



The Geographical Identity as the Main Factor of the Settling and Regional Development

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Introduction

The best way of proving anyone's geographical identity is to give them a map and see what pages they will look at, and on those pages what geographical names they will look for. No matter which map they will choose, everybody will look for their own country, for their own region and, finally, they will point at their native village or town. In our opinion the geographical identity is the essential factor of the habitation and regional development. It is like: "It is good to be home."

It is unimaginable to organize, plan, arrange and develop an area with and for such a communities to whom this is not the fundamental interest.

In this case the "public participatory process" cannot work, cannot succeed – which is – according to professor Iulius Fábos, the main principle of the habitation and regional development.

In the process of the regional development, the focus must especially be on a profound individual and local identity, which results from the regional identity.

In the last two years regional identity – especially with the implication of the European Union in the profound study of regional politics – has been ampler and has gained importance among other connection.

Nowadays the designer finds the regional development important because it presents transmigration, supports local investments, cultural and social activities. Yet, regional identity is based on investments and there is also a competition for the Union's financial sources on which regional identity is built on.

Naturally, it doesn't exclude the sociopolitical and psychological side of the regional identity, which may as well be both a positive or a negative attitude to the region, of the local community and political elite. In this respect, the changes which have taken place in Romania since 1989 are worth observing.

The Identity Question

The concept of "identity" has an extensive meaning in sociology, psychology and also in anthropology, but in Romania the theoretical and empirical study of "identity" is greatly defective.

The literature of regional identity focuses on the social examinations which consider the link of the individual and of the community to the region and on the analysis of the cultural, emotional, cognitive contents and manifestations which, in most cases, concern localities or smaller spaces. When psychologists speak about "identification", they think of the word "identity", according to which, throughout the process of development, the ego reflects different qualities into his/her own self, identifies with them, makes them his/her own. Identification is about a social influence which can have different types, different stages.

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According to Aronson there are three fundamental types in the reaction to the social influence: submission, identification, internalization. While submission is motivated by reward or punishment, internalization becomes in time an inner value, a part of the individual's personality. Identification does not result from inner needs, it is based on an attitude of self-definition, which means that a certain person or group finds another person or group interesting or attractive, and will be willing to submit to that other individual or group and adopt their conduct, their value system.

There is a complex connection between the sense of identity of the self and of the society. "The sense of identity of the self can only exist as a result of the development of social identity. Social identity shows the way in which an individual observes, lives through and presents his own social qualities" (Pataki F, 1982) So each and every individual can develop an adequate hierarchy of identity which, naturally, changes with the years and with the society. In the political structure before 1990, class, stratum and working place identity was prior to individual identity, which had a secondary role compared to collective identity, at least theoretically. The political structure could hardly bear the sense of political, sexual and ethnic identity. The powerful centralization of economic and social life, county identity forced on communities autocratically, led to the shrinking or total destruction of the remaining sense of identity, making its development impossible.

From the mid 60s on, in the well well-developed western societies, there has existed a growing interest in local communities and in the organization of local social research.

Sense of Identity in an Individual-Global Approach

In the previous part the individual and social identity consciousness and its connections were mentioned. Yet, the collective influence can be observed on higher and higher spatial levels. As it is known, the determining tendency in our own era is globalization, which in economics and outside it, in almost all other fields of social existence, can be observed. There are worldwide economic interrelations Marketing is more and more dominated by multinational banks and institutions (World Bank, IMF and so on).

After the collapse of communism in the unipolar world, the economic globalization accelerates. This is naturally completed by the continuous flux of information. The same tendency exists in the cultural and lifestyle changes.

Irrespective of interpretation, the effects of globalization are to be felt in our everyday life and perhaps the most important thing for us is to see what kind of compensating or at least moderating forces can be created on the level of everyday life in order to face the unicultural or sometimes aggressive tendencies of globalization. It is obvious that the reaction to globalization. It is obvious that the reaction to globalization has to be tested on regional and local levels, where the citizen's smaller communities can offer protection against the outer world, can create or protect valuable and rational human relationships.

Between the global and local levels there are numerous transitory forms which enrich our lives and which we prefer or refuse, to which we can identify or remain indifferent. The local and global "community" levels and the interaction and interdependence between them are presented by Z. Mlinar as follows (table 1).

Table 1. The local and global "community" levels and the interaction and interdependence.

Global			↑		↑	↑
Supra-national						
European	↑ A	↑ B	↑ C	↑ D	↑ E	↑ F
National	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Regional		↓			↓	
Local						
Individual				↓		↓

A – is the connection between the national and the supra-national levels, in which the European Union and the Europe of the nations are organized.

B – is the regional (sub-national) and the European (supra-national) connections, on which the

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Europe of the regions is organized.

C – is the junction of national and global levels (achieved in the membership of the UNO).

D – is the possible connections between the individual and supra-national levels. It refers to institutions that can be important supra-national connections to the individual (e.g. The European Human Rights Court of Law in Strasbourg).

E – the possible local-global interactions.

F – the individual-global interactions expressed by the “world-citizen” attitude.

The presented levels can express the limits of regional identity. During the examination of identity, it is important to approach the possible levels in a differentiated way. Such an approach is recommended by Nemes Nagy József, in the following local and global structure:

Macro-spaces	World (Globe) Group of countries (international integration) Country
Regions	Region County District
Local areas	Settlement (local authority) Locality Neighborhood
Micro-spaces	Family (household) – working place Individual

The recommended structure means not a mere automatic division of the area, but also the performers of different social spheres (institutions, organizations, and so on), but different processes, systems of conceptions, ideologies, also belong to the levels. As a result of these processes there appear social contents with new entities, which, one way or other, influence the evolution of identity.

The following chart is the scheme of the characteristic processes and conceptions of the different regional levels.

Table 2. Scheme of the characteristic processes and conceptions of the different regional levels.

Starting unit	Process	System of conception	New entity
Settlement	Localization	localism	locality
Region	Regionalization	Regionalism	region
Globe	Globalization	globalism	globality

The process and conceptions presented in the chart are easily recognized in the modern social movements, but their role and importance differ from one society to another, from one country to another, in accordance with the level of development, as well as the tendency of the social and political movement. That is why the space division of the sense of identity differs from country to country and also from region to region within a country.

According to a survey made by the New Democracy and Local Governance program in most of the European states, the sense of local identity is the most of the European states, the sense of local identity is the most powerful (Austria 61 %, Switzerland 59,2 %, Russia 39,1 %), followed by a sense of national identity (Lithuania 72,5 %, Poland 48,8 %, Hungary 39,1 %). The sense of regional identity has lower values (Austria 9,6 %, Sweden 5,4 %). Surprisingly, the European and global identity consciousness has low values (generally below 5 %).

As a conclusion we can say with regard to the different levels of the regional identity, that identity is generally determined by:

- the current status of the local societies, i. e.: the better organized and integrated the regional community, the stronger the identity consciousness;
- the integration of the regional community is motivated by the social composition of the community, by the functions of the community;

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- the role assumed by the local elite can be an example to the settlement or region. If the local elite recognizes the local values and assumes their representation, the identify consciousness can be strengthened;
- the prosperity of the settlement; if the local government manages local affairs successfully and the inhabitants realize the progress as their own, they will identify with the settlement faster and easier. Otherwise apathy and disappointment will follow, and finally the loss of identity;
- the successes of the settlement (cultural, sports, and so on), its fame (from time to time the negative signs of fame, too), can be beneficial to the local and regional identity

A Short Evaluation of the Problems Connected to Regional Identity in Romania and the Giurgeu Depression

The investigation of local/regional identity is not an advanced field of activity. There are only a few sociological surveys concerning the economic perspectives of the community and the individual as well as the choices of leaving the country or staying. The examination of the identity consciousness is established neither from a theoretical, nor from a methodological point of view. In the last few years we have had to face a difficult situation as the economic and socio-political changes have caused enormous gaps between the sense of identity of the different social levels. From a practical point of view, too, this is an important problem, because in the process of European integration, haste and deadlines make decisions unthoughtful and incorrect. An eloquent example of this kind is regional delimitation, which in Romania's case delimits eight NUTS 2 regions, which is to put it mildly, a bit premature. The aim of this study is not to discuss the requirements of regional limits or to offer alternatives but, as it is known, the European integration is unimaginable without well-working regions – and a well functioning region needs a firm regional identity consciousness.

No matter how complex the situation is the problem of identity would need a special attention within the national scientific research.

According to recent sociological research, the level of local and national identity consciousness in Romania is almost the same as that of the European Middle East.

The values of regional identity are much lower (about 3 %), while European and global levels are almost negligible.

The Giurgeu Depression can be considered a typical micro-region, in Romania. A territory of 1600 square kilometers is inhabited by less than 80,000 people. It's economic system is chaotic, its possibilities of development are strongly limited. The values and tendencies of regional identity have been examined, based on the data of two surveys.

The answer of 2,240 inhabitants of different age groups, as well as the answers of 1113 heads of families in Gheorgheni led to the following conclusion:

- sense of identity is the strongest on the local level (family, settlement, neighborhood). 56 %, which is a bit higher than the country average;
- the sense of regional identity (18 %) is stronger than the country average but the value of national identity consciousness is much lower than the country average. The explanation lies in the strengthening of ethnical identity consciousness as well as the closer relationship among people;
- 5 % of those who were asked wish for the success of the European integration processes. This high percentage – higher than in many countries belonging to the Union – is due to people's hope that they will have a better lifetime in a united Europe;
- the value of global identity consciousness is low (1 %), the same like the country level.

As regards the evolution of the regional identity consciousness and the expected tendency in Romania and, in the Giurgeu depression, there are a few conclusions to be drawn.

- the county identity is disintegrating as economic and social coordinating functions head for the large regional (NUTS 2) centers. But this will lead to an excessive polarization preventing the development of the centers of small regions;
- reasonable regional collaboration is disappearing, due to local selfishness of the settlements. This fact influences the development of the region as well as its power to maintain its inhabitants. Although mass-communication has started building up regional

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identity, there don't exist regional borders. In most cases the artificially created borders don't reflect reality;

- the modest results of regional integration and the low value of regional identity consciousness are also a result of the uncertain intentions of the government, which causes the lack of instruments in the regions. Undoubtedly, a main role is played by the egotism of the regional leader/factors. The most important part in the strategy of the regional development is held by the creation of mutual interest.

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