

Transylvania without Transylvanians?

Centralizing State Integration and Political Regionalism after World War I.

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Summary

In investigating the transformation process after World War I from a regional perspective, my survey not only examines the consequences of the disintegration of the Danube Empire and the nationalisms in Central and South Eastern Europe, but also offers an important contribution to the study of Central European identity discourses by stressing the particular self-conception of the Transylvanian Romanians. I demonstrate how a consolidating society failed to cope with the emergence of pluralism. Questions of regionality, federalism as well as orientalism and separatism remain central issues for the Danube Basin to this day. Such, this book contributes significantly to general questions on overcoming nationalisms and promoting social integration in the field of modern European history.

The survey employs a regional perspective. In this context 'regionality' is considered neither as a static geographical phenomenon nor as a pure product of discourse, but rather as a "dynamic concept embedded between ideological construct and a subjectively experienced landscape of action in which discourse is rendered spatially specific and in which the *Lebenswelt* is generalised in order to make the discussion more manageable". The study focuses on an assumed, imagined national group in a specific region – the Transylvanian Romanians. Other groups serve as a fundamental part of the examined discourse, since they represent the partners of alterity as well as solidarity. A crucial result of the survey is to display alternative opportunities of identification beyond national patterns: models of confessional, social, cultural and political *groupness*, *communality* and *connectedness* (cf. Brubaker/Cooper, 2007).

The *dispositif* of this discourse analysis consists of several aspects of social transformation resulting from imperial disintegration: the incorporation of a region into "Greater Romania" in the course of administrative centralization, the search for eligible means to accelerate the modernization process to catch up with the "West" and the permanent crisis after 1918. How was the pluralization process connected with the rise of authoritarian ideas, especially in the 1930s?

The employment of a discourse analytical approach made it possible on the one hand to show the close connection between institutional change and its instrumentalization by political actors, while on the other hand I wanted to depict identification models as well as demarcation and transgressions of typical perspectives of 'one's own kind' and "the other". The investigation period covers the "long 1920s", beginning with the year 1918 – the moment "Greater Romania" came into being – and 1933, the end of the last Transylvanian dominated government. The first main chapter focuses on the discourse of transformation in several sectors of public life (economy, education, culture, religion,

administration) whereas the second main chapter explores the different offers of belonging for the Transylvanian Romanians, in particular beyond ethnicity, in this period of comprehensive change.

The study thus deals with three issues:

1. The consequences of the dissolution of the Danube Monarchy and the national integration of Romania

My intention was to depict the institutional and mental integration process, avoiding dogmatic approaches of competing nationalisms and questioning the epistemological value of the concept of regionality. The dynamics of the transformation after 1918 are particularly suitable for demonstrating how concepts of belonging are constructed as a means of coping with contingency.

2. The divergence of democratic claims and the rise of authoritarian movements

As my empirical evidence shows, one crucial reason for the loss of confidence in the state and its representatives is the cleavage between expectations concerning the new national state and disappointment at its actual performance. "Transylvania", its politicians and the democratic ideas they represented became the greatest factor of hope for the society in the making. The fail of Transylvanian Romanian politics in 1933 accelerated the rise of authoritarian currents in Romania.

3. The development of a new historiographical approach by implying sociological and philological methods

In my survey I combined the sociological approach of Rogers Brubaker, which insists on the "de-essentialization" of ethno-national ideas, with the methods of discourse analysis. I could thus indicate that there were a range of other models of belonging beyond the "nation" and the "region" which proved to be important for the *Lebenswelt* of the individual: confession, social belonging, cultural-historical influences and ties to the local landscape.

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Biographical statement

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