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Review:
Orval Lofgren
The Nationalization of Culture

The study titled „The nationalization of culture“ analyses the process in which cultural elements become symbols of a nation, and the national space grows into a cultural one, thereby explaining the general terms, the transformation processes and the research methods that it had used.

Orval Lofgren points at the fact that current research on national identity mainly focuses on ideology, policy of nationalism, thus representing nationalism as a form of mistaken consciousness, i.e. a form of mistaken political identification. Examples of this approach lie in the works by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson.

However, the author claims that it was a necessary development phase of the scientific approach in which it had yet not been possible to review nationalism as a cultural phenomenon and a historical process. The contemporary interdisciplinary dialogue developed a new approach to the research of nationalism and national identity. An example of the interdisciplinary research is a project in which the author had participated and had a task to present the nation-building processes, the issues of the “national” folk culture, the issue of mentality and the national sentiment in Sweden and Hungary in a comparative manner. The advantage of the comparative framework method, which we also apply in our own project, is the possibility to outstand its own frameworks and a reduced possibility to have “home-blindness” researches. The comparative framework method encompasses different approaches to studying the national and cultural identity, thereby opening by then very scarcely researched issues such as the issue of methodological research, the relationship between sport and nationalism, the importance of national heroes and anti-heroes, the work of special social groups, the importance of national dishes, national cookware, and alike. Lofgren points at the fact that the notion of nation has different constructions in certain periods and social groups and that, when applying the comparative method, we need to take into account the conceptual differences between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism is based on the love for God, king and homeland, and nationalism on the idea of a common culture, country, destiny and friendship. Taking into account all of these facts, the author was focused on the problems

arising from the creation and renewal of national identity as an area where different interests compete with each other. Pointing at the specificity of the Scandinavian “nation-building” processes, he shows that the elements such as language, history, future, the national culture, folklore, historical and mythological heroes, which had been considered to be the foundations of a nation from the 19th Century on, were promoted and used according to opportunities that arise. Hence, the obvious national features change and their significance was different in 1912, for instance, than it is now.

Lofgren starts out from the viewpoint that national identity was a changeable construct which is developing and changing. An important role in strengthening and shaping identity is played by the consumer culture which has the aim to nationalise the consumers. The national images are formed precisely with the means of postal stamps, tourist brochures, television, radio, weather forecasts through which the sentiment of unity and belonging to a nation is adopted. Therefore, the key issue is as to how the public discourse becomes a national discourse, i.e. the process of the nationalisation of folk culture is a process of “inventing traditions” which was clearly shown on the example of the *Ajvatovica* manifestation.

The author paid special attention to the comparative method even at the end of his work. The comparative method has the aim to change the stereotypes of a “typical” member of a nation (very British or very Swedish), by stressing other qualities and not the capability of emotional control or happiness.

Data gathered by this method can be shaped into three parts: *the international cultural grammar of nationalhood* with an overview of elements usually considered to be the essential elements of a nation. The second formulation is *the national lexicon* as a form of cultural expression and the third construct is the *dialect vocabulary* which is focused on differences between nations.

Lofgren concludes that nationalisation was a process which is faced with integration and disintegration. However, regionalism as a subject of our research project does not represent a disintegrating element, but a way to preserve a nation’s vitality. Thereby, we should bear in mind that national culture is an ongoing process and that new generations introduce contemporary elements selecting the symbolic estate of the previous generations.

The author’s explanation of the comparative method, its application and the manner of systematisation of the results it had achieved is of great importance. Hence, the comparative

method of the nation-building processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monte Negro, Macedonia and Moldova represents an interdisciplinary, modern approach which opens up new scientific views.