AN ETHICAL AND A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF OVERCOMING DEHUMANIZATION OF SOCIALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS. AN EASTERN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The present paper applies the theoretical framework of recognition theories to socially excluded groups in order to promote the new framework for an inclusive society. Public policies for equalizing opportunities and encourage inclusion for marginalised groups in eastern Europa are seldom considering the issue of moral recognition in order to approach concrete policy measures. In spite of the theoretical weight of the terms, such an approach could be prolific for the future. Thus, it is relevant to highlight the present-day "vicious" circles of misrecognition of socially excluded citizens and to analyse different forms, motivations and consequences of moral misrecognition present in European countries. In such extend, the paper analyses the (self)perception of misrecognised citizens in their home countries and in those countries where they migrate. The general aim is to provide a policy-relevant theoretical framework based on recognition theories and to provide significant anthropological field research concerning the moral status of excluded groups in the context of massive migration from Eastern Europe to other part of the continent.

Keywords: dehumanisation; inclusive society; recognition theories; social exclusion; Eastern Europe

> "To live in the world produced by high modernity has the feeling of riding a juggernaut"
> Anthony Giddens

Introduction

Within the space of the last two decades, we have witnessed all over the world important advance in the field of social inclusion, economical redistribution and political recognition. From a theoretical standpoint, inclusion, redistribution and recognition are implicit if not explicit nowadays in almost all types of theories. From a practical standpoint, our everyday social life draws attention on the way we see and manage our interactions in terms of recognition of difference, inclusion of otherness, just distribution of material goods, etc. But

in spite of all theoretical efforts, recent social events and theoretical movements in France, Hungary, Italy or UK underline the political long term effects of the experience of social or cultural misrecognition, disrespect or even dehumanization. We have come to realize today "that the recognition of the dignity of individuals and groups forms a vital part of our concept of justice." (Honneth 2001, p. 44)

In the last two decades as well, we have experienced exceptional economic, political and social transformations. In Europe, the redefinition of the ideological and economical boundaries has brought advantages for many of its citizens. But the dark site of this phenomenon is the increasing marginalization of some groups. Amongst them are the socially excluded ones for whom extended forms of poverty and lack of self-esteem and self-respect has become an ordinary form of being (Kennedy & Danks 2001; UNDP 2007). In Eastern European, we can notice two major consequences of this phenomenon. First, we can notice the rise and spread of violent forms of anti-Semitic and anti-Roma attitude in this part of Europe. Second, we are witnessing massive migration of Eastern European citizens to Western and Northern Europe as the last hope for many for a good life in terms of political rights, moral recognition and economical status.

In this respect, I defend the thesis that a new aim for contemporary political actions should be an ethical approach of recognition which could determine an improvement of group self-consciousness of Eastern European excluded groups through new theoretical attitude manifest in transnational policies and social measures. Several primary actions are taking place: data on exclusion and poverty are collected, measured and compared in supra-national structures, joint actions are conceived, etc. (UNDP 2002; De Laat & Bodewig 2011; Vermeersch 2007). Such developments seem indicative of the growth of a common space for actions towards social and cultural inclusion of marginalised groups – actions that could be less state-cantered and allows claims to be framed in ethical terms. From a theoretical standpoint, comprehensive recognition policies, specially conceived for Eastern Europe may offer additional avenues for the advocates of social inclusion of some groups for raising demands about recognition and redistribution. From an applied standpoint, nowadays the strong national politics still maintain the social and economical status of marginalized groups and conserve their excluded status. Therefore, the importance of an innovative ethical and political approach is welcome in order to overcome misrecognition.

Current research
Debate on recognition and redistribution
Recognition and disrespect have become key concepts within the field of moral, social, and political theory. That the reproduction of our lives is governed by mutual recognition, "because one can develop a practical relation to the self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee." (Honneth 1995, p. 92) The matter of recognition has become prominent in social and political theory over the last two decades under the "patronage" of the Hegelian conception of *Kampf um Anerkennung*. Hegel was one of the first philosophers who argued that subjectivity is something that can only be achieved within a social context, within a community of minds and that it has its ground in an intersubjective process of recognition. In philosophy, "recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal… one becomes an individual only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject" (Fraser 2003, p. 10)

The recent development of the "politics of recognition" (Taylor 1992) wants to shed light on

the demands made by members of oppressed and marginalized social groups. In this regard, an important step was to bring recognition into view as a unique but neglected human good; as "a vital human need" (Taylor 1992, 26). The most prominent contemporary theorists of recognitions are Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser. In spite of significant differences between them, they are united in the conviction that "contemporary politics have seen a shift away from ideas of class, equality, economy and nation towards those of identity, difference, culture and ethnicity." (Thompson 2006, p. 3)

For instance, according to the normative view of Honneth, recognition is seen as a category that conditions subjects' autonomy on intersubjective regards. There are three key factors that shape individuals' capacity to fruitfully engage with others: the sense of a basic (1) self-confidence, (2) self-respect and (3) self-esteem. The initial love relationship is conceptually and genetically prior to every other form of reciprocal recognition. In this context, Honneth relies on the "object-relations theory" of early childhood experience, which lays emphasis on the fact that the "development of children cannot be abstracted from the interactive relationships in which the process of maturation takes place." (Honneth 1995, p. xiii) When a human beings possesses "self-confidence", (s)he will be able then to acquire self-respect. As Honneth understands it, self-respect has "less to do with whether or not one has a good opinion of oneself than of one's sense of possessing of the universal dignity of persons" (Ibid, p. xiv). Related to this, being accorded rights is also crucial to self-respect. While "self-respect is a matter of viewing oneself as entitled to the same status and treatment as every other person, self-esteem involves a sense of what it is that makes one special, unique." (Ibid, p. xvi) What "distinguishes one from others must be something valuable. Accordingly, to have the sense that one has nothing of value to offer is to lack any basis for developing a sense of one's own identity." (Idem)

The underlying premise for both Honneth and Fraser is the fact that distributive injustice has not disappeared in the 21st century. "On the contrary, economic inequalities are growing, as neoliberal forces promote corporate globalization and weaken the governance structures that previously enabled some redistribution within countries." (Fraser & Honneth 2003, p. 2) Honneth basically suggests a "normative monism" where recognition is a fundamental moral category and distribution is derivative. On the contrary, Fraser propose a "perspectival dualist" analysis which mean that the two dimensions are co-fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice. Fraser's general thesis is "that justice today requires *both* redistribution, *and* recognition. Neither alone is sufficient." (Ibid, p. 10). The debate between Honneth and Fraser is settled down on three levels: the one of moral philosophy – the priority of "the right" over "the good"; the one of social theory that put in question the relation of economy an culture, and the structure of capitalist society; and last, the level of political analysis which interrogates the relationship between equality and difference, between economic struggles and identity politics, social democracy and multiculturalism. Fraser's "perspectival dualism can be considered a fruitful theoretical position when we are taking into account marginalized groups.

Debating dehumanization

Dehumanization refers to processes in which individuals or groups are understood as somehow lacking the quality of humanity. Others can be perceived as lacking characteristics that in-group members take to be characteristically human (sense of morality, civility, higher cognitive or moral abilities, etc.). Unfortunately, members of a group occasionally see people of a certain ethnicity as animal-like (animalistic dehumanization) or as automatons

(mechanistic dehumanization). In extreme cases, such out-group members are met with disgust and perceived as somehow non-humans or sub-humans, as beings *without an inner life* (Haslam 2006). It seems that in such cases recognition and the grasp of another as a fellow human is missing (Haslam *et al* 2005; 2006; 2008; 2007; Bain *et al* 2009). Dehumanization is more a matter of degree. Recent studies on intersubjectivity deliver evidence that our basic sense of others as human beings being constitutively context-dependent. Thus, the fundamental level of understanding others as others is fundamentally context dependent – an aspect that any ethics must account for.

Can social exclusion and migration be related to ethnic criteria?
Migration is one of the most delicate issues concerning excluded groups like Roma in Eastern Europe, especially after Eastern European states had accessed European Union. The main question is whether the migration potential for Roma differs or not from that of other excluded citizens in Eastern Europe. Fleck and Rughinas (2008) gave evidences using empirical surveys that the migration potential of Roma is generally higher than that of non-Roma in Romania. Roma migration is around twice as high, while for short-term migration it is more than three times as high compared with non-Roma. According this survey, the Roma wants to migrate even under harder conditions than other ethnic groups (Fleck & Rughinas, 2008, p. 25-30).
In the 21st century, "ethnicity" unfortunately sometimes just replaced the analytical gap let by the inappropriate use of the concept of "race" as an explanatory tool for cultural, social and political "differences". (Barth 1969; Belton 2005; Jenkins 1999) Race and ethnicity has both set up as distinctive form of categorization a group without having any objective reality (Belton 2005; Malik 1996) and this attitude can dehumanize the group as a whole. The relatively "Romantic" acceptance of Roma ethnicity today has proof its vagueness and this ethnicity "cannot be accurately understood as a hygienic continuity of blood, race, ethnicity or hereditary factors. (…) [S]ocial and economic considerations need to be included in the analysis of Traveller identity in order to produce a more precise analysis of the Gypsy and Traveller population." (Belton 2005, p. 46)
In spite of majority researchers standpoint, some consider that "with the exception of educated Gypsy intellectuals who run the Rom(ani) political parties, the Rom(a) do not have an ethnic identity. For them, identity is constructed and constantly remade in the present in relations with significant others, not something inherited from the past." (Stewart 1997, p. 28).
Even if we regard Roma as an ethnic group, it has to be mentioned the unusual structure of the group. "The uniqueness of the Gypsies lies in the fact that they are a transnational, non-territorially based people who do not have a 'home state' that can provide a haven or extend protection to them." (Barany 2002, 2) In such extend, for the Roma every country they settle down for a period is a "country of residence." Comparing with other groups, like, for instance, the Kurds, the Jews or the Berbers; the Roma don't have a homeland or territory to which they periodically or symbolically return. "They are unique in their homelessness, a situation that, in important respects, explains their marginality as well as their relationship to the states of Europe and beyond." (Barany 1998, 143)
In this respect, one of the goals of the project is to show that academic discourse on ethnicity cannot shadow the ethical, social and political background of the excluded groups who face economical and social disadvantages and dehumanization. Scholars are seldom search for non-ethnic explanations for this inequality giving the fact that the main debate is focused on

existence or nonexistence of ethnic identity.

Theoretical background and aims: steps towards an integrative account
In my previous research on interubjectivity (Pantea 2010), I was concern with the meaning of otherness, foreignness, of what means "friend-enemy" and exclusion in the ubiqueness of social and political context. Intersubjectivity is based on the relationship between distinct subjects, one in which I and Thou are involved, and the co-constitutive relationship between them, a relationship which confers mutual recognition. From a social standpoint, self-consciousness is the result of a relationship with another. Self-consciousness is a construct that settles through multiple interactions: orientation of a person to another involves: interaction, communication and the sharing of common goal. Establishing a sense of shared experiences (between parents-child, social group, etc.) is through intentionality of the participants, through the participation in a common activity and, finally, by serving the common purpose and value systems. Establishing a sense of common and shared experience is the ultimate foundation of any form of recognition.

The motivation of the present project paper has been given by bibliographical and oral evidences I have gathered in Romania and Hungary during six community studies I realized from 2007 up to present. We can notice new explanatory paradigms of group mobility (based on value system, not only on economical stimulus) and new preferences of migration destinations, as well as new working strategies of Eastern Europeans (referring to Romanian and Hungarian citizens, especially Roma, but not exclusively). The main aim of the present research proposal is to analyse the ethical and political dimension of recognition (considered as a driving factor) in the social context of exclusion, and to compare political recognition strategies in Eastern and Northern Europe of misrecognised groups.

The present research project has four main goals in conducting the inquiry:
1. To highlight the present-day "vicious" circles of misrecognition of East European citizens and to make a comparison with different forms of misrecognition from other European countries.
2. To analyse an ethical dimension of misrecognised Eastern European citizens (Roma and non-Roma) in their home countries and in Scandinavia (fieldwork will be fulfilled in Finland, Sweden and Norway) using the theoretical framework of recognition.
3. To compare the social and moral status, as well as income opportunities and working habits of Eastern European citizens with that of other migrant EU citizens living in the same location.
4. To provide a policy-relevant theoretical framework based on recognition theories and to offer significant anthropological field research concerning the moral status of excluded groups in a context of massive migration tendency of Eastern Europeans on other part of the continent.

Conclusion
Using complementary methods during the whole research (social and political theories, ethics and community studies) can be considered a constructive and innovative approach for examining a comprehensive understanding of excluded groups living under different conditions of exclusion, dehumanization or even anonymization. The methods that will be used are as follows:

1. To depict the theoretical framework of the "struggle for recognition" and "the politics of recognition" (Charles Taylor, Honneth, Fraser et al.) and the ethical consequences of the phenomenon.
2. To present an eloquent synthesize of representative surveys made in the last 10 years in Eastern Europe on excluded groups (Roma and non-Roma) with high migration potential, and having an outcome in social and political theory.
3. To apply the theoretical framework to three samples of socially excluded group.
4. To make three community studies in three different countries (Sweden, Norway and Finland) where migration potential of Eastern European excluded group has increased in the five years.
5. To create a new comprehensive model, having a profound ethical and policy-making implication, related social exclusion from and of of Eastern European citizens.

The goal of the present research paper was to analyze misrecognized groups in order to present policy relevant argument with a moral perspective: these groups could be considered agents of social change towards ensuring recognition, eliminating prejudices and unequal treatment, increasing self-esteem, and affirming political representation for themselves and for the whole Eastern European region.

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