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NATIONAL IDENTITIES EXPRESSED THROUGH INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE BALKANS (Current Conditions and Perspectives)

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Modern living conditions break down the spatial and temporal limits. People belonging to different cultures exchange information, ideas, views, opinions on a daily basis. There are almost no isolates in which ethnicities communicate with each other, without being affected by the wider circle of ethnicities. The link between communication and culture is unbreakable, hence intercultural communication becomes a commonplace through various forms and opportunities of communion, since people come in touch with other cultures and communication codes that are inherent in them every day, directly or indirectly. Thus, they present their culture and transmit the ways of verbal and non-verbal communication to others, receiving at the same time from them. This also is a possibility to build both generally accepted forms and global traditional values because some communication situations are accepted worldwide beyond their first meaning and form of address (celebrations – Christmas decorations, gifts, ornaments, etc); celebrating St. Valentine – appropriate decorations, different experiences, adapting world known tales, new fashion icons, nurturing brands, etc.). That is the way in which a particular culture creates an interaction with another culture to produce a certain world view, on the one hand and on the other to develop a communication situation with the world, at the same time creating images of certain areas which compose the global picture that was increasingly directed towards intercultural communication as an opportunity to integrate communicative experiences and create a new way of cultural communication.

The cultural context of the Balkans is a complex process which can be analyzed synchronically and diachronically.

The cultural identity seen through the cognitive semantics leads towards a subjective interpretation of terms according to the needs of the given moment. Hence, the existing



definitions receive different dimensions. The different defining of certain terms comes from their different conceptualization. The recognition and self-identification through different discourses becomes a basis for determining identity, in these frames – the cultural identity. So, Peter Adler, 1977, expresses his view of a multicultural identity and the factors affecting the development of the intercultural identity as a process of which a new approach opens to conceptualize the term *identity* (national identity, multicultural communication etc.)

The national identity is not a strictly defined category, it is in continuous process in which it gets affected by the new movements (in global frames). But, it doesn't mean that those changes are such that will disturb the image of basic self-identification (through language, tradition, folklore, religion etc.). On the contrary, the acculturation of personality, the awareness of one's own national identity is strengthening, and it is followed by new modern processes. The awareness of self-identification and determination is possible through the recognition and identification of others. This only adds to, and crystalizes, the picture of one's own identity, which, in the Balkans, is seen through the national identity. When it comes to the national identity of a person, especially with the Macedonian people, the general conviction that the person is entitled to self-identifying the way they feel remains, and nobody deprives them of that right. This identification through the national identity is linked with the awareness and vision of self-existence, which, in fact, is a matter of choice, and hence nobody has the right to deny the view of the person, and moreover of a nation, as were the trials of such a thing when Macedonia and Macedonians are concerned.

On the other hand, each departure from the characteristics carried by a historically determined entity is considered a deviation, disturbance of the basic core that defines the recognizable depersonalization and disrespect of traditional values (and it spreads through various kinds of discourses, even wider over various communication codes: music, sound, language, image etc.).

Regarding the national identities on the Balkans, the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century are characterized by processes in which different entities activate the need to emphasize their own traits and localize them at a designated area. However, the problem is that many areas overlap according to historic experiences, followed by joint persons and developments and these reflect over all spheres of life (music, food, folklore etc.) and they all adopt them as their own property. Such an expansion and intrusion into the distant past and into history in quest for the roots has led to the emergence of synthemas: collective memory, national identity, national diversity, stigmatization (as a societal process of marking different groups and their members) etc.

However, different entities interpret all of these terms differently (according to their own needs). For example, stigmatization as a sociological term which emphasizes the biased disapproval and negative view of diversities in the society is interpreted as the stigmatization of individuals (according to Irvin Gofman who had defined the harmed identity from quite a different aspect). The terms get a new meaning and enters into a new paradigm, as a result of the actual developments. Especially now, when a migration process has also developed, the big move, actual events from the south border of the Republic of Macedonia, which in a way will draw the Balkans nearer to Europe through joint views towards this issue, so that the metaphoric name of the Balkans – the Gate of Europe – has become that in the real sense of the word.

The common cultural and historic frames for multicultural communication in the Balkans can be traced through myths, symbols, legends, prejudices and stereotypes etc., to the development of modern referent assumptions (cultural policy – which somewhere is reduced to only national; development of a unique media information system; institutionalization of a program which anticipates projects that cover intercultural communication (speech acts, structures of certain communicative situations), practical knowledge (through uniting elements in creating a new tradition of a cultural plan on a local and global reach – through the individual, family, family relations, surrounding: building the social, lingual, educated, communicative personality).

Intercultural communication in the local community, which is reflected in the Balkan communication, stretches toward Europe overlapping over the role of the English language as a language on a global level.

Multicultural mosaic and intercultural communication in the Balkans presupposes a few guidelines for thorough investigations.

- The sum of cultures existing on the territory of the Balkans of a variable frequency belong to different ethnicities, territorially linked, and located on the territory of the Balkans in modern conditions and reflected from the past: 1. The Slavic ethnicity: represented by different cultures – Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Hercegovian, Croatian and Slovenian. Non-Slavic ethnicity: 2. Romanian ethnicity (Aromanian, Romanian, Vlach ethnic group), Greek culture, Albanian culture, Turkish culture). 3. Different entities present on the Balkans, cultural minority ethnic groups: Roma, Jews, Ukrainians, Vlachs.
- The impact of languages of these ethnicities is added to this, and from the second half of the 20th century one might observe the strong impact of the English language through the processes of globalization (especially on a lexical plan).
- Other ethnicities and cultures present on the Balkans have left traces in the cultural communication, but the national identity has been firmly fixed in the basis and upgraded with new elements that are embodied in the basic tissue.
- Religious differences due to the existence of different religions: Christian-orthodox, Catholic, Protestants; Muslims, Jews...
- Important cultural areas, localities, persons which signify the cultural identity, which can be accepted by different entities on one and the same area and from different areas, but with the same treatment (for example, for the Macedonians: Ohrid, Gotse Delchev, Alexander of Macedon, Cyril and Methodius) and the parallel to other ethnicities which relate the above mentioned to their own history and identity.
- Diversities and joint expressions through letters: Cyrillic, Latin, Greek and Arabian letters.

The history and developments in the Balkans from different occasions are inscribed in the memory of the population, and that the created external and internal borders of the region which allowed for the disintegration and homogenization of the area. In the period from the 19th and 20th, 21st century, changes in the Balkans are evidently present, from wars to periods of peace, in which the West and East Balkans disintegrated and we can talk about independent states with all the official elements of codifications in them. The last in this line was Monte Negro.

All of these processes have made the region rich in cultural diversity and with a set of differences. It is interesting that everybody interprets these processes differently and from their own aspect, and all add a strict scientific approach to those subjective interpretations. Models have been proposed from authorities that again lean on the sympathy of particular ethnicities.

The communication between the Balkans and Europe, as well as the communication in the frames of the Balkan countries, states and nations is very complex, unfortunately often burdened with various prejudices, stereotypes caused by events from the near and distant history. Diversity is viewed as a threat and obstacle which carries an influx of interpretation of heterogeneity threatening with depersonalization, such a position is taken toward European integration processes regardless of the constant, biased and emphasized approach to Europe. Such positions are seen in the stereotypes on the Balkan people and the Balkans through the metaphors about them and the region, where they are presented as a bridge, gate, crossroads, border – all of them interpreted both positively and negatively with different stereotypes about them (so, the Balkan is: The Gate to the East, The Gate to the West, The Scent of the Orient, and The Threshold of the European Civilization); such examples exist both for Balkan people and Balkanization.

The Balkan identity seen from the outside, unfortunately carries a negative connotation: sharpness, cruelty, misery, primitiveness, limiting... However, from the inside, it has positive self-identification: tradition, ancient culture, honor, temper, energy, heroism, emphasized emotions, respect towards tradition and family, transparent patriotism. Yet, through some communication situations, one can see what is common for the peoples living in the Balkans.

Every nation in the Balkans is turned to its own, through language, myths, legends, folklore, and therefore it is almost impossible to present a shared history because everyone has their own interpretation of the same event. Almost every nation in the Balkans has its own national myth with which it enters into the near or farther history in order to define its identity. Several examples that build the linguistic and communicative situation through multicultural communication (verbal and non-verbal) expressed through certain holidays and manifestations, testify to the cultural identity which does not disturb the national identity. Such are: New Year celebration (gifts, decoration, Santa Claus); then celebrating Valentine, vs. St Trifun (Winegrowers (Wine) Day); greeting cards, a tradition with different ethnicities, beliefs and customs of common nature, celebration of spaces, sites that are believed to have some power (monasteries and mosques about which a belief has been spread to have some power); respect for the religious holidays of the others – great religious holiday Bayram – with characteristic baklava, Easter with red eggs, milibrod; in rituals at funerals (tombs, food, religious service, Christian customs, speeches, obituaries); at weddings (white dress, bride's flowers, taking photographs, celebrating, songs, garters, congratulations... bride's cake, candies (by the bride, mother-in-law), roasted pig, godfather's men etc.

Each culture relies on the national identity and has its own system of customs. Reviewing the vocabulary of Macedonian traditional customs, Liljana Makarijoska has linked it with the cultural identity of Macedonians as a significant cultural heritage. Through the customs, one can see not only the culture of the nation but the language, too, and in this way maximum protection is performed. The customs in the Balkans testify to the mul-

ticultural communication in different national identities. For example, the cult of water can be viewed in different time sections, the cult of the bread on different occasions. For illustration, we give an example from the new way of celebrating the birth of a child, a kind of multicultural communication. In Macedonia, a child's birth is marked by making a white wheat dough (тиганици, мекици, лангиди, блакца, пишии) and in the past we had a whole series of vocabulary linked with customs relating to a newborn baby (раѓање, први три дена, први 40 дена, мала молитва, голема молитва, прв заб, проодување итн.). Some of these customs today have spread to all ethnic groups (celebration in a restaurant), blessings at birth, for ex.: – Да е живо и здраво. – Големо (голем, голема да расте). – Радост да ви носи. – Нека е со убаво. – Нека е со среќа. – Да биде убаво на мајка, работно на татко. – Да расте со мајка и татко. – Аирлија.

Here, it is about developing different types of linguistic and communicative situations (verbal and nonverbal communication).

The national identity, as part of the identity, in general comprises the linguistic identity, which will be used in intercultural communication only as one part. All of that represents an entirety, which necessitates a wide scope of investigations. The objective is to clarify the complexity of cultural (linguistic, national) identities in the Balkans. In that way, the existence of various prejudices and stereotypes will be interpreted at the inter-ethnic level and tolerance and peaceful cohabitation will develop. Communication (verbal and nonverbal) demands skills and knowledge in a multicultural context (in order for us to be understood, and respected, we should understand and respect the others). But, this does not mean that we should neglect our own, and not protect and respect our own identity, by thinking about the others.

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National Identities Expressed Through Intercultural Communication in the Balkans (Current Conditions and Perspectives)

Summary

The Balkan region has always been a crossroad of cultures, religions, customs, ethnicities and, hence, research related to intercultural communications in this area in different periods gives different results. The actual ethnographic condition of the Balkans now, followed by statistic data, censuses, related to displacements, and the relevance of official data, creates the picture of languages that are used in the Balkans. In the 21st century different processes are going on, some fading out, and other finding room to activate (again) not only through languages and lexicon (active, passive and disappeared), but through other forms, too. The critical analysis of the discourse of Balkans witnesses the art of linking of differences through languages (Slavic, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, Herzegovinian, Montenegrin; and non-Slavic: Greek, Turkish, Albanian, English) supplemented by nonverbal communication, as a wide space for building the impression of common conditions. All this reflects on the national identities and on the construction of diverse characteristics as a sum of diversities on the Balkans.

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