GIVING MEANING TO IDENTITIES. A CASE-STUDY FOR THE ROMANIAN BANAT REGION

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Abstract: *Giving meaning to identities. A case-study for the Romanian Banat Region.* This research is focussed on the ethnic identities from Banat maintained till nowadays under different cultural forms. Identity starts from the feeling of 'social space', with a specific language for each ethnic group and a specific culture evolving through time. These local ethnic identities have determined the appearance of a regional identity. A questionnaire was launched among over 500 students and many interviews were conducted, reaching the conclusion that the spirit of 'banaţean' (native of Banat) is still alive among young people, albeit with a lower. Politically, local actors participate in projects to maintain regional identity, while at the central government level seem to embrace the Banat cultural identity.

Rezumat: *Dând un sens identităţilor. Studiu de caz pentru regiunea românească Banat.* Studiul de faţă are în vedere identităţile etnice din Banat păstrate până astăzi sub diferite forme culturale. Identitatea porneşte de la sentimentul spaţializării sociale, a limbii specifice fiecărui grup etnic, a unei culturi formate în timp. Aceste identităţi etnice locale au determinat apariţia unei identităţi regionale. S-a efectuat un chestionar asupra a 500 de studenţi şi elevi de liceu, precum şi numeroase interviuri cu personalităţi locale, ajungându-se la concluzia că spiritul de 'bănăţean' încă se menţine în rândul tinerilor, dar cu un vădit caracter mai redus decât în trecut. Sub aspect politic, actorii locali sunt angrenaţi în păstrarea identităţii regionale, însă reprezentanţii guvernamentali par mai puţin implicaţi în păstrarea identităţii culturale bănăţene.

1. INTRODUCTION

Identity is a feeling. The feeling of a group is called the 'we'. The 'we' defines a territory on the basis of stories from history or a certain pride; this is called 'social spatialization' (Paasi 1996, p. 7-8). This space is being socialized by the people who live in it. Groups are defined by rhetoric. In this chapter the rhetoric of groups in society is being explained. Through this, it is possible to see how different identities in Banat emerged and how a common 'we' in Banat has developed over time. The data for this chapter have been collected mostly though interviews and census data, although also data from the group discussion, questionnaires and different authors will be used.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Methodology

Regional identity is a difficult subject to measure. Generally it will be about measuring 'feelings' of people in relation to a certain identity; how do people experience their identity. To quantify and compare the different feelings, it is feasible to carry out a quantitative research. A comparison between different ethnicities, ages, city/rural is needed to unravel the question of identity in the Banat region. The best way to achieve this is with questionnaires, though it is impossible to obtain an outcome that can be generalized to the whole population of the Banat region or even the whole of Romania, because of time-constraints of the research. For this reason, the choice has been made to only interview scholars, students and, to explore a trend in identity, maybe their parents.

Why scholars and students? Scholars and students are, in the first place, one of the first receivers of identity reproduction (through schoolbooks, media and international orientation). Secondly, it is supposed that students are more willingly to cooperate in a research than older people or companies. Lastly, scholars and students are supposed to speak better English and German than elderly people. The conclusions of the research cannot be generalized to the whole Banat-region; it only says something about the student and scholar population in the Banat region.

The research will be carried out as following:
- Firstly, literature and statistics will be explored to get to know how history and identity developed over time. Furthermore, the region Banat and its context will be described.
- Secondly, the collecting of data will take place through questionnaires (quantitative part), distributed under 500 students and scholars. Some students and scholars will be asked if their parents would like to fill in the questionnaire too. The sample has to be representative for the ethnic minorities in Banat region, and for city/countryside. For this reason every ethnic minority (especially Romanians,

Hungarians and Serbs) has to be, if possible, a proportionate percentage to the size of the minorities. Also people from the city as well as from the countryside have to be representative in the sample. Respondents must be inhabitants of county Timiş, Caraş-Severin and the southern part of Arad, below the river Mureş.

- Thirdly, alongside the questionnaires, group discussions are being held to get a better view on the concept of identity and which emotions it evokes. Most important: how do people react on each other when talking about their own identity? People of different ethnicities and different layers of society have to cooperate in the discussions.
- Fourthly, alongside the group discussions and the questionnaires, a few qualitative interviews are being held to get to know what policy is being made on identity, how governments cooperate in this and to know what the role of the European Union is in the construction of identity. Also cross-border identities will be discussed in these interviews.
- Lastly, schoolbooks will be scanned to see how identity is being reproduced in education, because education is one of the tools that state, nation and region use to reproduce their identity.

2.2. Relevance for Regional Geography

Scientific relevance: the research of regional identity in the Banat region in Romania contains two important relevant things to regional geography:

- First, research about regional identity deconstructs the different meanings about Romanian nationalism; Banat multicultural patriotism; prejudices towards different ethnicities; and brings them down to history and discourse about how identities have emerged and how they are reproduced. This places the Banat region and different identities in the context of history, Europe, nationalism and ethnic tensions.
- Second, a lot of research has been done to borders, ethnicities, Romanian-Hungarian tensions, geopolitical questions. This research is more about what ethnicities in a certain territory have in common and why or why not. Moreover, the research deals with how identities are being developed, exist, and are being reproduced along each other, in stead of being opposed to each other.

Societal relevance: With the joining of the European Union at the front door, Romanian Government is diligent to fulfil the requirements of equal rights for minorities. Furthermore, when joining the European Union, the centralism of the Romanian state will possibly loose its ground and make regions stronger. This research provides an overview of how this social and regional transformation and dealing with minorities may take place.

3. EXPRESSION OF IDENTITIES (IN DAILY LIFE)

3.1. Language

In Banat, ethnicities still use their native language. Most ethnical groups in Banat have preserved their native language for over a long time by using it in formal as well as in informal social contacts. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, less than half were Romanians, followed by the Germans and Hungarians (Popa & Sârbovan

1999, p. 152; based on census data). These people used their own languages. Germans were active in trading and economic life, which made German also the language of trade. It became clear from interviews (with county councils, newspapers and political parties) that, at the time Banat was partitioned, people in the Romanian Banat spoke three or four languages; people cooperated with each other and there was a kind of multicultural feeling. During communist times, through equalization policies, language in Banat became more and more standardized. People were obliged to speak Romanian, although ethnicities remained using their own language in family occasions. After the communist period, and especially the last decade, non-Romanian ethnicities in Banat with their schools, newspapers and organization are better financed through the national and county government (interview county councils and newspapers, 2006/2007). Unfortunately, in spite of the good financing to keep language and identity alive, non-Romanian ethnicities as well as their languages are fading away (Romanian Census, 2002).

Table 1. Population structure by ethnic group and language in region West* (%)

Ethnic group				Language		
	1992	**2002**			**1992**	**2002**
Romanians	84,4	86,2			86,1	88,3
Hungarians	7,8	6,7			7,6	6,4
Gypsies	2	2,5			1,1	1,3
Germans	2,4	1,4			2,2	1,1
Ukrains	0,6	0,7			0,5	0,6
Other ethnicities	2,8	2,5			2,5	2,3
Total	100	100			100	100

* Region West: county Timis, Arad, Caras-Severin and Hunedoara
Source: *Romanian Census*, 2002&1992

In 10 years time, the relative amount of ethnicities got down quite rapidly. Especially the Germans, who were already in a very low number compared to the beginning of the 20th century, has gone from 2.4% to 1.4% of total population of the West region (see table 1). Before and after the revolution, most Germans left to (Western) Germany to work there. When a minority is diminishing that fast, it is difficult to maintain a language. The Germans who remained in Banat are mostly elderly people. On the contrary, ethnicities like Hungarians, Serbians and Ukrainians are more stable: Hungarians are in large amount and also politically active in Romania. They have their own schools and institutions. For them there is less reason to leave (Popa & Sarbovan 1999, p. 152). For Serbians and Ukrainians, the economic situation in Romania is better than in their home countries. These ethnicities are also slightly diminishing, which is the result of ageing (Interviews with newspapers, 2007). The elderly people of different minorities speak their mother language the most, but younger people have more profit in society by speaking Romanian in stead of their mother tongue. People that represent ethnicities say that when the mother language under younger people of the minority disappears, the ties with the minority will be less tight too (Interview Pataki, 2006 & Thiel, 2007). In the case of the Serbian minority, people older than 30 years old speak more Serbian, people less than 30 years old speak Romanian. All Serbians that

live in Banat speak very well Romanian. The question rises: When Serbian language is loosing terrain to the Romanian language, can we then still speak about a Serbian minority (Interview Goran, 2007)? The German minority is facing the problem that elderly people become isolated because they speak good German but their Romanian is not so well. Media (like newspapers) in their own language is very important for this people. Moreover, the newspapers in languages of ethnicities are important to keep up the knowledge of the group; people want to know what is happening within their minority group. Media can, in this way, bind together people that live relatively separated from each other (Interview Pataki, 2006 & Thiel, 2007). Through language, also the relation with the home-country of the minorities remains alive. Through this, there are many contacts with countries where the same language is spoken and where ancestors of minorities come from. Education and other projects have been financed and set up by governments of these countries. This made some ethnicities very dependent on those countries. Hungarians are facing some problems now with this, because the help from Hungarian government has decreased after 2002 (Interview Suto-Udvari, 2007). Nowadays the (financial) situation is good for ethnicities in Banat (Interview Goran & Thiel, 2007).

Romanian language has become more and more important over time in Banat. Especially for younger people, but also for elderly, the Romanian language is a necessity. From the minorities, about 10 – 30% speaks only Romanian (Census data, 2002). Children get Romanian friends and learn to speak more Romanian in stead of their native language in this way.

Language is not the only way to express a certain identity; many other things can do this as will be described in the next paragraph.

3.2. Cultural symbols

Next to language, there are many other things to express an identity or culture in daily life. Identities and cultures are also visible in space. In history, different ethnic groups laid their identity in space by means of architecture and landscape. These are the visible historic layers of Banat region. The most visible layer nowadays in cities is the Habsburg era. Architecture of Austrian and Hungarian style dominates the city centre and surroundings of Timisoara. After the Ottoman rule, Habsburg colonists came to Banat and drained the swamps, regularised the rivers and canalised the Bega-river. New arable land was given to Habsburg colonists. For the destroyed city came a new city plan with a grid-pattern and straight roads. The Habsburg colonists are responsible for the structure of city and parts of the countryside (plains) nowadays.

Furthermore, they were active in industry and commerce, improvement of agriculture and education. Germans from the western parts of Germany were active in mining and farming (Popa & Sarbovan 1999, p. 156-157). In industrial cities, like Resita, German influence from the 19th century is still present too. Fabrics were built by German industrials and a lot of people still speak German. Nowadays, even though the German and Austrian community has diminished almost totally, the heritage is still very alive and this heritage is being used in economy and identity building in Banat region. Romanians, who were in big majority in Banat at that time in the 18th century (about 4/5th of inhabitants), were seen as inferior people and poor farmers, especially on the plains (Cretan 1999, p. 143). When Hungarian policies and strength increased in the 19th century, Romanians almost became a minority (Popa & Sarbovan 1999, p. 152). Romanian culture and identity

(from 18th and 19th century) is therefore not very visible in city space, only on the countryside. Also the Hungarians laid their marks in the landscape, the influence on the cultural space of Banat is very slight (Popa & Sarbovan 1999, p. 154).

During the communist era, the cultural landscape turned into a state-centralist landscape. The number of different ethnicities decreased dramatically. Moreover, visibly the landscape became subordinated to central planning. Farms and arable land were restructured to big collectivised lands. Industrial production grew and people from countryside had to work in cities. In 1951, people from 172 villages were uprooted and transported to Baragan, near Bucharest. New Romanian villages came into place. This had great impact on the life in the countryside and from this time Romanian culture became more dominant.

Religious symbols in the landscape are also very important to express the identity of a certain group. In contradiction to the rest of Romania, Banat has a lot of Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches. In regions where Habsburgs and Hungarians were active, the Roman-Catholic Church still plays a big role. County Timis counts 10.5% Roman-Catholics, against 4.7% at the national level (Romanian Census, 2002). The Serbian orthodox churches in Banat are still present in towns and villages, and some in Timisoara. They have services in their own language and with this churches Serbians distinct themselves from Romanians on the base of religion, although they have common services.

Also a lot of people use the name Banat to mention the region in which they live. Newspapers for example title their newspapers with 'Banater Zeitung' (German) or 'Renasterea Banateana' (Romanian). Though, a lot of people (especially left-wing politicians) don't use the name Banat when they speak about the area around Timisoara and Resita, but they name the county or the Development region.

Huge Romanian symbols are the Romanian Orthodox churches in almost every village, town or city.

4. MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY AND THE CONTINUANCE OF IDENTITIES

4.1. The roots of a multicultural feeling

Banat is called an exception with relation to multiculturalism. An exception first because it has a different social ethnical structure compared to the rest of Romania. In Banat, the most ethnical groups can be discerned. Other historical regions have a lot of ethnical groups too, but Banat has the most diverse ethnical structure. Secondly, Banat is an exception because the different minorities live very scattered within the territory of Timis and Caras-Severin county. This scattering or spreading of ethnicities makes the ethnical groups less sensitive for isolation. Contacts and cooperation within and between different groups is therefore assumed to be better developed in Banat. Even though this supposition can be proved for the case of Banat, it cannot be denied that contacts and cooperation is also a social process, fuelled by internationalisation and social and economical trends. Due to these trends, state structures are restructuring and regional structures are trying to profile themselves in these processes. This profiling of the region happens though the highlighting of history, imaginary and myths of different time-spans. Through these histories, groups or regions discern themselves from other groups; this is 'othering'.

In the case of Banat, the history, myths and imaginary of some time-spans have been important for this 'profiling'. From this time-spans, Banat intellectuals and government institution derived the 'multicultural feeling' of Banat. A time-span that is very important for the reproducing of this multicultural feeling is the period between the First and Second World War, a period that old people still remember. After the First World War, Banat came for a large part in hands of Romania. In this time, the ethnical structure of Banat was very diverse and economy was historically well developed. From interviews it became clear that people spoke different languages and had a lot of contacts with each other, also between ethnicities (Based on different interviews, 2006/2007). In practice, history was different. In the 19th century, economy was classified; Germans and Hungarians were in leading positions: especially in rich peasantry and administration (Chelcea 1999, p. 4). Romanians were mostly poor peasants. When Banat became part of Romania, nationalist ideology started to withdraw the power of non-Romanian ethnicities in Banat. Establishing a Romanian bourgeoisie in Banat became part of Romanian cultural policy and social mobility between Banat and Romania was increased. This led to a suppression of non-Romanian ethnical groups; closing educational institutions and exclusion from public administration (Chelcea 1999, p. 5). The Romanian nation-state became the most important thing and everything was measured to that. In Banat, a certain nationalist regionalism discourse emerged: the regional sense of difference of Banat was based on a stronger agricultural economy and Banat intelligentsia felt also culturally superior in relation to the rest of Romania. This difference was due to Habsburg interventions in the past and due to ethnic interrelations. In this manner, the regional idea was integrated by national regionalist in the Romanian nation (Chelcea 1999, p. 5-6). If the ethnicities were suppressed in this time, why then comes this 'multicultural idea' from this time-span? Firstly, because the communist regime is blamed by Banat people for all their centralizing policies, but in fact these policies already started in the thirties. Secondly, not everything was against ethnicities in the interwar years; there was tolerance between different ethnicities and people spoke each others language (Interview Hrenoschi, 2006). Thirdly, after the communist period, there was a feeling of 'returning to Europe', to European democratic values and decentralization. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century the idea of multiculturalism was again introduced to connect with this European democratic values and regionalization and as a reaction to state-socialism. The only memory from before the state-socialist era came from the thirties and forties. So, when referring to a 'multicultural history', people refer to what is not state-socialist and to what still can be remembered, that is the period before state-socialism, a period in which a lot of ethnicities still lived in Banat. After the revolution, people thus based their identity on the nationalist regionalism discourse from the interwar years and referred to the 'multicultural thirties'.

Nowadays, the way in which Banat discerns itself from Romania is still not really on the base of multiculturalism, but more on the base of nationalist regionalism: for younger people it is economy that discerns Banat from Bucharest and Romania, although most people (also minorities) feel very part of Romania (interview Thiel 2007; interview Goran 2007; Group discussions 2007 and questionnaires). Multiculturalism in Banat is a kind of key-word which is being translated in: 'no ethnic tensions', 'living along together very well', 'cultural programmes' and 'Europe' (Based on all interviews and group discussion).

4.2. The meaning of multicultural society for people from Banat

The word 'multicultural' means literally 'much cultures'. A multicultural society means that the society is based on the presence of many cultures. In the case of Banat, this is certainly true. Dozens of different ethnicities live in Banat region. One could mention that a multicultural society comes from these minorities in the first place and is reproduced only by these minorities. This is not true in the case of Banat. Most Romanians are very happy with this multicultural idea too (Group discussions 2007, interview Naidan, 2007). This multicultural idea is something the region gets better from, because it gets subsidies for (inter)cultural programmes, it gets attention from other European countries, it is able to stimulate economy and tourism on the base of multicultural history and it is able to compete economically and culturally with Bucharest. Also the ethnicities have no problems with this 'multicultural idea' because it brings them also attention from other countries, subsidies and support from national and county government institutions (Group discussions 2007, interviews with newspapers, Naidan 2007, Hrenoschi 2006). Although there are many cultures in Banat, multiculturalism is not the only ground for Banat identity, but it is only a fact that there are many cultures in Banat and this fact gives profit for Banat inhabitants. Furthermore, this multicultural fact is another tool to distinguish Banat from the rest of Romania and establish a stronger regional pride.

4.3. Multi- and intercultural relations and dialogue

Though, in daily life, ethnicities seem sometimes quite segregated in Romanian society. Hungarians for example speak their own language, have their own schools (where classes are in Hungarian; this is not the case in German schools), and have villages where a majority of Hungarians live. Furthermore, Hungarians are politically organized. This means that in daily life they speak Romanian with Romanian colleges but with each other they speak Hungarian. This also goes for other ethnicities. Still, there are a lot of contacts between different ethnicities in Banat. Mixed marriages for example contribute to more understanding between families of different ethnicity. A lot of towns and villages offer a wide cultural programme, established to create contacts and better understanding between the people of a certain village, town or city. These cultural activities are made possible and are financed by the county council in cooperation with municipalities and communes (Interview Hrenoschi 2006, interview Naidan 2007). Germans, who have a long history in Banat and established their own schools too, did not gave the privilege of having German education or cultural programmes only to Germans, but made the German education system and culture accessible for the whole village or town (Interview Thiel, 2007).

Călin Rus, head of the Intercultural Institute in Timisoara, says that 'interculturalism' is a better word for defining the cultural situation in Banat than 'multiculturalism'. Intercultural relations have to do with integration. In all cultural diversity Banat is rich of, integration between these cultures is very important. The difference between Banat and other historical regions in Romania is that there is mutual understanding between different ethnicities; something that other regions lack. For instance, Transylvania has the 'Hungarian problem', a problem with a lot of prejudices from Romanians and Hungarians and a lack of good communication (interview Rus, 2006). The fact that the Hungarian community is very large and is very concentrated in certain areas in Transylvania creates a bigger distinction between Hungarians and Romanians. In Banat, minorities are smaller in number; minorities are more dependent on each other and on

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Romanians. This means that in Banat are no ethnic tensions. There aren't two groups that are really opposite to each other. Also the class-society during Habsburg and Hungarian reign and the economical welfare could have contributed to the fact that there were no ethnic tensions in Banat, even though the ethnical groups were quite large at that time.

This understanding between ethnicities is kept alive through a large offer of cultural and educational programmes. The Intercultural Institute for example puts energy in integration on the field of civil society, education, research and cultural policy (Interview Rus, 2006). Furthermore, the county governments of Timis and Caras-Severin put money and efforts in cultural festivities that take place in the region or villages (interview Hrenoschi, 2006 & Naidan, 2007).

Although a lot of ethnicities actually take part in these programmes, there are groups that do not participate. Gypsies for instant, called 'Rroma' in Romania, don't have a clear position in society. The National and County governments run special educational programmes for the Gypsy population in Banat and other parts of Romania. For Gypsies they have so-called positive discrimination policy, because the social-economic problems among Gypsies are very large. Gypsies accept the social benefits of society, but they do not participate in society (interview Naidan, 2007).

4.4. Continuance of identity based on multiculturalism

During communist times and after that, minorities in Banat region decreased drastically in number. In 1930, the percentage of Romanians was only 58% of total inhabitants in the Romanian Banat, in 1992 this percentage is 77.5% of total inhabitants. The last 15 years, the amount of people that belong to a minority has even more decreased (Romanian Census, 2002) Moreover, ethnicities suffer ageing (Based on interviews with newspapers, 2006/2007). Especially the younger generation has left to places were a better economic welfare can be achieved; in Germany for example. Because of this, one cannot speak so easily about multiculturalism anymore because the different cultures have left for a great part in the last two decades. This leaving of ethnicities leads to the fact that the ones that stay are even more becoming integrated in Romanian society, because villages and quarters in cities are not property of these ethnicities anymore. Because of their decreasing in number, segregation is getting less and ethnical enclaves are being phased out.

Even though different minorities seem to be slightly diminishing, the 'multicultural idea' seems to be more alive than ever. This multicultural idea does not exist because of the minorities, but, as stated before, is a part of the regional pride and superiority-feeling of Banat that emerges from a better economic standard and opposition with Bucharest. In this regional pride and superiority-feeling, heritage of the minorities is more important than their number. Multiculturalism in Banat is not referring to cultures nowadays, but to cultures in the past; the Habsburg and Hungarian influences for example. The opinion that these cultures always lived in peace together is another support for the multiculturalism idea nowadays.

Strangely, this multiculturalism idea, based on cultural (non-Romanian) heritage, doesn't seem to be very opposite to Romanian nationalist views. Romanians are taking part in this multicultural identity. As said before, the heritage of ethnicities also has something to do with economic welfare and Europeanization. During the last years of the communist regime and especially after the revolution, people longed for everything from the West, for democracy, and for economic welfare. A part of the minorities that lived in Banat

(Germans, Austrians, Hungarians), represented the 'West', and are responsible for economic growth and welfare before communist times. Romanians had this very hang to the West too; this is why western heritage in Banat is not opposite to Romanian nationalism or identity. This identity of the region (based on history and economy) is a part of Romanian national identity. On the other hand, the identity of the inhabitants (which consists of life stories) might be different from the identity of the region (Paasi 1996, p. 36). The tension between ideal (multiculturalism) and factual (economic progress, being opposite to Bucharest) identity (Paasi 1996, p. 36-37) is being highlighted in the reproduction of identities by different actors.

5. REPRODUCING IDENTITY

When identity is in the minds of people, it is the wish of the people that this identity will continue. Identity gets a shape during the institutionalization process of the region. The continuance of a certain identity is dependent on three actors: individuals, groups and society. Regional identity is a concept that characterizes the relationship between these three factors. This is called identity building. In this chapter is described how a certain 'regional consciousness' of Banat is reproduced by institutions. Media, education and political parties are important links between individuals, groups and society. Therefore, it is described in what sense these links are vital in establishing a region with a regional identity.

6. REPRODUCING OF BANAT IDENTITY THROUGH GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

6.1. Attention for Banat in government policy

A very important word in the policies of different Romanian government layers is 'development'. Policies exist of a lot of plans about economic development and European integration. This development is mostly taking place within the territory of the government level itself (that is: national, county or municipal). The websites of 'Timis council' and the municipality of Timisoara show hardly any link or word that refers to Banat. Though, especially the website of Timis council does refer to the fact that Timis is very multicultural and multiethnic. Also national government pretends that it is totally unaware of the existence of a historical region called 'Banat'. When representatives of governments in Banat (Timis, Caras-Severin) speak about Banat, they speak about multiculturalism and economic development within their own county (Interview Hrenoschi, 2006). In the policies of municipalities, counties and the Romanian state there seems to be a sort of 'national ignorance' of a region called 'Banat' in these policies.

To know whether the identity of Banat is visible in policy of governments, scholars and students have been asked in the questionnaires whether different government layers are active in giving attention to Banat and Banat identity in their policies. On a five-point scale (1 = very much attention to 5 = very little attention) the different government layers (also the European Union has been valued as government layer for the case of the research) have scores which are shown in table 6.1. Also the 'Mode' is shown. The mode is

a value that shows the most chosen answer of a question. This mode might differ from the weighed mean (score 1 to 5) (see table 2).

Table 2. Attention for Banat in government policy

Government layer	score 1 to 5	Mode
National government policy	3.36	3
County government policy	2.32	2
Local government policy	2.09	1
European Union policy	3.27	3

According to scholars and students in Banat, local governments give the most attention to Banat in their policies, with a score (weighed mean) of 2.09, that is 'much attention'; the mode is 1, that means that from the respondents most people said that local governments give 'very much attention' to Banat in their policy. County governments give in between normal and much attention, but national government policy and the attention of the European Union score in between 'normal attention' to 'little attention', although most respondents said they give 'normal attention'.

Between Romanians and minorities, Timis and Caras-Severin, less differences can be found. The only significant difference is between city and countryside. Crosstabs and Cramers V calculations show that, for all government layers, there are weak significant differences in the valuing by scholars and students of the attention that governments give to Banat. Scholars and students from Timisoara and Resita give a better score (1.92, between 'much attention' and 'very much attention') to local governments, which is different from the countryside, were students gave a score of 2.21. Also the attention of county governments is valued higher by students and scholars from the city (city = 2.15, countryside = 2.43). National government policy and European Union policy do not differ much between city and countryside. The reason for the difference in appreciation of government and European policy between city and countryside may be found in the fact that local governments of (large) cities have more power, have more possibilities and means to achieve their goals, and have a wide range of different actors that are able to cooperate with the local and county government. Moreover, the county governments of Timis and Caras-Severin are settled in Timisoara and Resita. Regional newspapers and radio stations that give notice of government policy are also settled in the cities, so the vicinity of government, actors, media and organization could make the county and local government more visible in cities than in municipalities on the countryside.

When the scores that the scholars and students gave are taken into consideration, there seems to be quite a lot of attention for Banat in policies, even though this is not very visible in the policies itself. From this we may conclude that also scholars and students perhaps reduce 'Banat' to what is visible (multiculturalism, economy) in their own neighbourhood. This multiculturalism and economical development, combined with a kind of pride, is combined into one word, called 'Banat'. If governments have attention for my village, my salary, development, ethnicity and culture, then they have attention for Banat.

6.2. Reproducting of Banat identity by county and local government

In stimulating and reproducing identity, culture and intercultural relations, county and local governments in Banat are very active. There is a great offer of cultural festivities or programmes in Banat. Especially county Timis is very active in organizing (inter)cultural festivities and programmes in cooperation with local organizations, museums, and cultural organizations. On the website of county Timis, an enormous list of cultural happenings throughout the year can be found that take place different locations within the county. All cultural happenings have been invented and are financed by the county government (Interview Hrenoschi 2006, Website County Council Timis, 2007).

The goal of the cultural festivities is to stimulate intercultural understanding. The activities are stimulated and financed by the county government, but the implementation and action of county government policies is carried out by the minorities, and cultural organization like 'Ruga's'; local (non-governmental) organizations that organize cultural festivities. The cultural happenings are sometimes focussed on only one minority, for example, the county council website of Timis (2007) shows a subject like 'German art heritage in Gottlob' is about the German ethnicity, but it is meant for everyone who is interested in it. People that live in the town, or people who are interested in art from different ethnicities will come to such an exposition. This exposition says something about the German art (reproducing of German identity) and it creates understanding from other ethnicities for Germans in Banat in general. In this way, county and local governments reproduce the intercultural character of Banat, though they leave the identity of the different ethnicities intact. The cultural department of the county government thus carries out its policy cooperating with different actors on the regional and local level, whereby the consumers of the cultural programmes are, next to the ethnicities, all who is interested in a certain subject (Interview Hrenoschi 2006 & Website Timis County Council, 2007). Cultural programmes and events are also taking place on an international scale, whereby counties and municipalities that are close to the border are actors in fuelling cross-border relationships and cultural programmes and events (Interview Naidan, 2007).

The fact that county and local governments are active in developing intercultural programmes, festivities and dialogue, doesn't mean that they are 'builders' of an identity that is applicable to the territory of Banat. Between the county governments in Banat (Timis, Caras-Severin and partly Arad) is little cooperation. The only answer that interviewees from county governments gave on the question if there is cooperation with other counties was: "we have good contacts". Although most people in Banat know about Banat region, Banat is not used as a base for intergovernmental cooperation.

6.3. Reproducing of Banat identity by national government

Since the time that a part of the historical Banat region joined Romania, there has been competition between Bucharest and the Banat region. Banat wants to go its own way, as the region has a strong economic development and is close to other European countries. According to Hrenoschi (interview 2006), head of the Cultural Department of Timis county: Because Banat is doing quite well, financial aid from national government is being distributed to poorer regions in Romania. This equalization policy, together with the bureaucracy of Bucharest, is not aimed to stimulate stronger regions, but to distribute welfare equally over the country. In this sense, Romanian national government is not

willing to reproduce or stimulate regional identities or cultures at all. Though, Romanian government does create the conditions for reproducing identities, by distributing money for cultural groups. The initiatives for cultural events (reproducing of identity) come from county governments, but are part of national policies. Counties mostly solve their own problems relating to culture and minorities, although they get some support from the national government (Interview Naidan, 2007). Moreover, although national government has had nationalisation and equalisation policies in the past, nowadays the national government is not a stand in the way to regionalization and the development of regional consciousness.

6.4. Identity reproduction tools: media, education and political parties

Media, education and political parties are links between individuals and society. These links have a top-down and bottom-up effect. Top-down because the government uses media, education and to a certain extent political parties to reproduce the identity it has in mind. Also groups in society use media and education (think of education in minority language) to bind individuals, that belong to the group, together. On the other hand, there is bottom-up effect of identity reproduction because individuals use media and political parties to let certain groups, society and governments know what their opinion is of how society should work. Through media, groups show that they are; though groups can also polarize trough media. What does this all mean for Banat? An equal distribution between the top-down and bottom-up effect of individuals, groups and society can lead to a consciousness where everyone in society as part of this is regional identity (Paasi, 1996).

Next to minorities and other actors that reproduce their identity, also governments make use of media and education to spread their policy related to culture and identity. Political parties work, to a certain extent, the other way round; they listen to society and try to influence this culture and identity policy of government. To see whether Banat identity is given attention by media, education and political parties, students and scholars have been asked to give a score on a five-point scale (1 = very much attention, 5 = very little attention) for the attention media, education and political parties give to Banat (see table 3). Also here, the score (weighed mean) may differ from the most chosen answer; therefore the mode is shown.

Table 3. Attention for Banat in media, education and political parties

Media, education and political parties	*score 1 to 5*	*mode*
Local and regional media	2.20	1
National media	3.26	3
'gimnaziu' school	3.18	3
'liceu' school	2.93	3
Political parties	3.37	3

In comparison with national media (like daily's, television broadcasts etc.), regional media scores relatively good for giving attention to Banat region. With a score of 2.20, local and regional media give 'much attention' and the answer 'very much attention'

has the highest percentage of the respondents. National media give 'normal attention' to Banat. With regard to education, the conclusion may be drawn that educational institutions also need to represent the national identity, but though, with a score of 'normal attention' it can be said that also regional identity is being reproduced by educational institutions. In Romanian geography schoolbooks though, everything is focussed on Romania. Historical regions are not even mentioned, and economical prosperity is shown with statistics of industry (for example it is shown how many plants a certain city has). Schoolbooks are thus based on nationalisation and equalization policies (Based on two geography schoolbooks for class 8: Posea, 2000 & Giurcaneanu, Musat, Ghica, 1997).

Political parties have an appreciation between 'normal attention' and 'little attention'. In their campaigns, political parties don't seem to feel much for Banat, perhaps some do. The relatively negative appreciation for political parties could emerge from the fact that scholars and students see political parties as 'national government', and perhaps because they are not very interested in politics.

Banat regional identity is reproduced by regional institutions as well as by national ones. Schools are translating the national identity, but they also tell about the region, which means that nationalization policies are decreasing in education. Also the emergence of regional media has given an impulse to regional consciousness.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The territory of Banat is based on the common history or image of history that people have. These people contribute to this history. Multiculturalism is rhetoric used by intelligentsia where many people subscribe to; therefore it can be seen as the 'ideal identity' of Banat.

The differences between Banat and the rest of Romania are difficult to capture in clear reasons. It is a regional pride, a feeling whose origin must be found in history and in a better standard of living in this region. The intercultural understanding in Banat region creates a base for a stronger regional consciousness where every ethnicity is part of. From the side of national government there is not much attention for interculturalism or regional identity, but more focussed on economic regionalism for 5 West Region in which Banat is more than a half.

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