

LOCAL IDENTITY: A CONSTELLATION OF STIRRING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MULTIPLICITIES*

HENRIETA ANIȘOARA ȘERBAN**

Abstract. *Local identity can be seen nowadays as a diverse phenomenon, manifest as multiple realities. But even the identity of a specific place, seen in geographical and sociological terms is subjected to centrifugal dynamics specific for the complexity of the contemporary world. We notice that there are local identities seen sociologically (and ethnographically) that identify local characteristics structured by the practices of certain social groups specific for the region or group and individual practices that have a political bearing. The idea of this study proposes a perspective in which local identity is not a homogeneous entity, but a multitude (of differences and Derridarian differances), themselves caught within multiple processes of transformation, in time and space. If local identity is not just one, or is not easily definable anymore, then is it diffusing or vanishing?*

Keywords: *local identity, personal identity, group identity, political and sociological identity.*

Local identity is a diverse phenomenon which manifests itself through multiple realities. But even the identity of the place, one with a precise geographical situation subjected to centrifugal dynamics specific for the complexity of the contemporary world. We notice that there are local identities seen from the sociological perspective, which identifies certain local characteristics structured specifically for certain social groups and certain social practices associated with a certain region, and with a local identity with particular ethnographic nature, consisting in customs, crafts, artistic practices and artefacts and in linguistic artistic works, or particularities, considered descriptive for that particular area.

The main idea of this study proposes a perspective that sees local identity as less than a homogeneous entity, but as a constellation of multiple differences

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** Scientific Researcher III, PhD, at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations, and the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology "Constantin Rădulescu-Motru" of the Romanian Academy and correspondent member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists; henrietaserban@gmail.com.

(and Derridian *differances*) and transformative processes, themselves caught within multiple processes of transformation, in time and space. Whether local identity is not homogeneous and unitary and it is not easily definable, can we infer that it is diffusing or vanishing?

Methodologically, we choose to approach local identity from the perspective of the subject, as whatever the subject decides to consider that it characterizes identity, either an element or a traditional process, or something else, something borrowed, or a result of her own creativity, when the self becomes her own work of art managed by herself and not the “mechanic” result of functional traditions, language games, customs, relations or the result of socialization and of the institutional practice, regional or national.

On the one hand, local identity is a mosaic of narrations about pain, desire, fear, origin, future, heroes and heroism, women and men, society and solitude, victim and executioner, social inclusion or exclusion, etc. and about the individual perception on all these matters, as well as about the attachment to places, objects, customs, crafts, artistic and linguistic products considered descriptive for a particular area.

On the other hand, these narrations are a true revealing process for the manner in which the universal myths of humanity are particularized within precise (yet different) temporal, historical, geographical, economic and political contexts. As well the mythology, as the collective memory and the nostalgia of communities play an important role within the structuring and the “colouring” of the particular narration of the local identities.

Nevertheless, local identity, so powerful in traditional communities, dissipates during modernity and postmodernism toward personal identities through diverse mechanisms, which do not send local identity toward nihilism, relativism or annihilation, but treats it as a resource to treasure and capitalize upon, distilling it in creativity¹, according to the conception (or lack of conception) of the world and self of the individual.

Local Identity in Traditional Perspective

Local identity is in traditional perspective transmitted and cared for, or even established by the elders, or family, local historic, or context, social, economic, political position or by the communitarian authorities, and not by the individual upon will. In other words, in pre-modernity identity did not belong to the individual unless in the extent she felt it given was given for a pious preservation.

When this is the case, local identity may be maintained for a longer while. Other times, the political regimes, the social and economic processes, or just time, may alter, or, at limit, may destroy local identity. This way, local identity is transformed or transfigured in its main characteristics, either slowly, or in a more drastic manner, following the directions drawn by the political, social, economic evolutions or by the personal one. In this respect we are going to

¹ See also Viorella Manolache, “Dinamica modelului european asupra localismului creator în epoca „modernismului ofensiv” (Prima jumătate a secolului XXI)”, in *Revista de Filosofie*, no. 1-2/2011, pp. 224-228.

present several Romanian illustrations of this dynamics: the traditions of the so-called “momârlani” (“Dacian remains”, who still wear at the holidays the tight trousers and the shirt down to the knees and talk in a specific manner characterized by certain particular terms) and the destiny of the Dacian fortress Bănița.

Thus, the first example underlines the perpetuation of a Romanian identity forming tradition deep into modernity and post-modernity. We recall, within the poetic and philosophical vision of Lucian Blaga, “eternity was born in the village”. The village preserves certain appearances of places, certain objects, or customs, certain crafts or artistic and linguistic products considered sacred for longer periods of time than the city. Some of these aspects are specific from village to village and some are common transcending the region. Nothing reaffirms more this long duration of tradition, than the custom of the Romanian population from the Jiu River Valley, called “momârlani,” a population resembling more the Dacians than the population from the rest of Romania, as a region unconquered (or incompletely conquered so that they were not really ruled or civilized) by the Romans, remaining closer to the Dacian traditions and culture. For example, these people from Bănița still preserve their tradition to bury their dead one in the garden behind the house². Thus the families remain together after death, too, caught in a circle of eternity. One may notice that these houses are quite uncommon, someone else that they can never be sold, but in fact for these people to sell their houses is unconceivable. At home is where everyone is, a place of really imperceptible changes, and hence, at home is a place where the circularity of traditions and the long durations of customs, give people a sense of something very close to eternity.

Another case provides an illustration of the disappearance of an identity custom. We refer to a custom from the same region that persisted until 1964 when it was eradicated by the communist regime. This was a ceremonial of the god Gebeleizis, perpetuated by the Dacians, as the ethnographer Petre Făgaș relates³. He shows that the Church not being able to discourage this custom undertook it among the other religious manifestations taking place in the Easter day. “How was this custom: the wealthiest people from the locality, along with the not so wealthy ones, but driven to faith, and also with the help of the Church, after the end of the liturgy and the sharing of the Pascal (Easter bread is accompanied by wine), they brought in the Church long tables from people’s homes. They put on these tables bread, cheese, ham and wine. From these ate whoever wanted, but only after the end of the liturgy. No one had, though, the right to take anything away from there but they could eat as much as they wanted to. People could go out and return without restrictions (after the liturgy), because the Church was open from the dawn to dusk. At the occasion any pauper received also a glass with 150 grams of wine. And people said that there are ones who taste wine and bread only at Easter”⁴.

² http://adevarul.ro/locale/hunedoara/raman-aproape-familie-moarte-1_50acc6b7c42d5a6638a1320/index.html.

³ <http://studiietnoistorice.wordpress.com/analize-si-cercetari/momarlanii-si-obiceiurile-lor-interviu-cu-petre-fagas/>.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

Some of the elements of identity remain partially unchanged despite the hostile political regimes, especially because they are inactive or unused elements of local/traditional identity. Within the chain of Dacian fortresses erected to protect Sarmisegetusa Regia, the main Dacian fortress, there was also Bănița Fortress. Situated next to the Vâlcan Gate, and responsible for the prevention of the Southern Roman invasions, it barred the itineraries from the Șureanu Mountains which could lead behind the Dacian defence lines. Bănița Fortress is nowadays for us a hill, pointed and covered by vegetation from which here and there spring steps or dislevelment that can suggest, maybe, a fortress. During antiquity and the Middle Ages the fortress was still used, but then it slipped into the dark foggiess of history. Probably the Romans posted guards at the fortress's feet in the attempt to insulate it. The wanderers say that the fortress is unsearched and it only escaped the communist vigilance because the 250-300 m of slope is difficult to climb (at least 25 de minutes)⁵. While the Churches were communist targets as active identity symbols of Christianity, at the time considered obsolete, this fortress, since it was not used, did not represent a big threat. Nevertheless, a part of the stones were used during the communist regime for the foundation of the railway.

In this last case, but also in the other cases presented, we notice that identity is more of a composite of elements and historic-social and political processes, with a layered architecture, whose stratification potentates its dynamics and its adaptability. Local identity is modelled by events and political measures as much as by social and linguistic interaction. Mary Bucholtz from the University of California, Santa Barbara and Kira Hall from the University of Colorado propose in the study entitled "Identity and interaction: a socio-cultural linguistic approach" an analysis framework for identity, as a product of the linguistic interaction that follows a series of principles.

In this respect, the authors show that identity is rather a product than a source of linguistic and semiotic practices and as following it is a socio-cultural product and not an intern psycho-social primary phenomenon. Another observation is that identities include diverse demographic categories at macro-social level, participative roles, specific situations and local and cultural positions, which are ethnographically triggered. Also, these authors show that the identities can be linguistically indexed in relation to style, structure and linguistic systems, etc. Also, the identities are built relationally through many aspects that sometimes overlap, concerning the relation between self and alterity, similarity and difference, authenticity and artifice/artificiality or authority and lack of authority. Eventually, the identities can be partially intentional, partially a question of habit, when they are not entirely conscious. Partially the identities are the result of the negotiation interactions, partially being a construct of the perceptions and representations of the others, as well as a result of the action of the ampler ideological processes and structures⁶.

⁵ http://www.replicahd.ro/replica_db/index.php?pagerun=2&title=banita_cetatea_interzisa&more=1&c=1

⁶ Study available at http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/40469_13a.pdf.

In this perspective we are remarking the ambiguities and the dislocations present in inner local identities, which tend to be rather an instrument in the language games that give shape to contemporary politics, to the individual reflection and aspirations, and in the more fortunate situation, they play an important role in the becoming of the individual as a personal resource. As the result of the diverse interactions and negotiations, of the local narrative-historical distillates and of the more or less ideological (or indoctrinating) socialization, a pure local identity, part of a totally particular pure culture is unconceivable. Always, the culture and the local identity maintain and retain certain relations with universal concepts, values, characteristics and sentiments as they do with the particular and specific elements.

As different, specific and special as *doina* is, touching the deep cords of the being when played on the flute of the Romanian shepherd it maintains powerful relations with all the sad and moving songs of humanity, voicing tentatively the ambiguous but powerful feelings of longing, love, fear, awe in front of life, death, love or nature, as in front of the great unknown or of the mystery. In this respect, this song is universal, be it popular or authored. Often, this type of song (which was translated by Bartók in the English language as *long song*⁷, which maybe should be called not according to its structure, but to its dominant feeling the *longing song*) traditionally does not have any words⁸, although it is a narration of feelings. Romanian ballads convey the same profound relation to the world and as powerful feelings through their words that sometimes are more important than the sound. And a similar profound trembling of being we find “far from home”, let us say, in that epical poem of Chesterton, “The Ballad of the White Horse”: *For the great Gaels of Ireland/Are the men that God made mad,/For all their wars are merry,/And all their songs are sad*⁹. Does not convey this ballad the feeling of the individual facing the nature and destiny and the same profound feeling of being in the world, although it is a cult poem from different times?

Time has shown that *doina* did not escape the language games that shape politics, fact especially apparent during the communist regime, which confiscated it precisely because it was an authentic and central element of local identity, first of all, and only then an element of the national identity.

The communist politicized musical institutions were meant to elaborate music reflecting political ideas. Music was rather a modest background for the political symphonies, which were unfolding to the fore. “Olt River Doina” was such an assembly that did not fall far from the party line¹⁰. Most certainly, in farther area and depending on the softer zeal of the local leaders, as in Maramureş, for example, *doina* was sung according to the customs of the place and not in agreement with the party instructions¹¹.

⁷ Elliott Antokoletz, “The Romanian ‘Long Song’ as Structural Convergent Point for the Chiasmal Harmonic Design in Bartók’s Fourth String Quartet”, *Oxford Scholarship Online*, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199936182.003.0008.

⁸ <http://www.webcitation.org/5qp3e9OPb>.

⁹ See <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1719/1719-h/1719-h.htm>.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ See also <http://www.webcitation.org/5qp3e9OPb> and P. Nixon, 1998.

Some other times the local culture and identity survive the vicissitudes of history and politics. So did the Romanian village Viscri that seems to preserve the 12th century local identity to a great extent. Local voices, documentarians and the naturalists say that the secret of this preservation was the game capital, very important for hunting, a passion of the last communist leader, because otherwise, the leader would have erased all these “foreign” villages (with German or Saxon majorities, or sizable populations) and their local identity. In the communist regime’s master plan, severing roots, local identities, made the progress toward the golden age of the future smoother. Nowadays this village is famous given the fact that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales Sir Charles bought a residence nearby. In HRH point of view these corners of the Europe are unique and precious, examples of natural ecosystems and sustainability¹². But this example is perfect to emphasize another aspect: what is the future for such a well preserved local identity? It is a not-simulated open air museum where people live, dress, talk and work almost like hundreds of years ago.

Local Identities Dependence on the Political Game: the Localism

Localism is a favourable context for the local identities. “A global perspective on localism”¹³ shows the diverse tentative to reach the local *grassroots* engagements in order to use and manage them, the diverse philosophies of the local government, as well as the diverse jurisdictions that enhance the various particularities in localism. In other words, we can talk about localism as of a sum of philosophies that prioritize the local element, at the same time offering a great importance for the local governance, which is adequate to the particular details of a certain place.

The global context and the phenomenon of globalization are the engines of localism nowadays. Although certain challenges of the localism of a region may be unique, there are nonetheless similarities, but there are especially common responsibilities and difficulties. It is about the local production and the local consumption of goods and also it refers to the local control of governance, as well as to the attachment to everything that is local – local history, local culture and local identity, all of them, inter-related¹⁴.

Localism adopts critical positions toward the centralisation of the governmental power, considered in opposition with the personal freedom. Localism is oriented in the opposite direction to the tendency considered natural in *The Federalist Papers*, namely that of the increase of government to the detriment of citizen freedoms. This way, localism considers that no *Bill of Rights* is a sufficient as protection against the danger represented by the overwhelming increase of the government, being necessary to maintain governance at a reduced level at which

¹² See *Wild Carpathia*, 2011, documentary produced for the Travel Channel by Charlie Ottley. Director: Alasdair Grant.

¹³ <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/assets/Publications/A-global-perspective-on-localism.pdf>.

¹⁴ <http://www.dailypaul.com/272410/localism-a-philosophy-of-government>.

it can be accountable and transparent. The attachment to this type of philosophy of governance is as well included in the concept of localism.

The decentralization of power is appreciated by the adepts of localism positively also from the economic standpoint, as they consider that by localism the market becomes stronger and that it maintains the prices of all the transactions at lower levels, maintaining thus also the people within the area, since otherwise, the price of the immigration in other culture is dear, as well financially, as at the level of interpersonal relations, of loyalty for people, culture and traditions of the familiarity of these traditions and customs, which all together build that comfort of home.

Localism is based also on the premises, aspirations and purpose of freedom, as well as on the limits of just government. The fact that a government is reduced and local does not ensure as by magic just governance.

Political philosophy of a more recent date recommends a series of theoretical thinkers of various perspectives, such as Michael Sandel, Philip Pettit, William Gaston, Michael Walzer, Q. Skinner and Richard Dagger whose works analyze and propose a revived attachment for the values which are common to liberalism and republicanism, as are the constitutionalism, the rule of law, the individual rights, and entitlements, the civic engagement and civic participation, and the reassessment of the virtues of liberalism and classical republicanism, as solutions for the restitution of the legitimacy of the modern democratic state. They are themselves liberals, republicans or communitarians, thinkers oriented toward the interpretation of the place and role of the values which are fundamental for freedom and democracy, almost in a Tocquevillean spirit. And localism is beneficial for the civic participation to a greater extent than the national scene. At the local level, both local identity and tradition are in strict relation with the participation in the public affairs and with the legitimating of the public life, in general.

Concentrating on the varieties of the public representation and understanding the representation in the democratic perspective of the popular entitlements, Philip Pettit¹⁵ understands localism within the national context, as a sum of benefices of the local pressure exercised within the process of democratic representation in the USA. "Within the system from Washington the members of Congress are prone to be influenced, for better or for worse, out of the preoccupation for the manner in which they will influence what is going on at home by their votes. This localism may bring occasionally real benefices to their district, as when the members can assure the obtaining of legislative favours. The members of the Parliament from Westminster have too little occasions to think in this manner, since their votes are controlled by the party; the local efforts will be restricted to offering local services of consultancy and performing occasionally roles of celebrity at the local events"¹⁶.

¹⁵ Philip Pettit, "Varieties of Public Representation", in *Representation and Popular Rule*, ed. Ian Shapiro, Susan Stokes, Elizabeth Wood and A.S. Kirshner, C.U.P. in print, accessed at 25th August 2014 www.creum.umontreal.ca/.../Varieties_of_Publi... See also <https://www.princeton.edu/~ppettit/papers/2010/Varieties%20of%20Public%20Representation.pdf>.

¹⁶ See Philip Pettit, "Varieties of Public Representation", in *Representation and Popular Rule*, ed. Ian Shapiro, Susan Stokes, Elizabeth Wood and A.S. Kirshner, C.U.P. in print, accessed at 25th August 2014 www.creum.umontreal.ca/.../Varieties_of_Publi..., p. 28.

Yet, localism tends to be based on the homogeneity of the identities and of the local tradition or reflection on both modernity and post-modernity proving that the things are not quite like this. In his work *After Virtue*, A. MacIntyre¹⁷ conceptualizes the situation of rival traditions, given that even modernity brought along with progress diverse discontinuities in the local traditions and identities. The understanding of the rival traditions (which can be correlated with rival identities) can be realized only by an effort of imagination and opening in order to understand and interrogate the difficulties and the challenges of a different (if not rival) tradition, because eventually the purpose is to overcome these rivalries. The author investigates the importance of the historical transformation (and the importance of the vigilance of the “guardians” of the identities) of the traditional correctness. A. MacIntyre shows: “This transformation of the self and its relation to its roles, from the most traditional roles and to the more emotive contemporary forms, could not show of course if the forms of the moral discourse, the language of morality did not transform, simultaneously”¹⁸.

The foundation of local welfare, guarantor of the (realistically, relative) preservation of the local identities, stay the democratic culture and traditions, as well as the good governance: the individual freedom, transparency, dialogue, tolerance and government’s accountability.

Personal Political Identity: Hybrid and Weak

“The weakness” of local identity in contemporary times is represented by the pre-eminence of the universal in relation to the particular. The democratic-republican “civil religion” plays an important role in this respect by the infiltration of the human rights, of the democratic rituals and of the modern idea of change and progress, at least as a vague aspiration or as a potentiality, more and more profoundly into the consciousness of the people. Also, an important role in what concerns the changes that “weaken” local identity has democratic pluralism sustained by postmodernism, along with multiculturalism, a more “flexible” reason and tolerance.

As we have shown in a review of a recent book on identity¹⁹, the study signed by Ana Bazac “Identity and Globalization: An Epistemological Perspective” has a clarifying role introducing the idea that identity can be study instance by instance or in a specific environment that either frees or limits certain aspects of identity. Approaching the status of case and *medium of identity*, the author arrives to the interpretation of the logical meanings of identity that often prove to be limitative (similarly to the meaning of limit, which does not often limit, according to the phrase of Constantin Noica, but rather indicate what exactly should be overcome). This interpretation leads to another, undertaking an equivalence of

¹⁷ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 31 sqq.; <http://epistemh.pbworks.com/f/4.+Macintyre.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹⁹ See Henrieta Anișoara Șerban, book review, at Lorena Stuparu (coord.), *Identitatea individuală în contextul globalizării. Studii și interviuri*, Craiova, Aius Publishing House, 2013, see esp. pp. 49, 51, 67, 68, 82, 83, in *Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations*, no. 1, 2014, pp. 160-162.

functionality in the analysis of the principle of identity related to a discussion of the principle of alterity. Within this perspective and preoccupied with the etymological moment, or with the capturing of that general mechanism conceiving identity for the human being, or the types of identities specific to individuals based on the dialectics of close-distant identities, this investigation centres on the subject, which is changing and at best evolving, in a dialogue with the perspective opened by Lorena Stuparu, building on the complexity of the concept of identity around and beyond the logical meanings, into the contextualization of the manner to allow identity to be “captured in words”: “Facing the rhetorical question ‘What happens next?’ Ana Bazac answers by inter-relating the idea of mass with personal uniqueness, but clarifying from these aspects the meaning of a concept such as multitude, pretext for the affirmation that “identity cannot issue a comfortable discourse”, but it can arrogate the right to represent a subversive perspective. Within an “autochthon” perspective, the study signed by Adriana Neacșu reconfirms the entering in dialogue of the national models with the European ones, bringing to the fore the conception of [the Romanian thinker – our note] I. D. Gherea, who justified the term of *pure self* in relation with the *substantial self*, configuring concrete features found in relative stability. The two categories imply individual identities that entertain complex situations and reconfigure their own lasting interval as a criterion for individual identity”²⁰.

Investigating the tension between universalism and particulars, Ernesto Laclau analyzed also the tension between postmodernism and its associated multiculturalism and the Enlightenment (and the foundationalism associated to the empire of the Enlightenment values). Laclau has shown: “On the one hand, under the banner of multiculturalism, classical values of Enlightenment are under fire criticism and considered as just a little bit different as the cultural heritage of the Western imperialism. On the other hand, the entire debate concerning the end of modernity, the assault on foundationalism and its varied expressions, tended to establish an essential link between the obsolete notion of foundation of history and society and nowadays contents, which, since Enlightenment, have played the role of foundation”²¹.

Pure local identity is unconceivable in the light of the current theories, but unconceivable is also a radically different identity. E. Laclau noticed also that it is necessary, even if only to affirm someone’s different identity, to consider at the same time the other’s identity, the way it is described, or interiorized and assimilated, even if only as a landmark, from which someone wants to differ. At the same time, there are sufficiently different identities to create the premises of marginalization. But even these identities are “polished” within groups in a similar manner as the exotic element, remaining the stain of colour of the group, marginalized all the same, but free to reposition, inscribing themselves in an already existing plurality of political initiatives, with the danger that the different

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ Ernesto Laclau, “Subject of Politics, Politics of the Subject”, *d-i-f-f-e-r-e-n-c-e-s : A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 7.1, 1995, p. 146.

and combatant identity, to be diluted or entirely lost. The cultural authenticity capital transforms into political capital, to wear thin or to be spent for the most part within a process called hybridization²². “Hybridization is not a marginal phenomenon but the very terrain where contemporary political identities are built”²³.

Discussing the phrase “strategic essentialism” Laclau noticed that it has the advantage to emphasize an important antinomy. On the one hand, this phrase explains the fact that essentialism sends to the idea of a strong political identity, without which neither the political calculus nor the political action could be conceived. But, Laclau continues, it is just a strategy and in fact an indication for the contingency of the political action.

Political identity nowadays is fragmented and limited in its combative intensity as limited is the action of the historical agents, notices Laclau. Even when political action is based upon a strong affirmation of the particularity, with a conviction that no agent could be capable by herself, it still emphasizes a community of some sort and the particulars involved discursively (we would say) in that political action are still convincing by the appeal to universal principles.

As a consequence, Laclau investigates the critique of foundationalism and selects two main characteristics of identity: 1. The antagonism and the exclusions are constitutive to any identity; 2. The system (as well as in the case of the Lacanian *object petit a*) against which these antagonisms and exclusions are appreciated and in consequence, against which the identity is judged is whatever system is required by the very logic of the context, but which, surprisingly, is still impossible. This necessary system is present by its absence. And so is identity, because is never fully formed, or entirely fixed, or entirely stable. This does not mean that identity is entirely unstable and entirely unfixed. This perspective supports the idea that identity is best seen as work-in-progress. Hereby the fragmentary character of identity which influences the nature of society, although it never fulfils its entirety and universality. In other words, we can infer that local identity is never completely particular, because it is undermined by the universality which is included in its particulars, paradoxically, even by the absence of that universality.

In the book entitled *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*²⁴ and edited by Stuart Hall and David Held, the former²⁵ distinguishes three very different conceptions on identity: (a) the identity of the Enlightenment subject; b) the identity of the sociological subject; and, c) the identity of the postmodern subject.

Presenting the identity of the Enlightenment subject Stuart Hall emphasizes the fundament of this identity, which is a specific conception about the human

²² *Ibidem*, p. 149.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

²⁴ See *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson, Wiley-Blackwell, 1996; <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Hall-Identity-Modernity-1.pdf>.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 597.

nature, as fully centred and unified individuality, gifted with rational capacity, consciousness, capable of action, with a “centre” consisting of a specific core emerged at the birth of the subject, and which has evolved with the subject, remaining though, essentially, the same – continue or “identical” with himself, we can say – along the entire existence of the individual. That essential centre of the self, explains Stuart Hall, was the identity of the person.

The identity of the Enlightenment subject, in Stuart Hall’s perspective, which is the generally accepted contemporary perspective, too, was an identity with a pronounced “individualist” and masculinist character, the subjects being described during Enlightenment as men.

The notion of identity of the sociological subject reflects at S. Hall the complexity of the modern world, found in full development, a world where knowledge built an awareness of the fact that the inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, being formed in relation to the “significant others” who have mediated in diverse modalities the relation of the subject with the world (with the values, meanings and symbols that are at the basis of culture) and as a consequence the manner in which it was inherited. Hall mentions that these ideas are indebted to the works of the symbolic interactionists such as Mead, C.H. Cooley, who have elaborated the “interactive” conception about the identity and the self. This is also the perspective that became classic in sociology, shows Hall: identity is formed by the “interaction” of the self with society. According to Hall, the sociological conception maintains in some of its interpretations the idea of the essence of being (considering that there is a “real self”, but it is modified, and formed within the discursive interaction with the world and the multiple identities that it offers. We can notice along with Stuart Hall the fact that the identity of the subject, in the sociological view, is a bridge between the self and the society, between what is personal and what is public. On the one hand, we are projecting ourselves in all the cultural identities we encounter, which we also internalize in proportions and manners that vary, and, on the other hand, we both make new meanings and values part of us, making at the same time as well us, a part of them and a part of the total social structure. There takes place also a process of relative adjustment of the individual identity to the social structure. The feelings and the objective positions occupied in society become more and more suitable to the social structure, a fact that strengthens the “welding” of the subject in the social structure²⁶.

In this interpretation of S. Hall the stability or even the establishment of the subject within the world that he or she “dwells”, the unity with the world and the predictability of the world are changed tackling the identity of the postmodern subject. The subject considered previously unitary and with a fixed identity, becomes characterized precisely by a fragmentary identity, compose and composite, multiple and hosting contradictions among antagonist aspects of the same identity. Postmodern institutional, cultural and structural change affects all the social identities in the sense of their fragmentation. Within the process of its identification the projected

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

self is as well variable, un-final and problematic. The postmodern subject has no permanent monolith identity, becoming a “moveable feast”, as Hall says, in the sense of a continuous transformation within the continuous exposal and strain of the cultural systems surrounding the subject.

In this theoretical perspective that we accept, the identity of the subject is neither, as we say, pre-defined, nor defined because it is a conglomerate of disjunctive identities found around the coherent self, Hall shows, but we may say, in a Lacanian perspective, around a coherent *absent* self. At different moments and in diverse situations the subject manifests varied identities that are neither expressions of a coherent self nor of unity around a coherent self as said above, but contradictory expressions, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are fluid, as Z. Bauman would say, and inconstant.

In Hall’s view, we *feel* that we own a unified identity from cradle to grave, only due to the re-comforting “narration about the self” that we are telling ourselves as we go, thoughtlessly readjusting it along the way²⁷. Thus, the fully unified, complete, sure and coherent identity is just a fantasy, and we can emphasize that it is quite the necessary fantasy to legitimate and fuel that “narration about the self”. In fact, says Hall, to the extent that the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted with an impressive multiplicity of the possible identities, each, at its time, being the identity with which we have temporarily identified²⁸.

Certainly, Hall warns, the three conceptions concerning the identity of the subject are, to a certain extent, simplifications. The philosophical, sociological and even historical arguments can complicate and render more precise the three perspectives. Nevertheless, as landmarks, these surprise the character of change consisting in the manner in which “we” relate to the self and to post-modernity.

Globalization is also a factor of perpetual but rapid or frequent change, with a specific character, specifically influencing identities. According to Giddens²⁹, globalization is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”, changing the world profoundly³⁰. The frozen, traditional relations, and the venerable ideas are swept away and the new ones become old in an incredibly fast manner, almost up to a point where what is solid melts into the air, as S. Hall showed. He also quotes A. Giddens: “In traditional societies, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations. Tradition is a means of handling time and space, which inserts any particular activity or experience within the continuity of past, present and future, these in turn being structured by recurrent social practices”³¹. Modernity, in accordance with these sources, not only that is an experience of the extensive and dynamic life, but it is also an extremely reflexive

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 598.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CT., 1990, p. 64.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1990, p. 21, apud S. Hall, *op. cit.*

form of life where “social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character”³².

Local identity is no longer that a temporal monolith from the bucolic reveries. Globalization, the tendency of disappearance of the rural space, or, at least its redefinition produces a more and more eclectic, dislocated, multiplex identity (as C. O. Schrag would say), in the places where we withdraw in the search for the traditional mark, for values and authenticity. The traditional element insinuates within fashion and artistic products whose aura of authenticity is paler. What we can see is a composite result, an exotic global identity gradually taking over local traditional identities. Globalization appears to promote either a parallel or a replacement identity.

Local identity, as much as it still lasts, is affected by globalization, but it remains a personal resource within the socio-political language games, which prone the individual to look inside and at its own individuality, as to at a work of art, found in progress.

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³² *Ibidem*.