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THE INTER–ETHNIC DIALOGUE:
CONFLICT, NEGOTIATION, COMPROMISE

SUMMARY

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Introduction

The main theme of this PhD thesis is the inter-cultural dialogue in Banat-Crişana and Transylvania. These regions are characterized not only by a cultural and ethno-linguistic diversity, but also by regions claimed as symbol-countries and essential spaces by both the Romanian and the Hungarian nationalism. Thus, Transylvania and Banat-Crişana are areas of political claims and counterclaims formulated in nationalistic terms. At the same time, the two historical regions are spaces of natural confluences and influences, of co-habitation and harmony. The Romanians, the Hungarians, the Germans and the other ethnicities have generally lived and live in harmony, with conflicts being rather exceptions to the day to day rule. Nonetheless, some of these conflicts have been a significant exception which in certain contexts, particularly in the last two centuries, caused bloody conflicts. For this reasons, the research dimensions I have established for this thesis are the conflict, the negotiation and the compromise.

Chapter 1 – Nationalism and Ethnical Diversity

In the first chapter, I have analyzed the main theories regarding nationalism and the nation. I was particularly interested in the way in which the issue of ethnic diversity is managed: how and when do ethnical groups come into conflict and the solutions by which national and ethnic groups can cohabit, with an accent on multiculturalism. Moreover, I have also analyzed the way in which globalization affected nation-states.

Until the second half of the nineteenth century the quasi-generalized belief was the one according to which societies are naturally organized in peoples, ethno-linguistic communities which originated from times immemorial and which have gradually evolved into modern nations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, sociologists and historians confirm the modern and constituted character of the nation. The Second World War produced a shock in the intellectual world. The crimes against humanity committed by the German National Socialism imposed a severe critical analysis of nationalism.

Modernism. The most significant approach in the study of nationalism is the array of theories generically called "modernism" or "classic modernism". Modernist theories

bring forth three great theses: nationalistic ideologies and the system of the nation states are modern; nations and national identities are also modern; nations and nationalism are the products of modernization and modernity. The national feeling is regarded as a mechanism which supplied identity in a world which underwent profound changes, and the transition towards modernity, towards a new kind of life.

Perhaps the main exponent of this current was Ernest Gellner, who openly de-builds the old theories regarding the nation and nationalism, stating that nationalism leads to the creation of nations, and not the other way around. Ernest Gellner believes that nationalism and the nations are social constructions, cultural creations of the modernity. The modern state demanded and imposed the coincidence between the cultural and political boundaries. Gellner defined nationalism as a political principle which demands that the political and the national unity should be congruous. The observation thus derived shows the potentially conflicting character of nationalism.

Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm are two significant authors who support the modernity of the nations. However, by analyzing national traditions as "cultural artifacts" invented by the elite, but with roots in certain important historical moments, by describing nations as being consensual "constructions", they attempted a different explanation for the popular response of the national feeling. Their perspective may be described as "constructivist", as they both believe that nationalists "invent" and "imagine" the nation through culture and social rituals.

Ethno-symbolism. Anthony D. Smith, former PhD candidate of Ernest Gellner's, formulated a series of criticisms regarding the modernist theories. He does not totally dismiss the modernists' contributions, but states that the nations and nationalism cannot be understood without taking into consideration the pre-existing ethnic core and the myth-symbol complexes on which ethnicities were based. Ethno-symbolism is concerned with the long duration of the history, with the deep roots of the nations. He does not contest the impact of modernization and industrialization, but he believes that "modernity is not everything".

Nationalism is a recent phenomenon, but it pleads for research focused on ethnicity as a predecessor of nations and nationalism.

Modernism, according to ethno-symbolists, cannot explain the passions which arise from one's belonging to a nation. Anthony Smith considers that the pre-modern ethic connections conferred to the national feeling a quasi-religious fervor. A marginalized or even excluded element by the modernists but valued by the ethno-symbolists for the

explanation of the nation is ethnicity. For the ethno-symbolists, the ubiquity of ethnical phenomena imposes setting them in the centre of the research of the nation and nationalism.

The potentially conflicting nature of ethnic groups and nationalism. People have committed unimaginable crimes instigated by nationalism, in the name of the nation, but have also committed crimes in the name of religion, science and political ideologies. Donald Horowitz is one of those researchers who tried to understand the mechanisms which lead to violence between ethnic groups. In the literature referring to ethnic conflicts there are approach differences between those who consider the ethnical groups as durable and tightly connected communities, inclined to ethnocentrism and hostility towards other similar groups (the hard perspective) and those who consider the groups as social constructions which are not necessarily inclined towards violence and conflict (the soft perspective). The two perspectives start from a different definition of the nature of ethnicity, as a natural given or a social construct. The hard perspective looks at groups as having strong roots, characterized by feelings of solidarity and willingness to sacrifice for the best interest of the belonging group. According to the soft perspective, ethnic groups can be deconstructed, analyzed from the perspective of the members of the group, whose behavior must be explained in terms of individual calculus, not from the perspective of certain collective purposes.

Rogers Brubaker is a theoretician who brought significant contributions to the theories regarding inter-ethnical relationships. He criticized the way in which the concept of "ethnic group" was reified in the related literature. According to him, the concept of "group" is taken literally in social sciences, including in the studies of ethnicity, race and nationhood. He calls "groupism" the tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multicolored mosaic of blocks which are undiversified from an ethnical, racial or cultural point of view. In Brudaker's opinion, ethnic conflicts must not be regarded as conflicts between ethnic groups, even if the participants regard them in "groupist" terms. By the reification of groups, a new reality which the researchers apparently try to describe is produced. Ethnicity should be regarded not as an entity or as an organism, but in rational, procedural and dynamic terms. The analytical unity is not the group, but the feeling of belonging to groupness.

Multiculturalism. The theoreticians of multiculturalism do not consider the common democratic mechanisms as sufficient in order to solve satisfactorily the issue of multicultural societies. Thus, a new paradigm is needed. The concept of collective rights

stands in the centre of this model and not opposed to individual liberty, but as a prerequisite of this individual liberty. Authors like Charles Taylor or Will Kimlicka proposed thinking frameworks and institutional arrangements which could permit politics of recognition for minority groups, as well as articulating theories of "multicultural citizenship". These theoreticians consider that multiculturalism is an adaptation and an extension of liberal democracies, so that it can properly face certain new demands.

The philosopher Charles Taylor is one of the philosophers who offered a theoretical and moral foundation to multiculturalism, generating an inciting and fruitful debate. Charles Taylor noticed that in the political life an oftentimes stringent need for recognition is felt. The theoreticians of multiculturalism found the demand of equal recognition for all cultural groups on the connection between recognition and identity. Taylor states that the identity is partially created by recognition or its absence, frequently by the lack of recognition or the distorted recognition of others.

Will Kymlicka believes that one of the most pressing problems faced by liberal democracies is the politicization of ethno-cultural differences. The cultural minorities demand further political recognition of their distinctive identities, more freedom and opportunities to keep and develop their specific cultural practices. Liberal democracies hoped that the protection of individual rights will be sufficient to manage the problems of ethno-cultural minorities. One currently largely accepts the fact that these common rights of citizenship are not sufficient. One needs certain differentiated group rights and there is a tendency among liberal democracies to recognize such rights.

Will Kymlicka was also interested in the global evaluation of multicultural policies, in order to demonstrate that the trenchant statements regarding the failure of multiculturalism are unfounded. He states that the Western democratic societies have made steps towards the adoption of multicultural policies, whether they have accepted this term or not. Kymlicka believes that the multicultural experiments were not properly understood and that the extent to which they were abandoned was exaggerated. Multiculturalism, according to Kymlicka, is part of a more extended revolution of human rights, involving ethnic and racial diversity.

Far from being imposed as a solution for the settlement of the problem of cultural and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism has generated numerous criticisms. Jurgen Habermas proposed a form of cultural patriotism, a general agreement on the governing rules of a society. Giovanni Sartori described it as a policy which is ready to promote the ethnical and cultural differences. According to him, multiculturalism, a phenomenon which

proclaims the right identity difference and ignores the connection of similarity, leads to atomization, to a ghetto society.

Transformations under the impact of globalization. Globalization may be understood as an enlargement, a deepening and an acceleration of interconnection at a global scale in all the aspects of the contemporary social life. One can notice numerous types of arguments regarding the impact of cultural globalization. Hyper-globalists foresee a homogenization of the world, under the impact of the consumerism promoted by the American society (one may talk about Coke-Colonization or McWorlding). Skeptics rather highlight the cultural diversity and the conflicts between civilizations, with an accent upon the anti-occidental resistance. The transformists focus on the intergrowth between cultures and the emergence of cultural hybrids.

There is a lively debate regarding the impact of globalization upon national states, the traditional framework for the intercultural dialogue. Hyper-globalists believe that this impact will be fatal for national states, which are tagged as old-fashioned. An opposing thinking trend appreciates that the states are actually the ones which control, give meaning and encourage the phenomenon of globalization, which means that the role of national states is far from being outworn. The state, in this respect, adapts to the new conditions imposed by globalization, in a world which remains a universe of states.

Chapter 2 – The Ethno-Nation: the National Awareness of the Romanians

The identity construction of the Romanian nation. The creation of the Romanian nation is the work of intellectuals who defined the nation and gave it a cultural identity and a subsequent political identity. The creation of national conscience is favored by the geopolitical evolutions in the central and east-European zones. Both in Transylvania and in the Principalities, the idea of nation is developed in correlation with modernity, which operates at an ideological, cultural, as well as an economical and social level.

Transylvania and Banat decisively enter the western-European political context by their integration in the Habsburg Empire at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. Imperial reforms will accelerate the spread of European ideas and the economical and social transformations which favor the germs of modernity. In the course of a few decades after the religious unification, a significant number of Transylvanian youth received a selected education in the centers of Catholicism. One thus witnesses the creation of the generation of intellectuals known as the Transylvanian School which, with great respect towards the authorities and towards the legal system, but also

with great zeal, gathered the ideas which will stand at the base of the national conscience of the Romanians in a cultural and political program. The idea of nation irrevocably over passed the borders of confessions, but was not yet modern. They had compassion for the peasantry, but they did not imagine the peasants as a component of the political nation.

The activity of these intellectuals prepared the cultural atmosphere during which the Pasoptist generation was born. The national identity of Transylvanian Romanians is formed and performed in 1848, when these intellectuals make an appeal to the peasantry, which they imagine and include in the political nation. The claims of the Pasoptists are, at the same time, national-political, confessional and social, headed towards the improvement of the condition of the peasants.

The revolution of 1848 led to the crystallization of nationalistic claims and counter-claims in Transylvania, events which will mark the following centuries. Starting with 1848, the idea of Romanian-Hungarian adversity is deeply rooted in the Romanian culture. The Hungarians had been perceived as a natural enemy by the Romanians for centuries. The Pasoptist revolution completed the process of defining the nation in an ethnical sense, while the language becomes equivalent to the nation and the state.

In the first part of the nineteenth century, by the increase of the influence of Russian imperialism, the political and economical monopole of the Ottoman Empire upon the Romanian principalities is removed. The political elite in Moldavia and Valahia decidedly entered the European system of thinking. It is possible that in the modernization of the society what really mattered were the economical practices (as stated by Ștefan Zeletin). Perhaps the adoption of Western cultural and political ideas (Eugen Lovinescu's point of view) was decisive. What is certain however is the fact that in the nineteenth century, the Romanian elite and slowly the entire society moved their attention to the west.

The nation and Europe were the strength ideas debated in the public space. The generation which studies abroad and which get into direct contact with the European ideas asserts itself. During the nineteenth century the concept of nation based on privileges leaves place to a new ethnic conception which transcends social classes. In the Proclamation of Islaz, ethnicity is the criterion of belonging to a nation.

The modernization of Romania is marked by the ardent dispute between those who led and managed these rapid transformations, the winners on the political stage (the main representatives were Ion C. Brătianu and C.A. Rosetti) and the opposition which dominated the epoch with its intellectual and cultural prestige (the group represented by

the members of the Junimea group, among which were Titu Maiorescu, P.P. Carp and Mihai Eminescu).

Inter-war Romania: centralization and mystical ethno-centrism. After 1918 and the Great Unification, Romania became a nationalizing state in the meaning described by Rogers Brubaker, who did not wish to eliminate or to silence the national minorities, but who claimed the state for a single nationality, for the ethno-nation.

The democratic evolution after the western model continued to be criticized and challenged in the name of a national specific which should be kept and valued. During the third and fourth decades, a new generation rose, which contested both the copying of the western model and the anchorage in a past which they considered as tedious. The "young generation", obsessed with the marginal role of an insignificant and mediocre culture at the global level, imagined a Romanian country which could earn a place among the major European cultures. The intellectual youth were attracted by mystic experiences and the primitive spirituality of the folklore. With the philosopher Nae Ionescu as a mentor, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica and many others adhered, more or less, for shorter or longer periods of time, to the ideological legionary trend. Their belief in the existence of a "national soul" excluded the notion of a society composed of individuals; it excluded democracy and pluralism as viable options.

Communism legitimates itself through the etno-nation. Similar to the other states in Central and Eastern Europe, in Romania the communist regime is imposed by force, through the intervention of the soviet army. The instauration of communist regimes was not the result of the traditions of political thinking in these countries. The communist ideology revised according to the soviet meaning, which appealed to the workers and the peasantry of these countries, beyond and sometimes against religious and national identities, did not gain popularity in Romania. Nonetheless, the communist regime was imposed a few years later, by violence and the brutal obviation of the opposition.

During the first two decades of the communist regime, the culture of the ethnos was replaced by the proletarian culture. The regime engaged in a complex process of rewriting historiography, with a pro-Russian and implicitly pro-soviet interpretation, coordinated by Mihail Roller. At the cultural level, proletcultism is promoted, a trend characterized by the elimination of the old culture, considered to be decadent, and its replacement with a culture put to the service of the workers and the peasantry, namely to the benefit of the communist ideology.

In the middle of the sixth century, a new phase of Romanian communism is inaugurated, where the Marxist-Leninist ideology tries to capitalize the national ideology in order to obtain legitimacy. The national ideology turned out to be capable of subordinating Marxism. Once reoriented towards nationalism, the Communist Party did not only identify with the workers, but with the entire nation. During this period the recovery of certain personalities and works of art takes place. By assuming the cultural inheritance, the communism intended its own legitimacy, at the cost of misshaping the authentic background of the national culture.

The tendency manifested in historiography was even stronger within the cultural products destined to mass consumption such as cinematography, where the messages were highly simplified and distorted.

The unitary national state inspired by ethnic nationalism is perpetuated in democracy. The debate of the 1990s polarized over the speed at which market economy was introduced, and, in subsidiary, on how much and how quickly Romania had to be (re)Occidentalized. The national idea was yet again at the centre of public debate. The model of the ethno-nation, of a unitary state dominated by the Romanian ethnos, successfully crossed this period as well and was consecrated by the new Constitution, through articles which cannot be subjected to revision.

In the Romania after 1989 nationalism was perpetuated in its communist form, thus resulting in a left-sided nationalism, hostile to market economy, atypical and odd in the eyes of European countries. The communist nationalism educated the Romanians in the spirit of their uniqueness and of the distrust in others, especially regarding the occidental values.

The political, cultural and social values which characterized the national communism and the protocronism were the reasons for fiery disputed: although contested, they continued to find supporters. Communism was established as being illegal and only an insignificant minority openly supported it. However, the core ideas of national communism still enjoy a vast audience. In Romania numerous historical works on a protocronist key were and still are published. Films with an ideological load are still broadcast and appreciated. The poets, journalists and philologists of the communist era did not encounter trouble in the transfer and keeping of their popularity in the new regime.

A model of solving the inter-ethnic disputes: the placement of the Statue of Liberty in Arad. A significant episode in this symbols war in post-communist Romania was the case of the Statue of Liberty in Arad. I have shown how this monument was

received differently over the course of time, according to the geo-political context and the nationalist climate predominant in Arad. The monument symbolized the Millenary Hungary and evoked the Pasoptist moment. For the Romanians, the symbol was considered as an offense and the statuary group was removed in 1925. An attempt of placing the statue in the public space during nationalist communism failed. The statue was however replaced in the public space in 2004, after negotiations which lasted for a few years and a virulent public disputed. I have shown that within the successful solution of the demands of the Hungarian community what mattered were the participation of UDMR at the governing, international pressure and the moderate attitude of local politicians. The placement of the monument of the Statue of Liberty was possible in a political context which favored inter-party dialogue. Although there is proof that not all the political actors "internalized" the values promoted by the Reconciliation Park, they have acted out of pragmatic reasons towards the direction of dialogue and compromise. The mass-media has had rather a role of slowing down and detaining the negotiations. Based on the idea of confrontation, the rhetoric of nationalist representatives was privileged.

Chapter 3 – Nationalism and National Myths in Banat and Transylvania

In the third chapter I have included four studies connected to nationalism and nationalistic myths in Banat and Transylvania.

Ideas about nation and ethnic groups in the "Românul" newspapaer. Repeatedly banned by the Hungarian authorities, the "Românul" newspaper led by Vasile Goldiş expresses the ideas and the conceptions of the generation of the unionists. I have analyzed the idea of nation, as it was understood by the politicians who accomplished the Unification of 1918 and based on the relationship with others, with the ethnic groups with whom the Romanians lived in this space, starting from the "Românul" newspaper. I have included in my analysis the 1911, 1913 and 1918 issues of this publication. In the spirit of the era and under the influence of Wilsonian ideas, the ideologists of the Unification of Transylvania and Banat with Romania focus, in defining the nation upon ethnical belonging, on religion and the Romanian language. A strong relationship is established between the land considered to be Romanian, the Romanian language and the nation. The ethno-nationalism resulted from this conception marks the articles in the "Românul". Nationalism marks any interpretation regarding the political reality, as well as the daily reality of the era.

The integration of Transylvania in The Great Romania (1919-1930): centralization, propaganda and censorship. The Unification of 1918 must not be regarded as a final stage in the historical process, but as a starting point in a difficult process: the unification. Romania answered the new challenges by creating and promoting a strong centralized and bureaucratized state, whose ideal was cultural, administrative and ethnical homogenization. I have studied the complex relationships between the authorities of the Romanian state and the ethnic minorities in the county of Arad during the period when Transylvania was integrated in Romania (1919-1930). I have analyzed documents from the State Archives in order to understand administrative actions, the reference of public institutions to the minorities and their problems, as well as aspects connected to the way in which the minorities in Arad perceived their own situation in the years that followed the Unification of 1918.

In the period 1919-1930 the local community in Arad is slowly integrated in the cultural, political and administrative system of The Great Romania: the Romanian language is imposed in administration in the course of a few years, schools become Romanian, while the symbolism in the public space is changed in the favor of the Romanians. The process is accompanied by mechanisms of propaganda and censorship, used directly by the public authorities. Minorities are regarded with suspicion and are carefully monitored by the secret services, which were particularly interested in the state of the spirit of the Hungarian population.

The construction of Michael the Brave myth through cinematography, from a nationalistic perspective. Nationalistic myths are promoted through cultural products of wide circulation. In this section I have analyzed the construction of Michael the Brave myth by means of cinematography from a nationalistic perspective during the communist regime. Why Michael the Brave? Because he is the emblematic figure for the idea of national unity in Romanian culture, but also because this historical character was the object of numerous re-evaluations in different political and ideological contexts. Why by means of cinematography? Because the cinematographic art and the fictional movie have a large audience and a great power of penetrating the wide public.

The myth of the country unifier Michael the Brave was built during the Pasoptist period. Although historians have agreed that during the 16th-17th centuries we cannot talk about a national conscience in the modern meaning, the myth has persisted and is still promoted by cultural products. The communist regime marked by protocronism fully used the ideas of the Pasoptist Nicolae Bălcescu, which it transformed from the perspective of

its own ideology. The myth of Michael the Brave was widely promoted not only through school books, but also through cinematography under the direct coordination of Nicolae Ceauşescu in movies like *Michael the Brave* (1971) and *The Mace with Three Seals* (1977). These two illustrations create a character with an unusual sense of history, close to contemporary viewers and with a strong national conscience. Michael is not a man of ambitions and political estimates – as are the leaders of the great powers or the Hungarian princes – but a profound thinker, a visionary. The character feels that he has been chosen to accomplish a destiny. In subsidiary, but clearly defined, the portrait of the Romanian people is also promoted: kind and patient, oppressed, brave when needed and willing to sacrifice for the west. At the opposing pole is the Hungarian nobility, superficial and arrogant, blinded by obscure interests. The communist ideology minimizes or eliminates the role of religion from the motivation of the historical actors. In return, the theme of social conflict repeatedly appears; Romanians needed to free themselves from a double oppression: a national and a social one.

Is Banat different? During recent years one can notice the tendency of consolidating the idea that Banat is an area of inter-cultural relationship, dominated by a pluralist and non-conflicting vision. By accentuating this reality, two ideas are at least suggested, if not openly stated: 1 – Banat is different in this regard from Transylvania and other close areas, marked by inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts; 2 – In Banat there is a conception of nation and nationalism which is different from the predominating conception in Transylvania. These ideas, which highlight a model of intercultural and inter-ethnical cohabitation different from the Transylvanian model, tend to impose themselves as proof which is less, if not at all, subjected to critical evaluation.

In this section, I have analyzed the different historical evolution of Banat up to a certain point and the particularities of this region and I have presented the arguments of those who state that these particularities persist. The distinctive features of Banat were highlighted in the context in which nationalism expressed itself stringently in Transylvania, the scene of older or more recent inter-ethnic conflicts. In contrast, the area of Banat has been sheltered from recent or more significant confrontations. The association between the lack of conflicts, the situation of cultural diversity, the preoccupation for intercultural acquaintance and perhaps the local patriotism shaped the idea of a cohabitation model with cultural roots.

However, the arguments invoked particularly by the intellectuals in Timişoara are, in my opinion, insufficient to demand the rooting of pluralist values or of a widely-spread

spirit of tolerance in Banat, different from other regions. After 1918 and especially after 1947, a new unitary vision of the nation was imposed in Romania and a process of cultural equalization took place through education and mass cultural products which erased regional particularities.

Transylvania cannot be regarded either as a hearth of inter-ethnic conflicts. Conflicts are in this case, as well, the exception, not the rule of cohabitation in society. Bilingualism, the Hungarian children who attended Romanian schools, mixed marriages and generally all of the elements of inter-cultural contacts cited by the Banatian intellectuals are typical to the large cities in Transylvania – Cluj, Sibiu and Braşov.

The idea of Banat as the owner of a different culture, more open to change, seems to have rather been built by a group of intellectuals than the description of empirical realities. However, the communities are dynamic structures: the belief of the Banat intellectuals in the local distinctive features can create the reality that it claims to discover through a process similar to that in which, on a larger scale, the nation was built.

Chapter 4 – The Perception of Inter-ethnic Relationships in the Environment of University Students

In this chapter I have analyzed the perception of inter-ethnic relationships in the environment of university students. I have used the data collected from two surveys performed by a group of researchers coordinated by Mr. Gabriel Bădescu, in six university centers (Cluj, Oradea, Arad, Târgu Mureş, Bucharest and Constanţa) regarding one's trust in people and institutions.

I have observed the students' attitude towards people of the same ethnic group in the wider context of one's trust in different social groups and public institutions. I consider trust to be a key-element in understanding the inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relationships in a community, the foundation on which one can build a harmonious relationship or, according to each case, the framework which permits the accumulation of certain tensions which lead to conflicts.

The level of trust in people belonging to a different ethnic group is relatively low among the students included in the two waves of the surveys. There are few variations at the level of historical regions, a fact which invalidates the opinions which state that certain regions (especially Banat-Crişana) are characterized by a political culture of a distinctive type, based on the acceptance and the assumptions of cultural and ethno-linguistic differences.

The means of relating to ethnicity seem to be included in a wider frame, where the level of trust is low both in relation to change and the unknown and in relation to public institutions. The highest level of trust in change appears when the "others" are defined by religion, in which case their behavior is perhaps perceived as predictable and known. The lowest level of trust is the one in people met on the streets. The trust in people of a different ethnic group increases when the respondents are the minority and they frequently experience the relation of inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue. Similarly, one's trust in people belonging to a different ethnic group increases when the respondents are often engaged in dialogue with colleagues of different ethnos in the university environment. There are elements which support the importance of mutual acquaintance and of the inter-cultural dialogue for the establishment and consolidation of an environment based on mutual trust. The trust in people of a different ethnos is favored by an open and permissive attitude those who are different, whether Rroma, or belonging to sexual or religious minorities.

One's involvement in volunteering activities is associated with a higher trust in those of a different ethnos, but the level of involvement in such actions is low. The survey applied to the students in the second wave, who are integrated in the university life, shows an increase in the frequency with which the students participate in the activity of the civil society and cooperate in actions based on volunteering.

Conclusions

The modern history of Romania is filled with discontinuities and turbulences: the fragile democracy which was imposed over the course of a few decades was suppressed by totalitarian regimes of right wing and left wing. In the past two centuries, there was however one line of continuity: the idea of nation.

The national idea is connected to the process of modernization, accelerated and favored by geo-political influences, by diplomatic decisions and by ideas borrowed from the West. The 1848 revolution is the moment when the Romanian nation was already formed beyond confessional and social boundaries. The conception about the nation is based on ethnicity, while the Romanian nationalism demands and defends a Romania of the Romanians and for the Romanians. The Romanian culture is dominated by an organic vision of the nation, reticent to change and in search of political and cultural forms which are adequate to the "Romanian soul". The study regarding the Romanians' conception of nation promoted through the "Românul" newspaper is edifying in this regard.

In the inter-war period, the model of the unitary national state was imposed, a model which sought to equalize the historical regions with different evolutions. I have used the case of Arad to illustrate the way in which the local communities were integrated in the new state.

Imposed by the soviet forces, the Romanian communism gave the impression that it would crush the idea of nation and that it would dissolve it in an ideology of the working class. However, it was not so: nationalism reappeared as a strong idea to confer legitimacy to an oppressive regime which sought roots in the values of the Romanians. Protocronism was the megalomaniac expression of a nationalism which was aggressively promoted by the state. The systematic and programmed means by which the political myths were built and re-built from a nationalist perspective is illustrated by the study regarding the filmic mythology and the figure of Michael the Brave.

The idea of the unitary national state, of ethno-nation, also remained the continuity bench-mark in the process of democratization began at the end of 1989. In the context of democracy and European integration, Romania has made significant steps towards pluralism and towards a society which is open in its relationships with the ethnic and national minorities. A successful model of negotiation is illustrated by the placement of the Statue of Liberty in Arad. However, at the level of the collective mind, of the public language and in the political life, an ethicist vision predominates regarding the nation, which can only with great difficulty be subjected to a critical examination.

In the last chapter I was interested in the way in which the students perceive their relationship with other ethnic and religious groups, as well as in the variables associated to these perceptions. I have considered one's trust in "others" as a proper indicator of one's opening and dismissal in inter-ethnic relationships and I have tried to analyze this variable. The wider and the more unknown the categories to which we relate are, the lower the level of trust is. Mutual trust among ethnic groups seems to be favored by the degree of inter-reference and of mutual acquaintance. Those who has an ethnos other than the Romanian one and who are used with the inter-cultural relationship tend to have more trust in change. Moreover, students who are used to discuss during seminars with colleagues of a different ethnic group generally tend to have more trust in them. This is a conclusion which confirms the need of an orientation towards policies and programs which favor inter-cultural education. The study seems to confirm the importance of inter-cultural education, the role of immediate mutual acquaintance in the establishment of relationships of mutual trust between ethnic and national groups, as well as in the provision of a climate of

peaceful cohabitation. At the same time, the data seem to suggest that the educational system – at a wide level, that of society – is poorly oriented towards inter-cultural education, cooperation, mutual acquaintance and tolerance.