Encountering the nation beyond borders: Hungarian high school students, tourism and the micromanagement of nation-building

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Abstract

The present thesis explores the ways in which governmental initiatives of political socialization influence the national identifications and self-understandings of high school students. Through a Hungarian project of educational tourism that finances the visits of Hungarian high school students to the regions outside of Hungary populated by ethnic Hungarians, the study presents how policy-makers envisage inculcating certain understandings of the Hungarian nation as an ethnocultural community transcending state boundaries. In their view, the school trips provide high school students with the possibility to experience the reality of this national community, to encounter this national "substance" physically through the senses and through actual interpersonal connections. The empirical data obtained from group discussions with participants of these journeys shows that these governmental intentions are subverted and transformed by individual agency and the structural characteristics of tourism. In their quest for a more "authentic" experience, the participants transform the official and formal fabric of the tours and look for informal embodied modes of encountering places and people. They experience sameness with, and difference from, the local co-ethnic in an ambiguous manner, these individual modes of encounter being mediated by shared narrative frames of orientalism and exoticism as well as the distancing nature of the "tourist gaze". The research concludes that these publicly financed tours reinforce the already existing ambiguous patterns of identification and differentiation between homeland Hungarians and their transborder co-ethnics, rather than fostering new, stronger forms of identification between them.

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I. Introduction

1. Introductory remarks

What makes people become *national*? This question has dominated an important intellectual trend within the study of nationhood and ethnicity for the last decade. The responses given to this question are manifold and describe how, when and why ordinary people use and reproduce national or ethnic frames of social cognition and action.[1] While these works offer a splendid account on the forms of *being* national, they often neglect to address the ways of *becoming* national. The present study aims to address this very issue by examining an educational tourism project sponsored by the Hungarian government. Initiated as a pilot project in 2010, the *Határtalanul* (in English: Boundless or Borderless) program has, thus far, offered financial support for around 38,000 teenagers with the specific objective to "enrich the knowledge about the Hungarians living beyond the borders, to foster connections with Hungarians who do not reside in Hungary, and to facilitate the communal/public engagement of pupils."[2]

The project which provides financial support for high school students to visit, in an institutionally organized manner, fellow ethnic Hungarian colleagues living outside of Hungary has, in this sense, an explicitly nation-building aim. It was envisaged by governmental elites as a means of political socialization, one that attempts to inculcate certain notions of Hungarianness in the targeted pupils; in other words, it seeks to make them *national*. Határtalanul can easily be placed within a long chain of transborder nation-building policies which have been implemented by consecutive Hungarian governments during the

[1] Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004); Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood," *Ethnicities* 8, no. 4 (2008): 536–563.

[2] "BGA-13-HA-03 - Együttműködés Gimnáziumok Között - Pályázati Felhívás," *Bethlen Gábor Alapkezelő Zrt.*, n.d., http://bgazrt.hu/hatartalanul/palyazatok/gimnaziumok/egyuttmukodes_gimnaziumok_kozott/. (my translation)

last two and a half decades. These policies have functioned to institutionalize of a Hungarian nation which transcends the borders of Hungary and includes all the ethnic Hungarian communities living in the territories of the former Greater Hungary.

Unlike most of the aforementioned nation-building practices, Határtalanul does not target external kin-minorities, but works with homeland citizens and seeks to influence their patterns of identification and self-understanding. The research question that arises out of this observation concerns the reasons for focusing on homeland citizens as the targets of transborder nation-building. Why is it important and necessary for the nation-building agenda of the Hungarian government to influence the patterns of identification of homeland residents?

After introducing the main topics and reviewing the most important conceptual issues and bibliographical references in the first two chapters, the third chapter of this thesis considers answers to the question posed above. In this latter part, I argue that during the last two and a half decades we have witnessed a gradual intensification and deepening of transborder nation-building policies and more restrained attempts of cultural institutionalization were step by step complemented by an ever stronger drive towards political integration. Although these policies primarily targeted ethnic Hungarians from the outside the country's border, they have also had an important impact on the domestic political life of Hungary; as such they have become polarizing factors in the domestic political scene.

As a large body of empirical evidence shows, a considerable part of Hungarian society does not identify with, but rather resists the conception of the transborder Hungarian nation. In this sense there is considerable dissonance between the aims of the government and the preferences of the citizens; or, in an Andersonian terminology,[3] the community imagined by the government does not wholly overlap with the imagination of the putative members of

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

the community. This gap or dissonance causes difficulties for the implementation of the policies of political integration of the transborder Hungarian nation, and needs to be diminished. In the third chapter, therefore, I argue that through projects like Határtalanul we are witnessing the governmentalization of nation-building. By targeting homeland citizens the government aims at creating subjects that are suitable for, and conducive to, the successful implementation of other measures of transborder nation-building.

Nonetheless, the question remains: how do these ideal subjects of nation-building look like? In the same third chapter I consider the main features of the Határtalanul program, the requirements of application, and the criteria for funding as well as at the discourses of relevant politicians and policy-makers. By doing this I contend that there is a body of knowledge related to the transborder Hungarians; a body of knowledge that is produced internally by the program and which is the primary instrument that frames the experiences and self-understandings of the pupils participating in the trips.

Additionally, I sketch the ideal portrait of the subject emerging from these tours. The different governmental discourses put an important emphasis, on one hand, on the experience of categorical sameness between Hungarians from Hungary and transborder Hungarians, and on the other hand, on the connections and networks among these people. In this sense, an ideal subject emerging from these trips is one that has a genuine experience of commonality or sameness with the Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary and has a network of acquaintances among them. Most importantly, however, this ideal subject acquires and, by participating in the tours, produces knowledge endogenous to the project; knowledge according to which there is a well-defined, unitary transborder Hungarian nation that can be visited, experienced and grasped through ordinary practices.

The fourth and fifth chapter of this study concerns itself not with this ideal portrait but with the actual high school students who participated in the trips organized under the aegis of

Határtalanul. In the fourth chapter I ask how these teenagers encounter the places and people that they visit. What are the factors that influence these encounters? How and why do the students accept, resist, transform or subvert the governmental discourses and public narratives that are transmitted through their professors and guide? At this point I claim that there are two main dichotomies within the practices which organize the modes of touristic encounters experienced by the tourists: formal vs. informal and discursive vs. embodied practices. The students involved display a notable preference for informal practices over the official schedule that was submitted at the application for funding. They also prefer embodied practices over more discourse-oriented practices of encountering places. Through this dual predilection, participants create a relatively free zone for maneuvering, in which the relatively tight control of the official program is challenged and alternative modes of encounter are opened.

Nevertheless, the pupils are not completely free of the public narratives and social representations of the people and regions which are visited. The narratives attached to transborder Hungarians do frame the experiences and interpretations of the teenagers. The most pervasive interpretative frame, in this sense, is the duality of familiarity and exoticism in the representation of transborder Hungarians. Exoticizing and orientalizing frames are used at each step by the participants when they are trying to make sense of their experiences.

The main question posed by the fifth chapter refers to the impact of the trips on the patterns of identification and self-understanding of the participants. How do the governmental discursive practices encoded in the program influence the social cognition of the students? The major observation related to these questions consists of the ambiguity that persists in the relationship between the journeys and the nation-building goals of Határtalanul. I identify several features concerning the structural setting of tourism and the orientalism of the narratives; features which undermine the nation-building character of the trips and, instead of

directing attention to categorical similarity, distance the homeland Hungarian guests from their transborder Hungarian hosts. The extraordinary nature of the trips places them outside of ordinary time and space within which national identifications are reproduced. Furthermore, the growth of temporal distance also erodes human connections that may have been formed during the trips.

Overall, this study claims that the trips constitute a frame within which the content of national identifications and self-understandings of the students are shaped through the interaction of governmental discursive practices, individual agency from the part of the students and teachers, and the structural characteristics of tourism. Such an interactive approach makes it clear that the tours do not function as simple transmission belts passing on a message from the elites to the students and molding the latter according to the whims and wishes of the former. In most cases the trips do not foster a profound identification with a transborder conception of the nation; rather reproduce already existing shared representations of the internal "other".

2. On the empirical data

The empirical basis for the study is drawn informal group interviews conducted with participants of the Határtalanul excursions to areas populated by ethnic Hungarian minorities. These interviews reflect on the *a posteriori* assimilation of the *in situ* experiences into the perspectives, worldviews and personal identity-narratives of the teenagers. They offer us an insight into the ways and modes in which the trips are filtered through the eyes of the youngster.

Adolescence and early youth are a crucial period in the formation of the social and political selves of individuals. According to most studies in political socialization, the ages between 14 and 25 is the period wherein the most significant changes in the political views of

the individual occur.[4] Although quantitative sociological studies have long dealt with research into political socialization, their ambiguous results though useful in identifying some agents of socialization, cannot elucidate the actual mechanisms through which these agents function or the factors that explain their relative strength or influence.[5]

There are two basic theoretical assumptions emerging from these inquiries. On the one hand, we are aware that agents of socialization (family, school, peer group, media, etc.) not only integrate youngsters into society, but also provide them with the social, economical, cultural and symbolical experiences on which the future attitudes and identifications will be based.[6] On the other hand, it is also clear that the teenagers are not a mere passive recipients of these inputs, norms and values coming from the family, the educational system or the peer groups; rather the teenagers actively shape them.[7]

In order to uncover the precise mechanisms of encountering places and people, encountering nationhood and conceptualizing self-understandings in the present study, I have chosen to work with qualitative methods. The chosen technique (group discussions) makes possible the undertaking of substantial micro-research which can answer the questions formulated in the introductory remarks. Although these discussions were not "proper" focus groups interviews *per se*, similarly to this technique, the discussions carried out by myself collect "data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher".[8] The emphasis here is on group interaction, this feature transforms group interviews into means suitable for mapping "how individuals negotiate and reconstruct their sense of who they are,

[4] Mihály Csákó, "Ifjúság És Politika [Youth and Politics]," *Educatio*, no. 4 (2004): 540.
[5] Csákó, "Ifjúság És Politika [Youth and Politics]."
[6] István Murányi, "Tizenévesek Előítéletessége És Demokráciához Való Viszonya [Prejudice and the Attitudes Towards Democracy in the Case of Tenneagers]," *Új Ifjúsági Szemle [New Youth Review]*, no. Spring (2010): 49.
[7] Csákó, "Ifjúság És Politika [Youth and Politics]," 541.
[8] David L Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 6.

their commonality, connectedness and groupness, in relation to other concepts [...], such as embeddedness in public narratives about nation(s)"[9]

The semi-structured group interviews recreate the group environment within which the pupils took part during the trip, they show the different dynamics within these groups, and hence display the impact of peers on the individual reconstruction of the experiences. At the basis of this research stand five discussions carried out with groups of 16-18-year old high school students. The smallest group consisted of three, while the largest group consisted of six members. The groups were homogeneous in the sense that they encompassed only people who participated together in the trips. This aspect ensured a more comfortable environment for the interviewees, and made possible the creation of shared narrative stream that barely needed the intervention of the interviewer. The spontaneous, semi-structured nature of the conversations is one of the most valuable aspects of my empirical material, since it points to the events, impressions, experiences and *a posteriori* rationalizations that were significant for the pupils and minimized the danger for the researcher to insist issues into reality.

During each discussion I had prepared some general lines into which I was planning to inquire: the general infrastructure of the tours, the preceding preparations, the programs during the trips, and their aftermath. I asked the students about their most memorable experiences, about the activities they undertook in their free time and so on. Often I used some projective technology, relying on the printout of the official schedule, photographs, or other materials prepared for the trips.

When selecting the groups my primary goal was to pick individuals from different socio-economic and educational background, thus making my findings more generalizable. Due to infrastructural reasons I was unable to reproduce faithfully the regional dispersion of the trips: out of the five discussions four took place in Budapest, and only one outside of it, in

[9] Tünde Puskás, *"We Belong to Them". Narratives of Belonging, Homeland and Nationhood in Territorial and Non-territorial Minority Settings* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009), 66.

the city of Pécs. However, the chosen groups included elite high schools and working class, specialized secondary schools, institutions with a declared religious profile and ordinary public schools. In the thesis I mostly explore the experiences which are similar despite the aforementioned differences in the participants' backgrounds. I do, however, note when certain particularities alter the way in which participants related to the journeys.

By applying this methodology and sampling my goal is not to offer statements valid for the entire population that participated in these trips. I am not able to control all the variables that might have a say in the whole process; as such my findings have a restricted validity. Rather, my objective was to uncover the cogs and wheels that make these trips unfold. Claims made about the students' preference for informal encounters and embodied practices, the powerful influence of public narratives or of the virtual geography promoted by Határtalanul may be used as further hypotheses for other cases, but the foremost relevance of these findings lies in their micro-character, i.e. in the fact that they go as close as possible to the actual subjects of the policy and trace the interaction of the general policy-sphere with its actual subjects and with the features of tourism as a medium chosen by the framers of the policy.

II. Theoretical framework and literature review

The present thesis identifies three distinct – but interacting – analytical levels: 1. governmental intentions and public discursive macro-practices; 2. individual agency from the part of the students, teachers and hosts participating in the tours; and 3. social practices involved in tourism. Following these three tracks, I will explore the scholarly literature covering these issues whilst concurrently pointing to the theoretical and empirical gaps that this study proposes to fill. First, I present the most important works studying the policies of the consecutive Hungarian governments aimed at the institutionalization of particular conceptions of nationhood (in Hungarian known as *nemzetpolitika*). Following this, I dwell on the micro-social aspects of identity-construction, putting a special emphasis on quotidian social settings and individual agency. Lastly, I explore the intertwining of tourism and identity-construction underlining the peculiarities of touristic practices.

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Since the late 1980s – early 1990s, Hungary has been a prominent locus for nationalist politics. Although by the end of the second post-communist decade nationalism gradually turned its attention "inwards" as well – with the resurgence of xenophobic and anti-Roma attitudes in mainstream politics – these two decades were mostly characterized by an "outward" attention. Hungarian nationalist politics in the last twenty years has been primarily preoccupied with ethnic kins living outside the boundaries of Hungary. The question of transborder Hungarians (*határon túli magyarság*) figured among the top issues for governments seated in Budapest. The Hungarian state, thus, embarked on a road of *transsovereign* or *transborder* nationalism which, according to the definition of Zsuzsa Csergő and James M. Goldgeier, denotes the attempt of particular states to define and

institutionalize the concept of nation in a manner that would include citizens of other states into the national community.[10]

The various transborder nation-building policies implemented during the period under discussion form a well-contoured arc whose trajectory leads to an ever tighter and more profound integration of ethnic Hungarians into the political body of Hungary. Nándor Bárdi's historical overview dating from 2004 presents accurately this evolution. Bárdi describes the ideas and policies adopted by consecutive governments and the gradual intensification of kin-state politics that reached its climax (at the time of writing his article) with the adoption of the Status Law. Perhaps, his most important contribution is to offer historical data about the main trajectories in the institutionalization of the Hungarian nation transcending state borders. It shows how transborder cultural institutions were created and broadened, at first, and how this cultural institutionalization was later complemented with a political dimension.[11]

Since the early 2000s, several new policies have been introduced, without however altering the already established course. Since 2011, transborder Hungarians have been offered external citizenship – acquired through a simplified process of naturalization – as well as being granted voting rights. In conceptual terms, this arc of kin-state politics can be grasped through the conceptual trio proposed by Csilla Hatvany. She pinpoints three different forms of kin-state politics: national responsibility, national integration, and national incorporation.[12]

Using these notions, the trajectory of Hungarian transborder nationalism can be described in the following manner: the initial mild policies of "national responsibility" that

[10] Zsuzsa Csergő and James M. Goldgeier, "Nationalist Strategies and European Integration," in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004), 273.
[11] Nándor Bárdi, "The History of Relations Between Hungarian Governments and Ethnic Hungarians Living Beyond the Borders of Hungary," in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004), 58–84.
[12] Csilla Hatvany, "Legitimacy of Kin-State Politics: A Theoretical Approach," *Regio Yearbooks* 9 (2006): 47 – 64.

aimed to assist the cultural reproduction of ethnic Hungarians living outside Hungary, were replaced by policies of "national integration", which in turn gave place to "national incorporation". Within national integration external kin-minorities were seen as integral parts of Hungary's ethno-national majority and, as a consequence, they were provided with opportunities for participating in the country's national structures. This category of policies also entailed an increase in the intensity and nature of aid given to kin-minorities by introducing certain financial and educational benefits within the Hungarian legal system. National incorporation went beyond this with the extension of citizenship and voting rights to the external kin-minorities.

The cluster of transborder nation-building efforts forms a node in which different political and societal processes, macro- and micro-processes interlock. I will subsequently the analytical distinctions between political and societal, macro- and micro-social, as well as inward- and outward-directed dimensions of this phenomenon; though I not that their differentiation in reality is not so clear-cut.

Scholarly research on the political macro-aspects of Hungarian transborder nation-building puts primary emphasis on their domestic political value. That is to say, besides their impact on external kin-minorities, these policies involve domestic political stakes for the Hungarian political elites. In an empirically rich volume Myra A. Waterbury discusses the different ways in which transborder ethnic affiliations are used by kin-state elites to further their political goals.[13] She argues that since the end of 1980s elites utilized the issue of Hungarians beyond the borders in order to obtain domestic political legitimacy, create and articulate their constituencies or strengthen their organizational structures.

A similar point is demonstrated from an anthropological perspective by Gábor Halmai. He describes the creation of the so-called "Civic Circles" by the moderate-

[13] Myra A. Waterbury, *Between State and Nation: Diaspora Politics and Kin-state Nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

conservative-turned-populist party of Fidesz, and the role of nationalism in this process. He argues that through these circles Fidesz channeled back to politics a large mass of people socially and economically dispossessed by the post-communist democratic transition and provided them with a grand narrative of nationalism and specters of nationalist social security and protection.[14] Halmai concurs with Waterbury in stating that nationalism and the issue of the kin-minorities were used by Fidesz in order to carve out constituencies and build organizational structures, but introduces a micro-perspective which is lacking in Waterbury's book. Halmai's research shows the responses given by the participants of the Civic Circles to the stimuli coming from the party-centre, and describes the dissatisfaction that numerous participants felt about Fidesz's "alleged" moderation during the 2006 political turmoil. A large segment of these aforementioned "disenchanted people" became the base for the extreme right wing movements that were born during that period.

Halmai's article is thus illustrative of the unintended consequences coded in such policies and emphasizes the agency of ordinary people. In this case, it shows the role of individuals who were introduced into politics and offered a sense of community, but only within a tightly controlled party-environment; a fact that later bred discontent.

The role of impulses coming from below is even more emphasized by the account of László Kürti on the "dance-house" movement of the late communist period.[15] The story of the dance-house movement is the story of an artistic subculture which gradually acquired more and more political features and became the societal basis for the political contestation of an entire regime. The question of transborder Hungarians served as the main catalyst for this

[14] Gábor Halmai, "(Dis)possessed by the Spectre of Socialism: Nationalist Mobilization in 'Transitional' Hungary," in *Headlines of Nations, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe*, ed. Don Kalb and Gábor Halmai (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 113–141.
[15] László Kürti, "Youth and Political Action: The Dance-House Movement and Transylvania," in *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 137–164.

movement and ultimately became one of the founding political issues of the Hungarian democracy.

The dance-house movement was also the first instance from a long series of tours, trips and touristic incursions into the regions inhabited by ethnic Hungarian communities. In the post-communist years an extended web of tours were created mainly through private initiatives and visiting the former parts of "Greater Hungary" and ethnic kins living there became a normal pastime for ordinary Hungarians. The Határtalanul project builds on these previously existing networks, but adds an additional dimension by bringing state-sponsorship together with political intentions.

The policies of transborder nation-building targeted and affected mostly the Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary. The most important landmarks – the Status Law,[16] the introduction of non-resident citizenship and voting rights[17] – all had important effects on the political and social life of these kin-minorities. In this sense Hungarian nation-building is predominantly outward-looking, that is, seeking to institutionalize a national community by targeting people not residing in the national homeland. Many authors have discussed the ways in which these political efforts are reflected by the patterns of identification in case of the target populations,[18] highlighting the fact that although

[16] Osamu Ieda, "Post-communist Nation Building and the Status Law Syndrome in Hungary," in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004), 3 – 57; Zoltán Kántor, "Re-intitutionalizing the Nation - Status Law and Dual Citizenship," *Regio Yearbooks* 8 (2005): 40 – 49; Michael Stewart, "The Hungarian Status Law: A New European Form of Transnational Politics?," in *The Hungarian Status Law: Nation Building And/or Minority Protection*, ed. Zoltán Kántor et al. (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2004), 120 – 151.

[17] Mária M. Kovács, "The Politics of Dual Citizenship in Hungary," *Citizenship Studies* 10, no. 4 (2006): 431–451; Szabolcs Pogonyi, M. Mária Kovács, and Zsolt Körtvélyesi, *The Politics of External Kin-State Citizenship in East Central Europe*, EUDO Citizenship Observatory (Badia Fiesolana, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Italy: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies in collaboration with Edinburgh University Law School, October 2010), http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/ECEcompreport.pdf; Szabolcs Pogonyi, "Dual Citizenship and Sovereignty," *Nationalities Papers* 39, no. 5 (2011): 685–704.

[18] Irina Culic, "Nationhood and Identity: Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania," in *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi et al. (Budapest and Iasi: Regio Books & Polirom, 2011), 227–248; Dénes Kiss, "A Határon Túli Magyarok Képe Önmagukról, a Magyarországi Magyarokról És a Többségi Nemzetekről," in *Az Autonóm Lét Kihívásai Kisebbségben. Kisebbségi Riport*, ed. Ferenc Dobos (Budapest: Balázs Ferenc Intézet, Book in Print, Osiris, 2001), 335–387;

identifying themselves with the Hungarian nation, the individuals belonging to these minorities do possess distinctive identities which do not correspond to the models promoted from Budapest.

Secondary correlates of these transborder nation-building efforts are the different practices of symbolic appropriation – and these already have to do at least as much with outward-oriented nation-building as with the inward-oriented one. Kürti has already touched upon the fact that the dance-house movement attached the authentic forms of national existence to the image of Transylvania and did this to further its own agenda concerning the reshaping of Hungarian national identity. Margit Feischmidt presents how the symbolic appropriation of Transylvania (and by extension the other regions populated by ethnic Hungarians) came to rely on a dyad of sameness and otherness, familiarity and exoticism, and how this duality is produced through social practice.[19] Symbolic appropriation functions similarly to stereotyping in the sense that it is permeated by power relations and is inherently involved in the production of boundaries and difference.[20]

It can, thus, be argued that Hungarian transborder nation-building policies – although explicitly targeting ethnic Hungarians from outside – are primarily concerned with shaping the attitudes and subjectivities of homeland citizens, in order to create the necessary conditions, in a circular manner, for the successful implementation of the very same policies. In other words, we are witnessing the *governmentalization* of nation-building policies, governmentality being understood as an ensemble formed by institutions, procedures,

Antal Örkény and Mária Székelyi, "Constructing Border Ethnic Identities Along the Frontier of Central and Eastern Europe - A Research Note," *Romanian Sociology*, no. 1 (2011): 14–24.

[19] Margit Feischmidt, "A Magyar Nacionalizmus Autenticitás-diskurzusainak Szimbolikus Térfogalása Erdélyben (The Symbolic Appropriation of Transylvania by the Authenticity-discourses of Hungarian Nationalism)," in *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók (Transylvania-(de)constructions)*, ed. Margit Feischmidt (Budapest, Pécs: Néprajzi Múzeum, PTE Kommunikáció- és Médiatudományi Tanszék, 2005), 7–32; Adrienné Sebestyén, "'Erdélybe Utazni Más'. A Magyar Turisztikai Irodalom Erdély-képe ('It Is Different to Travel to Transylvania'. The Transylvania-image of the Hungarian Tourist Literature)," in *Erdély-(de)konstrukciók (Transylvania-(de)constructions)*, ed. Margit Feischmidt (Budapest, Pécs: Néprajzi Múzeum, PTE Kommunikáció- és Médiatudományi Tanszék, 2005), 51–68.

[20] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 223–279.

rationales and techniques of governance placed at the intersection of the technologies of power/domination and the technologies of the self.[21] Using the Foucauldian concept of governmentality it can be shown how subjects of governance are actively created and mobilized though the rationales and techniques of government that define, characterize and incorporate them for particular ends.[22]

As I have illustrated in the preceding paragraphs, there is an abundant scholarly literature about certain macro- and micro-aspects of Hungarian transborder nation-building There is, however, a considerable gap concerning the ways in which governmental practices have impacted on the population of Hungary and attempted to construct new subjectivities suitable to the pursuit of more extensive, more radical nation-building goals. The Határtalanul project offers an intriguing example in this sense; a strategic case study for the observation of these mechanisms of constructing and transforming subjectivities.

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In order to analyze the transformation of individual subjectivities, identifications and self-understandings, I draw upon the conceptual toolkit of the theories concerning everyday ethnicity and nationhood as well as those discussing narrative identity. The conceptual framework at the basis of the research is, therefore, dominated by an overtly cognitivist approach and is preoccupied with the mental frames out of which social interactions grow. A foundational issue of such a cognitivist approach is the blurring of the line between narrative and experience conceived as two different sources of social cognition. In an empirically

[21] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 84–104; Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49.
[22] Mike Raco, "Governmentality, Subject-Building, and the Discourses and Practices of Devolution in the UK," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, no. 1 (2003): 75–95.

grounded study, Maurice Bloch claims[23] that the mechanisms of retention in the case of experience-based autobiographical memory and in that of narrative-based historical memory are similar. Bloch states that narratives are not stored in a linguistic form, but rather as mental representation of what the narrated event was like. Conversely, the recalling of distant autobiographical experiences can become more like the recalling of events that happened to other which one has been told about. By undermining the distinction in the cognitive functioning of these two types of memories, Bloch puts narrative and experience on a relatively equal footing. This argument is essential when the trips organized under the auspices of Határtalanul project are concerned, given that these instances lie at the intersection of narratives and lived experiences.

Ethnic and national identities – which, according to Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues, are not fixed, substantial entities, things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world[24] – feed on these narratives and experiences, but also shape them in turn. One primary implication of the argument proposed by this thesis is that the trips organized within the Határtalanul project are intimately involved in shaping the identities of the participants. However, as Brubaker and Frederick Cooper point out the term "identity" is an extremely robust one and as such its analytical value becomes questionable.[25] The two scholars disentangle the different layers of meaning attached to the concept, proposing concept of *identification* to deal with the construction of relational and categorical modes of self-perception and perception by others; and the concept of *self-understanding* to refer to one's sense of who one is and how one is prepared to act on the basis of that.

[23] Maurice E. F. Bloch, "Autobiographical Memory and the Historical Memory of the More Distant Past," in *How We Think They Think. Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 114–127.
[24] Rogers Brubaker, Mara Loveman, and Peter Stamatov, "Ethnicity as Cognition," in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, by Rogers Brubaker (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 64–87.
[25] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, by Rogers Brubaker (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28–63.

While reviewing the different layers of meanings acquired by the term identity, the authors elaborate a model for understanding the "collective" dimensions of social identities. They name three elements necessary for the formation of such identifications understood as cognitive and interactional frameworks: categorical commonality, relational connectedness and a sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group. These three elements – commonality, connectedness and groupness – can serve as a basis for the empirical operationalization of the formation of identifications, self-understanding and putative groups. Empirical researchers ought to look at the practices through which categorical commonality, relational connectedness and a sense of belonging are produced in particular settings.

A cognitivist approach towards nationhood and identity requires two more issues to be discussed. The concepts of narrative and narrative identity have to be dissected and the practices through which nationhood as a cognitive frame is enacted in everyday social life have to be listed. As pointed out previously, narrative can be one factor shaping, giving form to, identities, but it has several other functions. First and foremost, narrative organizes the individual experiences that constitute an individual, and through it, the individual acquires a sense of coherence and self-sameness, i.e. identity.[26]

According to Margaret R. Somers, narrative is an ontological condition of social life – social identification, experience, action and institutions are all of fundamentally storied nature.[27] Narrative provides social identity with historicity and relationality, that is, it anchors identity in time and space and emphasizes its intersubjective nature. Thus, relationality becomes a crucial notion since individuals, actions and events can only be understood in their relationship with other social instances. Emplotment becomes the process which orders these various interrelated instances and organizes them into a coherent whole.

[26] Douglas Ezzy, "Theorizing Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics," *The Sociological Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1998): 239–252.
[27] Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994): 605–649.

While narrative can be, concurrently, the source, the logic and the outcome of social identities, it is not the most effective conceptual tool to discover the manifestations of these identities (as cognitive frames) in everyday social practice. For this latter task the works of Jon E. Fox are especially enlightening. In several of his works, Fox presents how ethnic and national identities are enacted in everyday life, and how individual actors transform or subvert the nationalist impulses coming from the political elites.[28] He concurs with the argument put forward in the Cluj-monograph coordinated by Brubaker[29] according to which researchers have to look beyond the narrative manifestations of identifications and look for practices that make these identifications *experientially salient*. Using the example of university students, Fox shows that individuals are capable of discursively reproducing the nationally polarized terms of nationalist politics, however, there are few occasions in which they engage in such issues. When they are prompted, the students he studied could order information in accordance with the publicly available nationalist frames, but these frames were not enacted in everyday life.[30]

Together with Cynthia Miller-Idriss, Fox categorized the different practices in which national identity is enacted, i.e. it is used as a "cognitive and interactional resource"[31] in everyday social life. They differentiate between four types of practices: talking the nation, choosing the nation, performing the nation and consuming the nation.[32] This categorization can be of tremendous help for empirical research, by observing the different practices enlisted here can show how people acquire certain national frames and contents, how they become *national*.

[28] Jon E. Fox, "Consuming the Nation: Holidays, Sports, and the Production of Collective Belonging," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 217–236.
[29] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*.
[30] Jon E. Fox, "Missing the Mark: Nationalist Politics and Student Apathy," *East European Politics & Societies* 18, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 363–393.
[31] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*.
[32] Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."

The most important critiques of the cognitivist approach underline that such a perspective fails to place identification processes into situated fields of power. Talking about the Cluj-monograph, Norbert Petrovici states that nationhood and ethnicity "are not just conversations, they are signifiers that emerge and derive their meaning from fields of power in the world out there."[33] Petrovici describes how the seemingly non-nationalist stance of Romanians living in Cluj means, in fact, a permanent, taken-for-granted, non-contested presence of nationalistic political discourse, and explains why the ethnic Romanian inhabitants of the city accepted and supported this with their votes. He claims that nationalist entrepreneurs managed to recompose the symbolical space of the city in which recently urbanized workers were rendered redundant by the economic conditions of Romania's first post-communist decade.

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The formation of identities is often linked to ideas of space, tourism being one of the fields where these two notions are intimately interwoven. One of the most important theoretical works on this connection between space and identity was done by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. They look at the ways in which communities and spaces are imagined in parallel with each other, and how the two processes of construction influence each other.[34] In this vein they draw some general lines of inquiry for empirical research. The first is the need to investigate how in parallel with the imagining of communities spaces are also carved out and established as separate places. That is to say, one has to examine the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive identity as place. A second task is to examine the practices of meaning-making attached to spaces, i.e. the processes through which spaces and places are

[33] Norbert Petrovici, "Articulating the Right to the City: Working-Class Neo-nationalism in Postsocialist Cluj, Romania," in *Headlines of Nations, Subtexts of Class: Working Class Populism and the Return of the Repressed in Neoliberal Europe*, ed. Don Kalb and Gábor Halmai (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 57–77.
[34] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6–23.

made, imagined, or contested – processes which are profoundly permeated by the workings of power.

In the case of educational and/or identity-tourist projects, like Határtalanul, the construction and consumption of spaces occurs in parallel with the shaping of self-understandings. As Dominic Janes observes in the case of "semester abroad" programs the study abroad experience is not simply about the passive reception of pre-packaged tourist images; rather, through various embodied practices the participant transform their views on the destination, but also on their home and on themselves as well.[35] In this sense, the tourist destinations become veritable *heterotopias*. According to Michel Foucault, heterotopias are counter-sites wherein all the other real sites that can be found within a culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. These spaces are the spaces of reflection; spaces that condense and alter ordinary social spaces and by doing so they reflect on the content, structure and meaning of these everyday social places.[36] Following this line of thought, the destinations visited by the Hungarian high school students become the embodiments of national utopias, in which the authentic forms of national life can be found. These places manage to juxtapose several other ordinary social sites, and reflect on them. They "create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled."[37]

This construction of, and reflection on, self, otherness, community and space within tourism is first and foremost a function of social practices. Recent social science literature on tourist practices puts an outstanding emphasis on *performativity* as a fundamental component of this endeavour. The performativity approach looks at tourist destinations and attractions as nodes of reiterated performative acts and, as such, redistributes agency within tourism,

[35] Dominic Janes, "Beyond the Tourist Gaze? Cultural Learning on an American 'Semester Abroad' Programme in London," *Journal of Research in International Education* 7, no. 1 (2008): 21–35.
[36] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27.
[37] Ibid., 27.

focusing much more on hosts and guest than on public construction of places.[38] In a similar vein these investigations challenge the predominance of textual and visual consumption in tourism and propose the notion of embodied consumption. Tijana Rakic and Donna Chambers claim that embodied consumption and construction of places at the point of visitation involve not just corporeal and multisensory aspects, but also cognitive and affective processes. They also argue that consumption and construction of places are simultaneous, indistinguishable processes in which both tourists and locals play an active role.[39]

The concept of authenticity, so crucial for tourism since its very beginnings, is also reinterpreted in the light of this theoretical shift. Erik Cohen and Scott A. Cohen argue convincingly that scholarly interest should be turned from the notion of authenticity to processes of authentication. They conceptualize two analytically distinct but practically often intersecting modes of authentication – hot and cool – which they claim to be conducive to different types of touristic experiences.[40]

A further question related to the tourist experience is that of temporality. Concurring with the cognitivist views on ethnic and national identities, Tim Edensor foregrounds the significance of everyday life and habit to the reproduction of these identities. He focuses on institutionalized schedules, habitual routines, collective synchronicities and serialized time-spaces to develop an argument that quotidian, cyclical time is integral to national identity.[41] The trips analyzed here do not belong to the realm of this routinized, cyclical habitual time, but belong to an extraordinary temporality. The challenge for the researcher is to see how the former permeates the latter and how the latter can be incorporated into the quotidian time. It

[38] Erik Cohen and Scott A. Cohen, "Current Sociological Theories and Issues in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 4 (2012): 2177–2202.
[39] Tijana Rakić and Donna Chambers, "Rethinking the Consumption of Places," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 3 (2012): 1612–1633.
[40] Erik Cohen and Scott A. Cohen, "Authentication: Hot and Cool," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39, no. 3 (2012): 1295–1314.
[41] Tim Edensor, "Reconsidering National Temporalities: Institutional Times, Everyday Routines, Serial Spaces and Synchronicities," *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 4 (2006): 525–545.

becomes, thus, an empirical question whether the extraordinary time of the trips favours or disfavours the production of altered forms of identification. Scott McCabe and Duncan Marson are of the opinion, however, that tourist experience is of an enduring character. They see it as both lasting and flexible, constructed *a priori*, *in situ* and *a posteriori*. In other words, the tourist brings back the experience into the domestic sphere, reproduces and reifies the constructed space of experience, thus making it of lasting influence.[42]

All these theoretical considerations taken together can serve as the basis for empirical, ethnographic research elucidating the intricacies of tourism, individual subjectivities and putative national communities. There are a considerable number of similar monographs elaborated in different social contexts. For the perspective of this thesis, two such works have to be mentioned. Shaul Kelner's book on *Birthright Israel* tours offers a fascinating insight into the ways in which young university students, tour guides, hosts and policymakers interact within the framework of this program.[43] Kelner emphasizes the limits to the ability of policymakers to use tourism as a means of inscribing official discourses of identity on the self-understanding of tourists and points out the active role of participants in shaping the entire experience. Nevertheless, he does not deny the formative nature of these tours, even though the end product does not look like a planned one. The book also offers a comprehensive account of the discursive and non-discursive practices, the interpersonal and group dynamics as well as the cognitive and affective dimensions of the embodied practices entailed by the tours.

[42] Scott McCabe and Duncan Marson, "Tourist Constructions and Consumptions of Space: Place, Modernity and Meaning," in *Tourism and Social Identities: Global Frameworks and Local Realities*, ed. Peter M. Burns and Marina Novelli (Oxford and Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 91–108.
[43] Shaul Kelner, *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

A similar enterprise is Jackie Feldman's piece of the trips of young Israelis in the Polish sites of the Holocaust.[44] Feldman's main focus is the transformation of individual subjectivities or more precisely how the participants' self-understandings are transformed into ones of victims, survivors and witnesses. Both of these books can offer valuable theoretical and methodological guidelines for the study of such a topic.

[44] Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008).

III. Transborder nation-building and homeland citizens

1. Intensifying Hungarian nation-building: from national responsibility to national incorporation

There are many interpretative lenses through which the history of a state can be read. In the case of Hungary's post-1989 history one of the most salient interpretative frames is nationalism.[45] The question of the nation has remained in the center of political debates all throughout the two and a half decades that have passed since the fall of the authoritarian, "goulash-communist" regime of János Kádár. Nationalism even contributed to the withering away of this political system, since the question of the Hungarian nation and of ethnic kins living outside the borders of Hungary facilitated the articulation of the anti-communist opposition, or at least, of parts of this opposition.[46]

The newly democratic Hungarian polity began with its first Prime Minister, József Antall declaring himself "in spirit and feelings"[47] the prime minister of fifteen million Hungarians – an allusion to all the ethnic Hungarians who lived outside of his immediate jurisdiction. This gesture marks the official beginning of a governmental interest in transborder Hungarians, however, this is still a symbolical interest which was to become years later translated into more incorporating political actions. Due to spatial considerations and the scope of this thesis, I cannot enumerate all the political debates, laws and policies that

[45] When talking about "nationalism", "nationalistic politics" or "nationalistic attitudes" I am talking in the particular sense about a social attitude, worldview and an ensemble of practices that can be characterized as a subtype of what Rogers Brubaker calls groupism. Although Burbaker criticizes the analytical usage of groupism in social science, he also recognizes the groupist ways of seeing and acting are constituent parts of social practice. Nationalism in this sense is a particular pattern in social cognition and social practice which sees nations as "discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life" and bases the concept of nation at the heart of social and political action. Nationalism thus means also being actively involved in some kind of social of political activity aimed at the building, institutionalization or reproduction of a putative community, called the nation. This involvement with the image of the nation can be of varying intensity, nationalistic attitudes and actions, thus, spread out on a continuum between mild and more emphasized forms. See also Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," in *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7–24.

[46] Kürti, "Youth and Political Action: The Dance-House Movement and Transylvania."

[47] Szabolcs Pogonyi, "National Reunification Beyond Borders: Diaspora and Minority, Politics in Hungary Since 2010," in *European Yearbook of Minority Issues 2011* (Bolzano, Italy: European Center of Minority Issues, Forthcoming).

occurred since then on the margins of this issue of the Hungarian nation.[48] However, by looking at these instances one can see that the post-communist history of Hungary as the history of continuous and repeated attempts on the part of the governing elites to extend their jurisdiction over that segment of the 15-million-worth Hungarian nation which was living in the neighboring states of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia.

In other words, what one sees is the attempt to institutionalize a Hungarian nation which transcends state boundaries and includes not just the citizens of Hungary-proper, but all the ethnic Hungarian minorities living on the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This process of definition and institutionalization, what Zsuzsa Csergő and James M. Goldgeier termed transborder nationalism,[49] had practical consequences for the lives of both homeland Hungarians and external kins, and also shaped the political development of Hungary and its relations with its neighbors.

Despite cabinet turnovers and directional changes within Hungarian politics transborder nation-building has remained a constant presence and it underwent a remarkably linear evolution in the last twenty-three years. At this point I am using the terminology of Csilla Hatvany[50] in claiming that the scope and depth of nation-building was considerably extended throughout this period: the initial mild policies of symbolic and cultural assistance were gradually replaced by more and more extensive material support and were paralleled by an increasing political integration of transborder Hungarians into the Hungarian polity. This process culminated in the introduction of non-resident citizenship and voting rights.

In the words of Csilla Hatvany, thus, transborder nation-building developed through the 1990s from a simple stance of national responsibility-taking into one of national integration. This latter pattern had already transcended the minimalist objective of assisting

[48] Others have already accomplished this task, see for example Bárdi, "The History of Relations Between Hungarian Governments and Ethnic Hungarians Living Beyond the Borders of Hungary"; Waterbury, *Between State and Nation*.
[49] Csergő and Goldgeier, "Nationalist Strategies and European Integration," 273.
[50] Hatvany, "Legitimacy of Kin-State Politics: A Theoretical Approach."

the cultural reproduction of the kin-minorities and started to view them as parts of the Hungarian polity. The introduction of the so-called Status Law at the beginning of the 1990s began to offer participation in the social, cultural and economic life of Hungary to non-citizen ethnic Hungarians; the main criterion for these benefits being ethno-national belonging.[51] By 2010 the Status Law developed into non-resident citizenship and voting rights, and thus the whole process culminated in measures of national incorporation.

Such a linear portrayal of Hungarian transborder nation-building is, of course, an *a posteriori* reconstruction and conceptualization of the whole issue. I am not claiming that at each particular point on this line the actors had a clear sense of direction or purpose. Quite the contrary, this process was heavily influenced by contingencies, the different actors changed their own stances multiple times (e.g. Fidesz's relation to external citizenship), that is to say, everything happened according to the normal logic of political life. Also, this posterior construction of a linear trajectory does not imply the existence of a well defined agency behind it; indeed, never on the course of the last twenty years were there significant political forces that would have envisaged and steered such a developmental arc. Nevertheless, the gradual extension, in scope and depth, of Hungarian nation-building cannot be denied, nor can the contribution of the two major domestic political camps to this trajectory. Both the political Left and Right have both worked on the furthering of this process and both facilitated this linear development.

It is true that major impulses came always from the right-wing agents, the events that mark the new stages in this whole evolution were precipitated unmistakably by them, however, left-wing parties also played their part. The big nationalistic pushes initiated by right-wing governments were always stabilized and consolidated by the Left. This is the case with the creation of a transborder network of institutions that provided cultural and material

[51] Ieda, "Post-communist Nation Building and the Status Law Syndrome in Hungary."

assistance to the kin-minorities; and the implementation of the Status Law as well. Even the governments of Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004-2009), the socialist prime minister demonized by the Right as "anti-national", worked on the reform and optimization of the regime which distributes financial help to Hungarian communities abroad.[52]

The two major political camps have had some significant substantial disagreements throughout the years. They opposed each other on the civic vs. ethnic definition of the Hungarian nation, on the issue of non-resident citizenship etc. However, looking back from the present, these clashes did little to stop the extension and intensification of transborder nation-building. Although often fundamentally rejecting the proposals of the right-wing parties, left-wing governments were inefficient or unwilling in reversing these proposals once they were implemented; on the contrary, they worked on their elaboration and consolidation.

Even the rhetoric of the two sides became closer to each other. The Right always had, using Michael Stewart's expression, a component of soft revisionism within its rhetoric aiming at the symbolic reconfiguration of the territorial space.[53] This occasionally not so soft, symbolic revisionism is absent from the discursive and ideological toolkit of the Left, instead there is a strong attempt to harmonize the discourses of Europeanization and modernization with kin-state politics. The creation, in the mid-90s, of an economic infrastructure aimed at the strengthening of initiatives for modernization and the construction of civil society,[54] as well as the technocratic-oriented reform of this infrastructure ten years later[55] were all carried out by left-wing governments seeking to take away the edge and electoral appeal of the emotionally-charge nationalistic rhetoric.[56]

[52] Waterbury, *Between State and Nation*, 117–142.
[53] Stewart, "The Hungarian Status Law: A New European Form of Transnational Politics?," 122.
[54] Bárdi, "The History of Relations Between Hungarian Governments and Ethnic Hungarians Living Beyond the Borders of Hungary," 70.
[55] Waterbury, *Between State and Nation*, 130–135.
[56] Ibid., 128.

However, in recent years, right-wing politicians also adopted this narrative of harmonization with "European values". The attempt to emphasize that Hungarian kin-state politics is following already existing European examples can be observed in the debates around the introduction of non-resident citizenship in 2010. This attempt can also be traced in the workings of the governmental think-tanks in charge of elaborating the intellectual underpinnings of the second Orbán-government's nation-building policy.

To sum up, periods of nationalist right-wing governance gave the major pushes towards a more and more extensive kin-state politics, whilst periods of leftist-dominance did not result in the reversal of these steps, but rather their consolidation and institutionalization. As of 2013, this pattern remains unbroken and there seems to be an overall agreement about the present state of Hungarian kin-state politics and a commitment from both sides towards the policies of non-resident citizenship and voting rights. The disagreements are not so much concerning this substantial core of the issue, they rather belong to the realm of political simulacra.[57]

2. Creating the subject of nation-building

Although it professes the primacy of the community called the nation, nationalist politics works always with individuals, whom it tries to make *national*. Modern nation-states are immensely powerful in influencing the socialization of their subjects and in framing their contexts of action in such a way as to enforce a national mode of social cognition.[58] These states employ a wide range of institutions, procedure, reflections, calculations, tactics that make modern governance possible; this ensemble of apparatuses and practices are what

[57] For the application of the concept of political simulacrum in the context of Hungarian kin-state and minority politics see Nándor László Magyari, "Kis Rommagyar Politikai Szimulákrum [A Bit of Romanian Hungarian Political Simulacrum]," *Magyar Kisebbség* 16, no. 1–2 (2011): 70–85.

[58] See for example Eugen J. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

Michel Foucault termed *governmentality*.[59] In a general sense, some modernist theories of nationalism resonate with this Foucauldian notion of governmentality by claiming that the formation of modern nations was called for by the challenges of modern governance.[60]

More important for this study are the various concrete discursive and knowledge-practices which enable the implementation of particular policies. A fascinating example is offered by Mike Raco, who describes how in the case of Scottish devolution the subjects of governance are actively created and mobilized though the rationales and techniques of government.[61] In a similar vein, I contend in this chapter that within the Határtalanul (Boundless) project we are witnessing the governmentalization of Hungarian transborder nation-building, and seeing how technologies of power and technologies of self and particular knowledge-practices permeate each other within this project in order to create subjects suited for the transborder nation-building itself.

But why is such a measure necessary, why does the government feel necessary to introduce such a measure? In order to find the answer for this question two dimensions have to be taken into consideration: the nature of prior transborder nation-building policies, on one hand, and the acceptance of these policies by the target-populations, on the other. As regards the first aspect, these policies were always oriented, at least nominally, towards ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary. Nevertheless, these policies have always had a powerful impact on the domestic Hungarian scene too. As Myra Waterbury pointed out, kin-state politics has been used by right wing actors, among other goals, for shaping constituencies,[62] which is also intrinsically a nation-building work.

[59] Foucault, "Governmentality," 102.
[60] The connection drawn up by Ernest Gellner between the emergence of nationalism and industrialization is an illustrative example in this sense. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).
[61] Raco, "Governmentality, Subject-Building, and the Discourses and Practices of Devolution in the UK."
[62] Myra A. Waterbury, "Ideology, Organization, Opposition: How Domestic Political Strategy Shapes Hungary's Ethnic Activism," *Regio Yearbooks* 9 (2006): 65 – 86.

For FIDESZ, the most important right-wing party (in power between 1998 and 2002, and since 2010) constituency-building and nation-building became one and the same task. Following the influential speech of Fidesz-leader, Viktor Orbán on May 7, 2002, in which he claimed that the "homeland cannot be in opposition", in the eyes and discourses of right-wing politicians Fidesz and the nation became synonyms. In the same speech, Orbán called for the formation of the so-called "civic circles" which became the grassroots basis for the party's future success, but also the hotbed for the extreme right that was born in the second half of the 2000s. With the help of these civic circles Fidesz brought back into mainstream politics a large mass of socially and economically dispossessed people (empowered them, as it were), but did this by offering them a grand narrative of the nation to connect them and give them a sense of belonging.[63] The issue of Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary was a crucial piece of this grand narrative, and therefore any policy concerning these kin-minorities was of essential importance for the shaping of the domestic political scene as well.

By the second decade of Hungary's post-communist democracy, thus, nation-building and party politics had become intimately connected, and for right-wing decision makers any measure taken in relation to transborder Hungarians acquired stakes in strengthening their own legitimacy, in de-legitimizing the political competitors and in constructing their own electoral base. From this perspective, any discrepancy between the imagined Hungarian nation and the self-understandings of the putative members was not only a problem for the ideal of a unified Hungarian nation, but also for the electoral successes of Fidesz. Translated to the rationale of the nation-cannot-be-in-opposition strategy this meant that the more people identify with the Fidesz-promoted idea of Hungarianness, the bigger the party's electoral support will be.

[63] Halmai, "(Dis)possessed by the Spectre of Socialism: Nationalist Mobilization in 'Transitional' Hungary."

However, when one takes a look at the relationship between the conception of the nation promoted by the Right and the patterns of self-understanding among the putative members of this imagined community, one sees serious discrepancies, both amongst transborder Hungarians and homeland Hungarians. In parallel with the intensification of transborder nation-building, there were some other modifications in the conception of Hungarianness as promoted by Fidesz. During the years we could witness a gradual move towards centralization, anti-voluntarism and uniformity.

The centralization of decisions-making within the all-Hungarian political sphere and the fight against minority-actors independent of Budapest is paralleled by the discouragement of national centers alternative to Budapest. The Hungarian nation that used to be conceived as a multi-polar one comes to be more and more centralized. The extension of citizenship and voting rights is just one institutional example of this move.

In a similar manner the conception of Hungarianness advocated by the Right came to be more and more focused on the institutional ascription of identity instead of voluntary choice. Already in the case of the Status Law in order for someone to be recognized as a Hungarian, it was not enough to master the language and declare oneself Hungarian. A third criterion, that of external recognition by a Hungarian social or political institution, was required in order to qualify as a person within the scope of the Status Law.[64] With the introduction of non-resident citizenship a question of who is Hungarian and who is not can become even more powerfully ascribed from Budapest. As the Transylvanian political scientist, István Gergő Székely, argues there is a chance that a political cleavage will be created in the midst of self-declared minority Hungarians, a cleavage that divides individuals with and without Hungarian citizenship.[65] In such a scenario the decision of who belongs to

[64] Ieda, "Post-communist Nation Building and the Status Law Syndrome in Hungary," 21.
[65] István Gergő Székely, "Az Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt És Az Erdélyi Magyar Pártrendszer Jövője [The Hungarian People's Party of Transylvania and the Future of the Hungarian Party System from Transilvania]," *Magyar Kisebbség* 16, no. 1–2 (2011): 108–109.

the Hungarian nation would slip out completely from the hands of the individual and would become a function of governmental rules, procedures, institutions and apparatuses.

A third component of this Fidesz-promoted conception of the nation is uniformity. If we look at the hostility of the second Orbán-cabinet towards the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (the ethnic Hungarian party of Romania) or the mixed Magyar-Slovak Most-Híd party, we see that the government is opposed to any kind of politics that tries to accommodate the complexity of overlapping, multiple identities, blurred boundaries and ethnically mixed marriages. Uniformity is still not so much an expectation which is actively enforced in political practice, but rather it can be read as a passive presupposition from the part of the governmental decision-makers. That is to say, one can observe that second Orbán-cabinet is increasingly unable to elaborate differentiated policies for the different Hungarian minority-communities. More precisely, the standard image of the kin-minorities in the eyes of the government became very close to the image of the Hungarians of Eastern Transylvania, the so-called Szeklers. Their image is increasingly used as the epitome of all the minority communities and their features as basis for policy-making. However, an overwhelming majority of ethnic Hungarians live in completely different social settings than the Szekler and using them a Procrustean bed for policy-making is highly problematic.

There is ample sociological evidence which demonstrates that the government-sponsored vision of Hungarianness and the whole transborder nation-building project do not meet with unchallenged support among both homeland citizens and external kin-minorities. In the case of the latter, there is a strong culturally and linguistically understood Hungarian self-identification,[66] but this coupled with a powerful sense of distinctiveness from homeland

[66] Culic, "Nationhood and Identity: Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania," 236; Ladislav Machacek, "Slovak Republic and Its Hungarian Ethnic Minority: Sociological Reflections," *Slovak Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 3 (n.d.): 203.

Hungarians[67] and acts of disassociation from Hungary itself.[68] As regards the homeland Hungarians, the situation is similarly problematic from a nation-building perspective. The 2004 referendum on dual citizenship showed that a large portion of Hungarian society does not identify wholeheartedly with the cause of ethnic Hungarians abroad and is instead more concerned about the socio-economic aspects of the issue of dual citizenship, a reality that was fully exploited by the left-wing government of the time. Not only that a large portion of the population decided not to appear at the ballots (voter turnout was 37.67 percent), but almost half of those who cast their votes (48.43 percent) expressed rejection toward the initiative, a fact that points to the strength of their hostility.[69] According to the calculations of Mária M. Kovács an overwhelming majority of 81 percent did identify with the extension of the citizenship to their alleged co-ethnics, and expressed this by either staying away or casting a negative vote.[70]

By the end of the 2000s and the return of Fidesz to power this situation has changed, a fact that proves the success of party in disseminating nationalist stances. A survey conducted in mid-2011 showed that 61 percent of the Hungarian voters approved the introduction of non-resident dual citizenship, while a considerably diminished but still significant segment (34 percent) rejected it.[71] The same survey reveals, however, that the extension of voting rights together with citizenship is still a highly opposed question; 77 percent of the respondents claim that only those residing on the territory of Hungary should have right to vote in national elections. Even 64 percent of self-declared Fidesz-voters adopt the same attitude.

[67] Kiss, "A Határon Túli Magyarok Képe Önmagukról, a Magyarországi Magyarokról És a Többségi Nemzetekről," 338; Machacek, "Slovak Republic and Its Hungarian Ethnic Minority: Sociological Reflections," 198.
[68] Örkény and Székelyi, "Constructing Border Ethnic Identities Along the Frontier of Central and Eastern Europe - A Research Note," 19.
[69] Waterbury, *Between State and Nation*, 127.
[70] Kovács, "The Politics of Dual Citizenship in Hungary," 436.
[71] "A Medián Felmérése a Határon Túliak Választójogáról [The Survey of Medián on the Voting Rights of the Hungarians Beyond the Borders]," *Origo.hu*, August 1, 2011, http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20110801-a-median-felmerese-a-hataron-tuliak-valasztojogarol.html.

In the context of such a discrepancy between governmental conceptions and popular attitudes it becomes clear why there is a need for measures to transform the patterns of identification and self-understanding adopted by the putative members of the nation. For Fidesz this is a question of dual importance, the stakes are both ideological and electoral in nature. Ideologically speaking, in the views of the right-wing decision-makers there should be an overlap between the imagined community as it is imagined by them, on one hand, and as it is imagined by the presumed members of this putative community, on the other. The existing discrepancy, however, prompts these politicians to undertake more and more nation-building work and to diversify their techniques and methods, since a mere institutionalization of the transborder nation does not necessarily create the popular attitudes necessary for its own proper functioning.

3. Határtalanul and the ideal subject of nation-building

Határtalanul can be understood in this context as a project envisaged by its framers to fulfill the objective of transforming popular self-understandings and conceptualizations of the Hungarian nation. Set up as a result of Resolution 101/2010 adopted by the Hungarian Parliament,[72] the project is part of a broader educational scheme aimed at strengthening the "feeling of national togetherness". The resolution mandates the government to establish a Day of National Togetherness on June 4 of every year,[73] which would be celebrated in every school by special themed programs revolving around the issue of Hungarians living outside

[72] *Az Országgyûlés 101/2010. (X. 21.) OGY Határozata Az Iskolai Nemzeti Összetartozás Napja Bevezetésérõl, a Magyarországi És a Külhoni Magyar Fiatalok Közti Kapcsolatok Kialakításáról És Erõsítésérõl a Közoktatásban, Valamint a Magyarország Határain Kívül Élõ Magyarság Bemutatásáról [Resolution 101/2010 (X. 21) of the Hungarian Parliament Concerning the Introduction of the Day of National Togetherness, the Establishment and Strengthening of Relations Between Hungarian and Transborder Youth, and the Presentation of Hungarians Residing the Beyond the Borders of Hungary]*, *Magyar Közlöny No. 163*, 2010, http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/mk10163.pdf.

[73] June 4 is the anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Treaty in 1920 which dismembered the Hungarian state, the transfer of territories to the neighbouring states meant the creation of large ethnic Hungarian minorities.

the borders of Hungary. It also mandates the creation of a school trip program through which the connection between homeland and transborder Hungarian youth could be strengthened. A third element is the foundation of a so-called "House of Hungarians", this institution would play educational and coordinating role for the educational program programs mentioned previously and would also function as a knowledge-center/museum regarding the transborder Hungarians.

Határtalanul was set up as a pilot-project for the 2010-2011 academic years and from the following school year it has functioned as a fully-fledged program offering state funding on a competitive basis for schools to organize tours to regions inhabited by ethnic Hungarians and to cooperate with Hungarian-language schools from these areas. At the present there are three different tracks designed for elementary schools, technical and specialized secondary schools, and for high schools. Up until the 2012-2013 academic year, around 38-39,000 pupils had benefitted from the funding offered through this scheme. From 3000 participants in 2010, the number of "lucky" students stabilized around 16-17 thousand in 2011 and 2012.

In this section of the thesis I have reviewed the governmental conceptualizations and discourses attached to Határtalanul while contending that the relevant policy-makers view the program as an educational one with the objective of transforming subjectivities, inducing knowledge required for the successful implementation of other transborder nation-building measures presented in the previous sections. In doing this I am rely on press interviews with relevant decision-makers, most importantly the spiritual father of Határtalanul, Örs Csete; on written materials produced around the framing of the project; and on the conclusions of a conference presenting the project to teachers who are planning to submit applications for the 2013/2014 school year.[74]

[74] I attended this presentation organized in the "House of Hungarians" in Budapest on March 1, 2013.

There are two fundamental questions that have to be answered in order to discover the intentions of the framers. The first question refers to how these influential individuals conceptualize the project, while the second inquires into the ways in which these conceptualizations appear in the fabric of the project. Concerning the first question, there are some keywords that are used by politicians and the framers of the project, recurring expressions that reflect the main assumptions of the one who utter them. All these expressions point to a glorious optimism on the part of the decision-makers in relation to the potentials of the program. They all see it as an enormous opportunity for "turning national togetherness into a concrete experience"[75], for "filling with content"[76] this sense of belonging together. Örs Csete also talks of "knowledge-shaping" (*tudásformálás*) and "knowledge-input" (*tudásbevitel*),[77] while one official from the Gábor Bethlen Fund, the institution responsible for funding the trips, spoke about "long-term personality-development".

For a *prima facie* glance what we see here is education *par excellence*, in the sense that it wishes to familiarize the pupils with a supposedly exogenously existing body of knowledge; knowledge that refers to Hungarian kin-minorities, the regions they inhabit, their history and their present situation. In a volume that discusses the findings of a research that stood at the basis of the Határtalanul pilot-project, Örs Csete claims that Hungarian society, due to various historical and political reasons, has a lack of general knowledge about their ethnic kin. The school trip program wishes to fill in these very gaps and by this it changes not only the attitudes of the participants, but the entire public thinking of Hungary.[78] By acquiring this body of knowledge the state boundaries that separate the different parts of the

[75] Zsuzsanna Répás, state secretary for nation policy within the Ministry of Justice and Administrative Affairs in opening speech of the conference about the Határtalanul project (March 1, 2013)

[76] Eszter Kovács, "Menő a Magyarsággal Találkozni - Interjú Csete Örssel [It's Cool to Meet with the Hungarians - Interview with Örs Csete]," *Kitekintő.hu*, August 22, 2011, http://kitekinto.hu/karpat-medence/2011/08/22/men_a_magyarsaggal_talalkozni/.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Örs Csete, "Nemzeti Összetartozás Az Oktatásban [National Togetherness in Education]," in *Határtalanul! A Nemzeti Összetartozás Az Okatatásban [Boundless! The National Togetherness in Education]*, ed. Örs Csete (Budapest, 2011), 14–15, http://bgazrt.hu/_files/HATARTALANUL/HATARTALANUL_nemzeti_osszetartozas_az_oktatasban.pdf.

Hungarian nation are presumed to be dismantled within the minds of the people, this knowledge thus becomes a collective one shared not only by the participants but their parents and grandparents as well.[79] In Csete's conception it will become a taken-for granted attitude for the participants to challenge political boundaries and to transcend these by regularly visiting the ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary.[80] "The millions of connections thus created will condense into strong net leading from one Hungarian to another."[81]

On a closer look, however, it becomes apparent that this knowledge about the transborder Hungarians is not something that is born outside the project itself or that exists autonomously from it. Rather, it is knowledge shaped precisely within the project and is permeated by power, by the interests and assumptions of its framers. According to Michel Foucault, "truth is not by nature free – nor error servile – but (…) its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power"[82] The knowledge that is propagated though this program is a profoundly ethnicist one, and this fact determines the limits and forms of what is *sayable* within this knowledge and the limits and forms of its *approporiation*.[83] For example, as I will show in a latter chapter, the program creates a virtual geography within which the participants move. It is an ethnic topography in which the tourists meet only fellow Hungarians, move in predominantly Hungarian setting. This offers them a sense of cultural and linguistic security and a feeling of commonality with the locals, but it also shape they way they come *to know* the visited regions. It is in this sense that the knowledge-production undertaken within Határtalanul marks the boundaries of the *knowable* and *sayable*.

[79] Ibid., 16.
[80] Ibid., 19.
[81] Ibid., 13. (my translation)
[82] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 60.
[83] Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," in *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 59–60.

Governmental discourses at the margins of Határtalanul rely on the assumption that the existence and unity of the Hungarian ethnocultural nation is a natural given; a sort of natural fact which has been overshadowed by various contingent historical and political processes. But once freed from these contingencies the natural state of affairs would re-emerge and the members of the nation would automatically recognize their most profound affiliation to the natural community of the Hungarian nation. This assumption/meta-knowledge shapes the way in which it can be appropriated by the people. It cannot be appropriated but through live experience, through "touching and seeing" the unity of the nation.

In this sense, the knowledge and discourses around Határtalanul are not exogenous to the project. Their production is intimately intertwined with the unfolding of the project itself. The school trips and the knowledge that should be acquired through them are both organized and shaped by the decision-makers. The very program relies on the assumption that there is something to know about the Hungarian nation and the transborder Hungarians, and that there is such an entity as the Hungarian nation. This underlying meta-information are, however, made true partly by Határtalanul itself, since the nation itself is not a pre-existing reality, but is produced through the tours; the tours that, from the viewpoint of the framers, are just displaying in an experiential manner the existence of the nation.

Can this reading of the governmental discourses be also substantiated by the more technical aspects of the project? As I pointed out earlier funding is provided on a competitive basis, applicants are required to fulfill some mandatory criteria and to hand in proposals for the trips with a detailed plan of what they wish to accomplish during the tours. The decisions are made by the Gábor Bethlen Fund based on these proposals. An individual project consists

of three stages: a preparatory one, the trip itself, and an evaluation stage.[84] In the preparatory phase every group is required to organize a preparatory class lasting for that least three hours during which the participants get familiarized with the destinations of their tour, the history and present situation of the ethnic Hungarians living in that region, etc. This stage might also include optional program activities like visiting a museum, organizing a quiz and so on.

During the actual trip the applicants have to carry out several programs for which they get points, the decision on funding being made on the basis of these points. Students can participate in activities related to their field of study or visit places and tourist attractions organized around one particular theme of study or they can just simply attend events with cultural or national relevance. Pupils may also undertake philanthropic activities or ones that have public utility-value for the ethnic Hungarian communities they are visiting. Another possible activity, which according to the coordinators of the project is worth the most points, is the production of a material or non-material article, one that is created in cooperation with the hosts. Such products may include a technical object, an artistic artifact or a performance.

It is clear that the framers wish to somehow integrate these trips into the general educational process by encouraging their attachment to the particular topics and fields that the pupils are normally studying in school. Hence, the pupils who are learning about the catering trade in specialized secondary schools are encouraged to organize tours discovering the gastronomy of a region; students of Hungarian literature should visit the sites of great writers and poets who lived and worked in the regions outside of today's Hungary, and so on. According to Örs Csete, the reason behind this decision is to de-emphasize the extraordinary

[84] My information about the structure and criteria of application come from the presentation of the conference mentioned previously and from the guide-book published on the website of Határtalanul: "2013. Évi Pályázati Útmutató És Elszámolási Szabályzat a Határtalanul! Program Pályázati Felhívásaihoz [The Guide-book for the Application and Accounting for the 2013 Boundless Program]" (Bethlen Gábor Alapkezelő Nonprofit Zrt., 2013).

character of the trips, and turn into a normal, everyday, business-as-usual educational trip,[85] thus emphasizing the normalcy and banality of unified Hungarianness.

After the trip, the applicants still have to accomplish some tasks, such as the organization of a mandatory evaluation class summarizing the experiences of the participants. This can be complemented by other programs that involve the entire school and, in this way, the experiences of the participants are presumed to be disseminated by their colleagues who did not take part in the tours themselves.

The program items and requirements set up in the application documents and the discourses of the decision-makers within Határtalanul outline an opportunity structure which in turn traces out the portrait of an ideal pupil that comes out at the end of such a trip. After reviewing these materials I can argue that such an ideal outcome or product of Határtalanul has three main characteristics: the participant has a considerable body of knowledge about the Hungarians abroad, has a strong sense of sameness with these people and, last but not least, has some personal connections with them.

I have already touched upon the assumption that knowledge that is supposed to be acquired by the participant is not exogenous from the whole project, but rather it produced through it. I have also mentioned that this knowledge relies on some meta-knowledge, namely that the transborder Hungarian nation as an entity does exist, and that there are things to be known about this entity. What I have not explicated thus far is the way in which this meta-knowledge is produced and reproduced through the project itself. It is at this point that the three characteristics of the ideal subject of Határtalanul coalesce. The meta-assumption that there is a transborder Hungarian nation which can be seen, experienced through cognition and emotion is, in fact, generated by the experiences of fundamental sameness and personal connectedness. The policy-makers put a strong emphasis on transforming the

[85] Csete, "Nemzeti Összetartozás Az Oktatásban [National Togetherness in Education]," 25–26.

"abstract" ideal of national togetherness into a "personal and lived through experience".[86] In the words of Zsuzsanna Répás this is achieved thanks to the fact that the participants "find themselves in Hungarian environments similar to the ones at home, meet colleagues who learn about the same poets, live in the same way, etc."[87] In a similar vein, they make friends, keep up contacts, and in this way they weave the already mentioned net of the nation.

Knowledge about the existence of the transborder Hungarian nation, the conviction that it exists and that it can be experienced is produced through this dyad of sameness and connectedness. This knowledge resembles religious truths in the sense that its truth value is created by praxis, by continuously reiterated action, that is to say, by ritual. In other words, at the core of Határtalanul stands a mechanism of *hot authentication*. According to Erik Cohen and Scott A. Cohen, hot authentication is "an immanent, reiterative, informal performative process of creating, preserving and reinforcing" the authenticity or realness of an object or entity.[88] Authentication is realized through practices and gestures of paying respecting, making offerings and, all in all, in participating in the rituals targeted at the entity, object or site in question. Through all these discourses of acquiring knowledge, encountering sameness, commonality and building personal connections, networks of acquaintances, the framers of Határtalanul are in fact encouraging the participation in this process of "hotly" authenticating, making real the Hungarian nation that transcends state borders. According to their hopes this will change not only the subjectivities of the participants, but by becoming a collective knowledge and experience it would transform the attitudes of the entire society – according to the optimistic predictions of Örs Csete: in ten years.[89]

[86] Ibid., 19.
[87] Határtalanul conference, March 1, 2013 (my translation)
[88] Cohen and Cohen, "Authentication: Hot and Cool," 1300.
[89] Kovács, "Menő a Magyarsággal Találkozni - Interjú Csete Örssel [It's Cool to Meet with the Hungarians - Interview with Örs Csete]."

IV. Nation-building school trips: encountering place, encountering people, encountering narratives

On a chilly day in late February 2013, a group of fifteen high school students visited the Hungarian National Museum, more precisely its section dedicated to the Revolution of 1848 and the reform period that preceded it. In a room full of revolutionary relics, manifestos, declarations, flags uniforms and a huge printing press placed at the center of the hall, one of the girls leaned forward to examine the declaration that decreed the dethronement of the Habsburg-dynasty. One of the boys sneaked silently up to her to examine what appears to be the upper part of her underwear. The other boys, all aged between 15 and 18, encouraged him cheerfully, but with the covertness required by the environment and the monitoring eyes of the two teachers. The teenagers later went on to reenact a scene from the initial days of the revolution wearing costumes that were presented by the museum guide as "authentic replicas" of the 19th century clothes.

The pupils, students at a working class high school and specialized secondary school, participated in the guided museum tour as a preparation for a trip to the Carpathian part of the Ukraine where they would visit the ethnic Hungarian community living in the town of Berehove/Beregszász. They went to the museum in order to get familiarized with the Revolution of 1848, which would be commemorated by a performance put on stage by the Hungarian teenagers and would be presented in the Ukrainian town. Their trips is funded by the Hungarian government through the Határtalanul project.

This short episode demonstrates the ambivalence and ambiguity which surround the touristic educational program and it also shows how the intentions of the framers coming from above get transformed by the actual participants of the project. The episode also raises many important questions: How lasting are the impressions and experiences acquired by the participants within such touristic enterprises? By trying to subvert any kind of authority do

they also subvert the contents that are coming through these authoritative channels or, quite the contrary, are they highly vulnerable in the face of these contents? What, how and why influences the ways in which these teenagers perceive the places, people and narratives they encounter in their tours? These are the questions which will be posed in this chapter, my main argument beneath the answers I give being that the perceptions, conceptualizations and self-understandings of the participants are influenced, not just by the governmental intentions and discursive practices, but by their own actions and those of their colleagues as well as the structural characteristics of tourism as a medium.

1. Encountering people and places

Tourism is a medium through which people can come to know a place "and, through a variety of practices, can actively position themselves in relation to it."[90] In other words, tourism is a particular practice of encountering, consuming and constructing place and people, of coming to "know" them, build a connection with them.[91]

According to one of the most influential trends in the social study of tourism, represented by the "tourist gaze" argumentation of John Urry, tourism is an extraordinary, non-conventional way of consuming places and people. In Urry's conceptualization tourism as a social practice has among others two defining features: its transient nature and its focus on the unconventional, the extraordinary.[92] In other words, tourism relies on the basic dichotomies of everyday vs. extraordinary and passing vs. permanent.[93] The tourist gaze, thus, constructs places and people as unique, particular, different, shows the unfamiliar aspects of what previously was thought familiar, or places the ordinary in exotic, unfamiliar

[90] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, xvi.
[91] Ibid., 3.
[92] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, Theory, Culture & Society (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 2–3.
[93] Ibid., 12.

environment.[94] This is how the tourist gaze constitutes a place as worth seeingand worth visiting.

Critiques of, and reactions to, Urry's thesis emphasize the more enduring character of the tourist experience. These arguments point out that touristic sites are constructed *a priori, in situ* and *a posteriori*[95] and that the participants' construction of meaning (for example through memory) offers an enduring experience.[96] Others have argued that such touristic experiences offer the possibility of lifelong *experiential learning*.[97] Dominic Janes describes how, for instance, study-abroad programs foster deeper levels of learning and self-reflection not only though in-class learning, but also out-of-class encounters.[98]

Experiential learning is by all means one of the fundamental declared goals of the Határtalanul project. There is a considerable pressure put on the teachers to fulfill the criteria posed by the project, to earn as many points as possible in order to secure the funding; this is why they try to push as many program items as possible into the official schedule. This schedule has to be followed and audiovisual proof has to be submitted proving the completion of every task. This pressure is in turn transmitted to the students, who translate this as the usual school pressures, i.e. as work. All but one of the groups I interviewed talked about the existence of this strong sense of pressure. They all knew from the start that this trip was going to be different from a normal trip, because they had "work to do", as one of my 18-year old informant from a Budapest-based Catholic high school expressed it. "We knew that it was going to be different to an average trip: here we had tasks to accomplish, souvenirs to collect, photos to make" related a 17-year old boy. "The teachers really made a huge effort

[94] Ibid., 13.
[95] McCabe and Marson, "Tourist Constructions and Consumptions of Space: Place, Modernity and Meaning," 105.
[96] Ibid., 100.
[97] Janes, "Beyond the Tourist Gaze?".
[98] Ibid., 31.

to turn this into a *proper* educational fieldtrip, so as to make us enrich our knowledge" observed an 18-year old girl from an elite high school.

This performance-oriented character of the trips is, not only reflected subjectively by the participants, but can also be seen on the printouts of the schedule. There are a minimum of ten program items for each day, often involving travel from one place to another; bus rides are also used efficiently for short student-presentations about the upcoming sight. This drive to see, to do and to try as much as possible is programmed into the competitive funding scheme of Határtalanul. Although according to the initial intentions the project was to be extended by 2013 so as to offer a free trip for an entire age group,[99] the competitive funding scheme has remained. This may point simply to a lack of financial resources, but it most certainly increases the control of the government agency over the structure of the trip, and this is not an insignificant consideration for any policy-maker.

As I have showed above, for the participants the busy schedule and the whole performance-ethic attached to it meant a real burden and a disconcerting factor. They described how the discussions with the professors prior to the trips "totally killed the mood" aith all the talk being centered on the work-part of the whole trips. However, when the pupils were reflecting about the actual trips they remark a difference: despite the rushed and busy schedule each and every tour was seen to be a great and exciting experience, a "fun experience". The overwhelming majority of the pupils claimed that they had a really good time *despite* (and the emphasis here is on the preposition) the pressure to fulfill the tasks. But what were the methods and practices through which they managed to transform the burdensome work into an entertaining, enjoyable excursion? How did they manage to fill the gap between these two extremes? Finding the answer to this question means also grasping the

[99] Örs Csete, "Nemzeti Összetartozás Az Oktatásban [National Togetherness in Education]," in *Határtalanul! A Nemzeti Összetartozás Az Okatatásban [Boundless! The National Togetherness in Education]*, ed. Örs Csete (Budapest, 2011), 26, http://bgazrt.hu/_files/HATARTALANUL/HATARTALANUL_nemzeti_osszetartozas_az_oktatasban.pdf.

core of the entire touristic experience unfolding within these Határtalanul journeys. By examining the ways and means of transforming the whole experience I can show how the participants encountered people, consumed places and, ultimately, how this whole thing influenced their social cognition. This puzzle also exemplifies how the participant agency interacts with governmental frames and the medium of tourism.

Concerning all these questions I argue that for the students the whole essence of the whole trip consists of a struggle between "institutional", official, formal ways of encountering and private, informal ways of coming to know the places and the people. When I undertook a simple content analysis of all the semi-structured group interviews and tried to count the different thematic units occurring in these discussions, it became clear that this struggle between the two modes of encountering are in each case the most or second most frequently discussed topic. Beside the openly stated comparisons between the official programs and the informal events and activities, the latter are also in a more covert advantage. They are more often remembered and recalled and more frequently connected with positive, pleasant feelings, that is to say, they are the ones who made an impression on the kids.

The same quantitative analysis of the topics which came up during our discussions shows that the least influential were actually the places visited as part of the official schedule. In the case of interviews which took place long after the trips the participants could not really recall these destinations and did not remember names or places at all. Two out of the five discussions took place at least six months after the respective fieldtrips, in these cases the sites from the official schedule did not really come up or even if they did, it was because they acquired some informal aspects, they were somehow transformed from a formal item into a proper informal encounter. In the case of the other interviews, which were much closer to the

tours themselves, the memories more vivid, but official program items still figured marginally in these discussions.

"These are not the things I have recollections about, I have memories about the walks we had with my friend in the town" answered a girl from a high school in Pécs when I enquired about the official programs they participated in. The conversation took place more than a year after she and her peers from the school's choir took part in a trip to a small town in Eastern Transylvania. Similarly, many of the other discussions revolved around these more personal experiences. A recurring story is how the guests and host went together to pubs, what they discussed there or how they sneaked out of the dorm from under the watch of the professors. In one of the anecdotes a boy was invited by some locals to their house, where he could see the way in which these people live, the cattle and horses from the stables. He had a dinner with that family and chatted after the meal, which for him was the "most positive experience" of the entire trip.

A paradigmatic case in this respect is the episode of getting acquainted with the hosts. Most of the official schedules contained program items with the explicit mission of familiarizing the guest-pupils and the host-pupils with each other. This consisted oftentimes of some kind of common activity, mostly a game through which the members of the two groups could present themselves. Interestingly enough, a large number of the participants claimed that these had not been the activities through which their really came to know the locals; instead the evening sneak-outs, the informal discussions in each other's dorm rooms had been more prolific and "sincere". For some groups accommodation in dorms was replaced by individual accommodations by host-families. Two of the groups I discussed with had the privilege to experience somehow both types of accommodation. One group spent most of the time in a high school dorm of a town, but for two nights they were hosted by families in a small village. Another group, due to lack of enough willing families, was split in

two: one half stayed with local families, while the other half got accommodation in an isolated dorm. In both groups, there was an acute awareness of the differences between the two modes of overnight accommodation. The participants made overt comparisons which emphasized the superiority of the family-type accommodation. Among the main reasons they pointed to the truer, livelier, more personal bonding as well as the establishment of more meaningful contacts.

Tourists are usually strongly concerned abot the authenticity and sightworthiness of the sites they visit and are anxious about whether what they are shown is authentic or not.[100] They are aware of the fact that they are in a mediated environment, a "tourist bubble" and they are striving to exit it.[101] Within the Határtalanul journeys this preoccupation appears in the form of discontent about the tight schedule, while the quest for authenticity is formulated in expressions such as "truly getting to know them", "close, human contact", "dismantling the shyness and reservation", etc. In terms of the already mentioned distinction/continuum between cool and hot authentication,[102] the students definitely prefered a more participative, hot method in which authenticity is produced by doing rather than by declaration. Cohen and Cohen claim that such processes of hot authentication provide the participants with an experience of "existential authenticity", a sense of finding oneself, a sense of communal belonging that gives rise to a temporary feeling of existential "truth".[103]

The informal modes of encountering do not only offer an escape from the mediating, burdening, "inauthenticating" authority of the professors and official schedule, they do not only open the possibility for a encounter perceived as more personal and human, they do not only give the chance for "individualized experiences whose uniqueness endows […] with an

[100] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 113.
[101] Ibid., 112.
[102] Cohen and Cohen, "Authentication: Hot and Cool."
[103] Ibid., 1302.

aura of authenticity,"[104] but they also open the avenues for non-discursive and non-visual methods of coming to know the destination and the hosts. Many of the critiques of Urry's tourist gaze point out that this conception of touristic experience is too focused on visual modes of consumption.[105] Rakic and Chambers state that "tourists' consumption of place is multisensory, corporeal and active" and that embodiment and performativity are at least as important as visuality for touristic consumption and construction of places.[106] Embodiment in this context "denotes the way in which the individual grasps the world around her/him and makes sense of it in ways that engage both mind and body."[107] Performative embodiment implies practices that involve not so much watching, but actively participating in different activities, engaging in exercises that involve the body; because of this, performative practices influence both the cognitive and affective side of the tourists.[108]

For the students participating in the Határtalanul project these kinds of embodied practices were mostly offered by the informal modes of encountering. Of course, there were some items, even in the official program, that could be interpreted in this way; such as the dance house or learning how to created folk artifacts. These activities were fondly remembered as the most entertaining entries of the menu. Nevertheless, the embodied practices that will likely have the greatest relevance later when I will consider about the identity-related implications of the trips are the ones taking place informally.

At this point two multilayered examples will suffice. One girl studying at a Catholic high school in Budapest, but having been born in Slovakia describes her experience with a group of young locals from a remote village in Transylvania. She and one of her colleagues were taken by some boys from the local Catholic high school in a pub, where they had a chat.

[104] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 150.
[105] Rakić and Chambers, "Rethinking the Consumption of Places," 1612.
[106] Ibid., 1613.
[107] David Crouch, "Places Around Us: Embodied Lay Geographies in Leisure and Tourism," *Leisure Studies* 19, no. 2 (January 2000): 63.
[108] Rakić and Chambers, "Rethinking the Consumption of Places," 1629.

On their way back to the dorm, the cheerful crowd was stopped by another gang of teenagers, who apparently had some conflicts with boys accompanying the two girls from Budapest. A fight broke out with punches being thrown. Understandably, the two guests got scared and, in a glimpse, started to run back to the dorm. The following day they met up with their slightly injured hosts, and spent another pub-evening with discussing the whole event and all the different fighting stories of the lads. Quite obviously, for the local teenagers this whole story provided a masculine chance of impressing the "foreign" ladies, and quite an embodied practice in itself. But more important are the affective and physical implications of being marginally implicated in a fight, running away, then seeing the marks of the fight the next day.

The other anecdote is somewhat connected to the famous equestrian statue of King Mathias of Hungary from the Transylvanian city of Cluj Napoca/Kolozsvár.[109] Visting the monument was part of the official program of the group, however, what left an imprint on the pupils was the marching of a huge crowd of Romanian football ultras shouting and singing on their way either to or from a match. According to my interviewees at that moment they felt somewhat threatened and everybody tried to stay silent and tried not to utter a word in Hungarian. In response to my question whether someone had told them to stay mute they said: "No, we just knew that we have to shut up."

These two instances are somewhat extreme examples, but they show perfectly how embodiment in the case of informal encounters works. Because of the embodied practices involved in them, these are the events that actually leave a mark in the memory of the participants. These, and not the official sites and program, are recalled at home, among friends or for the recorder of an interviewer. These are the ones that shape both the emotions and the thoughts of the pupils *a posteriori* when they are thinking about the transborder

[109] About the symbolic significance of the statue see Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*, 139–141.

Hungarians, about the lands they live in and so on. As I will show later, these embodied practices are also integrated into the identity-talk and nation-talk done by the participants.

Up to this point I have spoke about the predominance of informal modes of encountering over the "institutional", official program items. However, it has to be pointed out that the formal framing of the whole trips has undoubtedly an impact on the perceptions of the tourists. The emphasis put on the Hungarian character of these journeys, the requirement to visit nationally relevant sites, to interact with co-ethnics creates a special virtual space within which the participants move, and this fact is significant in terms of the framing of the private experiences. The trips do not focus on the interethnic nature of the destinations; they do not encourage encounters with different ethnicities living alongside minority Hungarians. Contact with either ethnic Romanians or Romanian sites in Transylvania is almost non-existent, with the notable exception of the anecdote I have just recalled.

Apart from offering an inaccurate image of the life in these regions, such an approach to the issue also creates a feeling of security for the tourists, a feeling of security which is stemming from the fact that they do not exit their linguistic comfort-zone. There was at least one person in all of my group discussions who mentioned the feeling of security caused by the fact that "everybody" understood them. As one of the girls expressed it, "I did not have to think, how to formulate a question, if I wanted to ask for help".

Tourism always involves the immersion into a foreign, alien and unfamiliar environment and as such it can breed insecurity. In the case of group tours this sense of insecurity was mitigated by a strong reliance on the community of fellow travelers, on the group mates.[110] However, in this very case, the hosts, the fellow co-ethnics can also lessen this anxiety, and can provide the tourists with a feeling of sameness as well. This binary

[110] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 147.

intertwining of sameness and security plays into the governmental intentions of developing a sense of commonality between the homeland Hungarians and the transborder Hungarians. Embodiment here again plays a very important role: no discursive practice would be so effective in producing the feeling of commonality that this embodied insecurity.

2. Encountering narratives

Participants in the Határtalanul are supposed to obtain knowledge about their ethnic kins and ultimately about themselves. Knowledge in this sense is oftentimes discursively transmitted, recalled and reconstructed. As I have shown above tourism involves a significant proportion of non-discursive, embodied modes of encountering places and people, embodied experiences, but these experiences are made lasted, constituted *a posteriori* through narratives.[111] Taking into consideration, that there is ultimately a "limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives"[112] which shape and frame the touristic experience, we have to look at the narratives about transborder Hungarians and about Hungarianness, narratives that were encountered and recalled by the participants.

When looking at the narrative representations of Transylvania Margit Feischmidt states that the most fundamental feature of the whole question is its ambivalence: the representations of the region rely on the dualities of similarity vs. difference and familiarity vs. alienness.[113] This ambivalence is not a new phenomenon and it is deeply embedded in the ways in which homeland Hungarians think about their kin-minorities and the regions inhabited by them. A good example of this *long durée* ambivalence is displayed by the touristic guidebooks dealing with Transylvania, these materials build on the same archetypes

[111] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 614.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Feischmidt, "A Magyar Nacionalizmus Autenticitás-diskurzusainak Szimbolikus Térfogalása Erdélyben (The Symbolic Appropriation of Transylvania by the Authenticity-discourses of Hungarian Nationalism)," 7.

since the genre itself exists.[114] These books employ two discursive strategies when portraying Transylvania: symbolic incorporation and internal orientalism.[115] The first identifies the region as an authentic bearer of Hungarianness, while the second posits the "modern", "urbanized", "developed" Hungary in opposition with the "exotic", "natural", "traditional", "pristine" Transylvania.

Both of these narrative modes of encounter can be found in abundance within the discussions with my interviewees. They frame their experiences, their stories and accounts using these two main strategies. I have already talked about the experiences of similarity and identity that are constructed through the sense of security offered by the linguistic sameness. At this point, therefore, I should touch more upon the instances in which the internal oriantalism, the exoticization of the transborder Hungarians, occurs.

An initial observation is that the participants are profoundly influenced by the images and narratives which can be found throughout the public sphere, in textbooks or the media. "For me Transylvania means all these tiny hidden villages and the cows" – claimed one 18-year old girl when asked about the expectations she had before the trip. This statement synthesizes all the other implicit and explicit references to this pristine and rural nature of the regions inhabited by transborder Hungarians. These are typical instances of romanticizing, orientalizing[116] and exoticizing discourses, in which the destinations are portrayed as substantially "different", fundamentally "other" than the "home" environment of the tourists.

These images are decisively influenced by the pre-packaged representations, public narratives with which Hungarian citizens are faced pretty often. They are also a function of the background in which the individual pupils have been socialized. One young female participant in a Transylvania-trip recalled that her mother was really passionate about the

[114] Sebestyén, "'Erdélybe Utazni Más'. A Magyar Turisztikai Irodalom Erdély-képe ('It Is Different to Travel to Transylvania'. The Transylvania-image of the Hungarian Tourist Literature)."
[115] Ibid., 63.
[116] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

region. She had never been there in person, but at home, in the Southwestern Hungarian town of Pécs, she had a huge collection of handbooks, guidebooks and albums which were occasionally leafed through by her family.

These prior discursive frames are also aided by the official programs which focus more on these rural, traditional aspects of the destinations, rather than on aspects of urban, intercultural life. One of the most frequent program items, present on the menu of almost all Transylvanian trips is the visit to Deva, to the orphanage run by the Franciscan father, Csaba Böjte. The friar is a symbolic figure, thanks to his frequent media appearances and his tours within Hungary, who runs one of the most famous charitable campaigns in the Hungarian public sphere. His success is partly due to the special blend between the rhetoric of Christian charity and powerful nation-talk.[117] His center in Deva figures in many of the journeys carried out within Határtalanul and, in most cases, has a powerful impact upon the visitors.

Many of the girls among my interviewees mentioned that the whole visit had a strong emotional charge for them, and that they found there the most memorable moments of the entire tour. Talking and playing with the orphans housed there constituted an emotional shock-therapy for the students and a peculiar entrance into the region they were about to see. The impressions won here suggest the view of a community living in very bad conditions, deprived, but keeping together and keeping happy. The exotic, orientalist overtone in such an imagery is obvious. "I only hear about such things from Brazil, that children are living on the garbage heap" interjected a 17-year old boy when we were talking about their memories and impressions from Deva.

The encounters of the tourist with local Hungarians are similarly placed within this orientalizing interpretative frame. In talking about people my interviewees reiterate all the

[117] For the intertwining between the rhetoric of nation and rhetoric of charity see Ildikó Zakariás, "Kultúramentés És Szociális Segítés - Esettanulmány Egy Határon Túli Magyarokat Segítő Iskolai Mozgalomról [Cultural Protection and Social Charity - Case Study on a School Initiative Aiding Transborder Hungarians]," Manuscript (Budapest, 2012).

well-known clichés: they are more relaxed, closer to nature, friendlier, community-oriented and hospitable. These characteristics are always mentioned in antithesis to the home where people are less friendly, more individualistic and more egoistic. The clash of these two stereotypes happens not only in speech, but in action and observation as well. According to one group, the fact that the locals "have a different conception of time" as compared to the people in Budapest, helped the strict professors ease up and start loosening the tight schedule.

This example is particularly interesting because it shows how events and facts have relevance only if they fit in the already acquired cognitive frames. As mentioned, the students talked about a "different conception of time" in the case of theses pristine locals, and they demonstrated this observation by the fact that their hosts were always ten to fifteen minutes late when a common program was organized. For the tourists this was a clear sign that the villagers were "different", not so uptight as the people of Budapest. After half an hour, at the end of the same discussion, in a completely different context, the pupils were teasing one of their colleagues because every morning he is ten to fifteen minutes late from school. "Well, of course, I live at the other end of the city" came the obvious answer, marking the normalcy of the whole habitual lateness. Nobody "accused" him of having a different conception of time.

One of the primary preoccupations of the 17-18-year old pupils is figuring out their lives after high school. Here again, my interviewees saw some differences between themselves and their hosts. According to them the main difference is that homeland Hungarian students can go and study what they are inclined to, while the transborder teenagers are coerced by their living conditions to find tracks through which they can earn a living, even if they do not feel attracted by that particular occupation. At the same time, however, they also claim that people in Transylvania, for instance, are not as interested in

money as the ones in Hungary. The former just want to earn their subsistence, while the latter want to consume luxury and to produce more money than they need.

Both this orientalizing narrative frames and the powerful drive to find informal, more authentic ways of encountering places and people creates distance between tourists and hosts, and this fact has serious implications for the identity-building function that the Határtalanul program is supposed to fulfill. After reviewing the modes in which the participants encounter places, people and narratives, as well as the ways of *a posteriori* reconstructing these experiences, the next step is to speculate about their impact on the identifications and self-understandings of the students.

V. School trips and Hungarianness: an ambiguous relationship

Talking about the kindness of the locals from an Eastern Transylvanian town one of my interviewees observed: "I have never experienced so much kindness towards foreigners." After a brief moment of puzzlement she added: "well, actually, not foreigners." This short phrase synthesizes perfectly the ambiguity of the identity-work that is carried out by the Határtalanul trips. As I have shown in the chapter about the intentions and conceptions of the project's framers, the tours are created in order to foster a sense of similarity and connectedness, and ultimately a feeling of belonging to a unified, transborder Hungarian nation. It is almost as if they drew inspiration from social science conceptualizations of identity, which see national identifications as products of categorical commonality, relational connectedness and a feeling of togetherness.[118] The present chapter looks at the implications of these journeys for the patterns of identification and self-conception displayed by the participants. The main questions, at this point, refer to how the tours did or did no influence these patterns of identification, how they did or did not change conceptions of Hungarianness and, ultimately, why they did or did not do so.

When thinking about social identities – or to use the more precise analytical terms proposed by Brubaker and Cooper: identification and self-understanding[119] - there is one major question of ontological and epistemological nature, namely how to conceptualize and measure the formation and transformation of these patterns of identification. The answer for this complex question is, in my view, narrativity and the concept of narrative identity. According to this narrative identity trend, lived experience is not separable from narration[120], the Maurice Bloch offers some very convincing empirical evidence to support this claim.

[118] Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," 47.
[119] Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'."
[120] Ezzy, "Theorizing Narrative Identity."

When looking at the memory-patterns of the Zafimaniry of Madagascar he discovered that the mechanisms of retention and recall in the case of experience-based autobiographical memory and narrative-based historical memory are similar. Neither of the two memories is stored in linguistic form, but rather as mental representation of what the event was like, nevertheless, both are recalled in narrative form with all the characteristics of the genre included.[121]

Undermining the sharp distinction between narrative and experience opens the way for a circular understanding of the relation between narrative and experience. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur, Douglas Ezzy show that the narrative has two interfaces with lived experience: on the one hand, it precedes and shapes the events on lived experience, on the other hand, it is shaped, transformed by those experiences.[122] Narrative is thus constitutive part of social life, or as Margaret R. Somers puts it, narrative is an ontological condition of social life.[123] She argues

> "that stories guide action; that people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories; that 'experience' is constituted through narratives; that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or in some way to integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives."[124]

Thus, narratives are in the same time mere reflections of cognitive and emotional patterns of identifications and constitutive parts of these identities. They are not only ways of expressing the way we see ourselves, our position in the social world, but public narratives frame the way we conceive of these issues,[125] while narrative emplotment provides the

[121] Bloch, "Autobiographical Memory and the Historical Memory of the More Distant Past."
[122] Ezzy, "Theorizing Narrative Identity," 144.
[123] Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity," 614.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 619.

individual with relationality, embeddedness in time and space,[126] a sense of self-sameness and continuity.[127] Individual ontological narratives, i.e. patterns of self-understanding and identification organize personal experiences into a coherent story, thus, offering the individual with a personal history. This identity which is narratively created can account for the stability and fluidity of identifications, for their social and intersubjective constructed nature. Using Ezzy's words, narrative identity "is coherent but fluid and changeable, historically grounded but "fictively" reinterpreted, constructed by an individual but constructed in interaction and dialogue with other people."[128]

Following these theoretical lines, when undertaking my groups discussion sessions I looked for any kind of discursive utterance related to Hungarianness as building block and reflection of narratively constructed identity. In this case again, the mere quantitative overview of the topics touched upon by the participants makes apparent the marginality, insignificance of identity-talk during and after the trips. The relative absence of identity-talk and nation-talk shows that in their *post hoc* narrative reconstructions and individual self-narratives the entire Határtalanul experience is not primarily about the transborder Hungarian nation. In other words, the trips are not integrated into the personal histories as something that changed, affected, transformed, weakened or influenced in any significant way the self-understanding and identification of the students. And, in the vein of the narrative identity conception, if there is no narrative sign of influence, there is no influence as such.

Why is this identity-building and nation-building component of the trips is so weak? The most plausible answer is given by the extraordinary nature of the medium, of tourism itself. As most of the contemporary studies on the production and reproduction of nationhood show, national identity, the feeling of belonging to a nation is made experientially salient

[126] Ibid., 616.
[127] Ezzy, "Theorizing Narrative Identity," 245.
[128] Ibid., 246.

through everyday ordinary practices. Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss enlist four such types of everyday practices – talking the nation, choosing the nation, performing the nation and consuming the nation[129] – through which nationhood becomes a "cognitive and interactional resource"[130] in everyday social life.

The trips offer the opportunity for various ways of talking *about* and talking *with* the nation, of perfoming the nation through rituals or of consuming the *national* products. They have learnt about the history of transborder Hungarians, about their current situation, have sung the national anthem, waved flags, danced in the dance-house, consumed traditional Hungarian foods and beverages, so in this sense enacted all the practices that could foster an identification with a transborder Hungarian nation. However, they did this within a touristic environment and this undermines the whole identity-work in two ways.

First of all, it places the whole experiment into an extraordinary temporality. As Tim Edensor points out, nationhood is most efficiently produced in cyclical quotidian time through: "(1) the routinized, official temporal framework established by the state; (2) the persistence of national habits and routines; (3) the synchronization of national time in popular culture; and (4) the serialized, enduring time-spaces within which quotidian activity takes place."[131] A one-week tourist trips is in this sense a unique, solitary occasion which is by definition outside the everyday temporality. It is external to the quotidian individual habits of the tourists and it is external to the routinized temporal framework set up by the state of Hungary and within which the pupils live their school-life. In other words, the experience of the transborder Hungarian nation is an extraordinary occurrence; consequently identification with such a unique entity is largely impossible. Quite the contrary, the opposition between ordinary and extraordinary time functions as a distancing agent. It marks the boundary

[129] Fox and Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood."
[130] Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*.
[131] Edensor, "Reconsidering National Temporalities: Institutional Times, Everyday Routines, Serial Spaces and Synchronicities," 530.

between the normal framework of the Hungarian state and the extraordinary framework of the ethnically defined Hungarian nation. This does not contradict the previously mentioned statement of McCabe and Marson[132] about the enduring nature of the tourist experience. It simply means that the enduring touristic experiences are not conducive, but rather are adverse to the identification with such a conception of Hungarianness.

Once the students re-enter their ordinary life-setting, they lose contact with the extraordinary world of the trip. The images and representations, the memories acquired there can persist or even if they fade, they can be reactivated, but the lively connections, interactions and practices that make up the everyday social life do not exist anymore in the way they existed for a brief moment during the tours. When asked about how they keep in contact with the friends they made in Transylvania, one of my groups revealed that they have a forum on one of the online social media, namely Facebook. According to my informants, interactions on the forum were pretty active in the first couple of weeks after the trip, but as the temporal distance grew so did the silence. At the moment of my visit to their school, the Facebook forum had been mute for more than six months. The relational connectedness that was achieved through Határtalanul was, thus, only a unique instance, not relying on repeated, circular reiterations. For this reason, its impact on fostering long-term identification was minimal.

Secondly, tourism as a medium has other structural characteristics which are similarly creating boundaries, rather than fostering identification between homeland and transborder Hungarians. The most important feature of this nature is what Shaul Kelner calls the semiotic of difference. For tourism the most important accomplishment is the construction of a site, a destination as sightworthy; however, something becomes usually worthy of visiting because of its distinctive feature. Hence, the tourist gaze positions its object relationally in a field of

[132] McCabe and Marson, "Tourist Constructions and Consumptions of Space: Place, Modernity and Meaning."

contrast between the home and the away.[133] This contrasting structurally rooted in the tourist experience draws attention to three forms of difference: absolute difference, difference within similarity, and similarity within difference.[134] Tourism is, thus, able to focus the attention on difference even in the case of instances which are framed discursively as similarly. Many of the perceptions related to transborder Hungarians described in the previous chapter are doing this precisely.

Additionally, the anxieties that the students experienced about the authenticity and validity of their experiences are also agents of estrangement.[135] The trips encourage the participants to observe and investigate closely their destinations, and as such it objectifies and commodifies the sites and the people in the focus of the tourist gaze.[136] As one of my interviewees, herself born a transborder Hungarian born in Slovakia, pointed out, the students in the trips were encouraged "to survey", "to research" the locals because they are "so damn different". For her the informal programs of sneaking out of the dorm with the local kids, going to pub were the experiences which showed that the hosts are "the same youngsters as we are."

However, even these informal experiences are not unambiguously pointing toward a genuine sense of identity between the hosts and the guests. This is also a consequence of tourism itself, since the journeys themselves direct the focus of the students inside, towards their peer group.[137] One of the pupils remarked, that they have taken hundreds, perhaps thousands of photos during the excursion, but ninety percent of them shows the tourists themselves, the friends and classmates, and only a tiny minority of the pictures portray actually the sights and the locals. The ambiguity is also reinforced by the deeply-embedded narratives of exoticism and orientalism attached to transborder Hungarians. As I have already

[133] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 97.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 113.
[136] Ibid., 114.
[137] Ibid., 147.

recounted in the second part of the previous chapter, the superficial profession of deep connection and fundamental sameness between homeland and transborder Hungarians is always accompanied by a pervasive exoticization and stereotyping of the latter, a mechanism that is always a fundamental constructor of boundaries.[138] The transborder Hungarians are closer to nature, have different time-conceptions, other ways of dealing with conflict, different modes of relating to material value, different career tracks, so all in all they are different from *us*, homeland Hungarians.

They are however "not foreigners", they speak the same language, they live in cultural environments which make the guests feel at ease. "Their sense of Hungarianness is more powerful than ours", pointed out one pupil, and "we should follow their example in how Hungarian they are in so difficult circumstances", added one of his colleagues. In this sense, the journeys carried out within Határtalanul are reproducing all that emotions and narratives that exist already within the Hungarian society. The participants return home, their usual quotidian life is resumed, and as Shaul Kelner observes, later the experiences acquired during the trips may be reactivated,[139] but most probably they will be shaped by more powerful and more embedded discursive frames depending on the alternative identity-narratives that each of the students possess.

The experiences of sameness and difference live side by side within these Határtalanul-excursions. However, the aspects pertaining to similarity are usually not interpreted in a frame of national identification. The cities where transborder Hungarians live have the same German drugstore-chains as the ones in Hungary, the same Irish pubs and music clubs. When it comes to national questions, the whole frame of orientalism kicks in: traditional arts and crafts, dance house, collecting souvenirs, singing folk songs, that is to say, things which are very remote from the daily lives of most of the students. As a consequence,

[138] Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'."
[139] Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 189.

nationness or Hungarianness becomes indeed something which can be experienced by the physical senses, can be touched, smelled and seen, but only within a temporary, extraordinary setting which makes it remote and insignificant for the participants.

VI. Concluding remarks

The present study explored a government-sponsored school trip program as an empirical case of *becoming* national. Envisaged by the Hungarian government as a means for strengthening the identification of teenagers with the Hungarian ethno-nation transcending the boundaries of Hungary, the *Határtalanul* project can be placed within a long line of transborder nation-building policies undertaken in the last two decades. Its uniqueness consists in its target population, given that the nation-building work is not directed to ethnic Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary; instead, it focuses on homeland residents. I have demonstrated that the project arises out of the recognition that there is significant discrepancy between the official conceptions of Hungarianness promoted by the government and the identifications and self-understandings of the putative members of this ethnocultural transborder nation. This discrepancy causes difficulties for the implementation of other nation-building goals; hence the objective of Határtalanul is to close this gap.

The project becomes, in this sense, a case of the governmentalization of nation-building. It is an attempt of knowledge-production and an assemblage of discourses and practices which, from the perspective of the policy-makers, should transform the social cognition of the target population, in order to facilitate the implementation of other nation-building measures. The aforementioned governmentalizing work is revolving around a body of knowledge, a body of assumptions which are placed by the framers at the basis of Határtalanul, but whose validity is produced endogenously through the excursions themselves.

According to this knowledge, the existence and unity of the Hungarian ethnocultural nation is a natural given; a sort of natural fact which has been overshadowed by various contingent historical and political processes. However, the nation itself exists irrespective of these impeding factors; therefore it can be experienced even physically through the senses. It

can be seen, touched, visited, heard and spoken to. The natural pre-existence of the nation is, thus, made true, in a circular manner, precisely by the project that was constructed on this presumption. In other words, it is the conclusion (i.e. Határtalanul) that makes its own premise valid by offering the participants practices of experientially encountering the transborder nation. These encounters are also expected to shape the self-understandings of those who experienced these encounters.

However, as I argued throughout this study, the actual tours are fields of interaction wherein the governmental discursive practices meet with individual agency and with the structural characteristics of tourism; and this alters many of the outcomes. In their quest for an "authentic" touristic experience the pupils subvert and transform the official schedules and replace the visually-oriented program items with performative and embodied practices. Through a number of empirical examples drawn from the group discussions with the participants, I demonstrated that these informal modes of encounter are the ones that are remembered and integrated into personal histories and self-narratives. The official programs are salient inasmuch as they also open avenues for embodied experiences.

Both the formal and informal performative and embodied practices place the participants into ethnic Hungarian environments where they experience a sense of cultural security; a sense that can foster identification with the local kin-minorities. Concurrently, however, these cognitive and emotional patterns which come from these experiences are intertwined with powerful narrative frames of orientalism and exoticism. These are the primary agents of distancing between the homeland Hungarians and their transborder hosts. Additionally, the trips are placed in an extraordinary temporality outside the ordinary time of the everyday; and this fact also diminishes the identity-fostering potential of the trips, as does the distancing, objectifying and alienating effect of the tourist gaze.

Consequently, the journeys have a very ambiguous relationship to the conceptions of a unified Hungarian nation. They undoubtedly offer cognitively and emotionally influential embodied experiences which place the participants into a web of interactions and relationships with transborder Hungarians. They offer them a sense of security which is not usually felt by ordinary tourists. These instances are very important for de-emphasizing, unmarking the feeling of categorical sameness or for making this feeling taken for granted.

Nonetheless, there are other factors which work precisely against this. The extraordinary nature of tourism as a practice emphasizing sightworthiness and difference, the exoticising narrative frames and the temporal extraordinariness of the tours make the "encounter with the nation" something very distant from daily life. In many respects, thus, the previously existing ambiguous patterns of identification and differentiation between homeland Hungarians and their transborder co-ethnics persist. It depends on the future social and political contexts how the experiences and memories acquired during the trips will be integrated into the personal self-narratives of the individuals. Whether they will be reactivated or forgotten, whether they will be instrumentalized politically or completely ignored are questions that remain, for the moment, unanswered.

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