessary corrections. As I already mentioned, the author also deals with the developments after WW1 in the section containing the antecedents that were drawn up correctly and are based on an extensive literature review. Here, however, the text at some places (Leslie 2020: 6) suggests that the new

borders were formed without any major conflicts. But this does not correlate with historical facts. Regarding the experiences of the population affected by the new borders and their attitudes which formed afterwards, it must also be noted that the Czechoslovak army’s entry at the turn of 1918 and 1919 was accompanied by several serious incidents with fatalities. The volley fires of Bratislava and Želiezovce should be highlighted from the later Southwest Slovakia region, as a document of the time, constructed based on the reports of the Italian officers leading the entering army, reports that 34 civilians in total lost their lives in this region.¹

On the other hand, according to the last chapter, the border region managed to survive WW2 without any severe damages and correlating losses. It is undoubtedly true that most of the border region was indeed lucky that the front line quickly “passed” across them. However, it must also be mentioned that the front line was frozen for months at the lower course of the Hron River at the turn of 1944 and 1945; consequently, the towns near the river suffered severe damages, and a part of their population was deported at the time. The “Hron bridge-head” located near the town of Štúrovo at the delta of the river changed hands several times during these months under

1 The report of General Luigi Piccione, dated 20 February 1920 in Kroměříž, submitted to the Czechoslovak minister of defence. Document no. 148. In: Horváth, V., Rákoš, E. and Watzka J. (ed.) (1977): *Bratislava, blavné mesto Slovenska. Pripojenie Bratislavy k Československej republike roku 1948-1919*. Bratislava: Obzor, pp. 294 – 29.

the operations related to the siege of Budapest and the German relief attempts. Being a significant traffic hub, the town of Nové Zámky became a victim of two serious Allied air raids in the autumn of 1944, until a mistaken, third air raid, carried out by the Americans on 14 March 1945, obliterated or damaged more than half of the town's residential buildings. A total of 1900 bombs were dropped on the town, and according to different estimates regarding civilian fatalities, the number of losses were between 2000-4000 during the third raid.² Indirectly, this also contributed to the radical transformation in the ethnic construction of the town after 1945.

All in all, I appreciate this book of high value, and in the hope of future reprints, I would like to highlight some minor mistakes that need correction. Right at the beginning of the book, in the summary of toponyms (ix. o.): “Šturovo” correctly: Štúrovo; “Šurány” correctly: Šurany. The name of Anna Kéthly, a Hungarian social democrat, is misspelled (the letter “l” is missing) in both the text (Leslie 2020: 151) and in the index (Leslie 2020: 232). Smaller accented letter mistakes can be found in the Slovakian and Hungarian personal names and place names. It is very fortunate that a few comprehensive sketch maps can also be found in the beginning! However, I must draw attention to the fact that in the illustration on page xi. (East-Central Europe, 1945), the dot marking Budapest is not at the right place. (Northeast from Vác)

As the conclusion of my book review, I should like to highlight two things. One of them is the author's well-grounded decision (pp. 4) on the toponym's spelling. It is a good indication that the author is fully aware of this sensitive issue in the regional discourse, and already in the light of this fact, it is most respectable that he has chosen a spelling way which correlates with historical facts and is correct and unbiased. The other is a verbatim quote from the introduction of the work, which, in my opinion, is similar to the previous one. It is a great evidence of the author's balanced and unbiased attitude. The author touches on the following in the introduction of the aims and the driving force behind the minority policy of the Hungarian government (which “enforced” the First Vienna Award in 1938): “*Whatever their rationale, the Hungarian government's treatment of Slovaks challenges the recent scholarship that has argued that Hungarian minority policies during World War II were geared toward achieving an exclusively Hungarian ethnostate. In the Hungarian-Slovak borderland, ethnic dominance, rather than exclusivity, was quite clearly the objective.*” (Leslie 2020: 18.). It is indeed very fortunate that this work has been born!

György Farkas

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² Urbán, Zs. et al. (ed.) (2014): *A (Cseh)Szlovákiai magyarok lexikona. Csehszlovákia megalakulásától napjainkig*. Bratislava: SPN. pp. 108.

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