

## Ethnocultural symbolism as a research tool for identity issues in a “global village”\*

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**Abstract.** The article offers some methodological insights on the recent studies of ethnic phenomenon (particularly, of ethnic identity) in times of globalization and mobility. On the basis of what is happening with ethnic cultures in these processes, thoughts are shared on the necessity of finding a precise scholarly lexicon and suitable combined approach to this subject today: the term *ethnic* as a scholarly construct is suggested to combine the contents of both *ethnos* and *ethnicity* and to denominate the past and present specifics and dynamics of ethnic identity issues. The potentials of ethnocultural symbolism are also explored as an instrument for studying ethnic identity today in a constructivist perspective, because of its capacity to order and sort out, trace the dynamics, and reveal the malleable position of different identity components.

**Keywords:** ethnic, culture, identity, globalization, mobility

In its relatively short intellectual history, the theoretical ethnology worldwide has always taken its cue from the developments in social realities. Once elaborated scholarly, its findings and trends have been directed back towards the socio-political life and social advances. This was the way, how the classical theories of the *melting pot*, *assimilation*, *acculturation*, *homogenization* etc. appeared in the past, also the contemporary concepts of *pluralism*, *multi*, *inter* and *trans culturalism* - this reality feeds and questions the theory dealing with an ethnic phenomenon, and takes knowledge and practical lessons from it. Today the social scientists keep therefore a careful and very sharp eye on what is happening with the societal structure in our times of turbulent human mobility, profoundly affecting *the ethnic*. Social predictions have been made and respective expectations

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have arisen about ethnic and cultural relational rearrangement, leading to unification/regimentation as a result of intense communication and globalization (Rosencrane 2001; Cohen 2004). But so far this did not occur in social reality, respectively the minority cultures have not been assimilated into the leading industrialized nation states, and in fact, a contrary process appeared: a globalization-related dynamics and social reconfigurations, such as a rather unexpected flourishing of ethnic movements, activation of voluntary and forced migration and other forms of mobility, and changes in attitudes towards ethnic values. With people easily moving around the globe, many areas - not only throughout their entire history but especially today - represent an explosive ethnic mixture of conflicting social, economic and political as well as cultural views and respective interests.

**Ethnic culture in global situation.** Mobility, migration and refugees are the key instruments of population change in Europe today. Actually, refugees and the migration crisis were one of the major challenges for Europe and the world beginning right after WWII. According to a report of the International Organization of Migration, there were approximately 19.5 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2014. An essential part comprising about 14.4 million, were under the mandate of UNHCR, which is around 2.9 million more, if compared to the previous year. The Dublin Regulation was adopted when the EU did not expect large numbers of asylum seekers. However, in 2011, the so called ‘Arab Spring’ marked the beginning of a significant number of irregular journeys across the Mediterranean, and later increased in magnitude when the political conflict in Syria started. The war in Syria itself caused over 4 million refugees. The former average of about 300,000 refugees per year in the EU during the period 1994-2002, has been replaced by the number of asylum seekers, reaching approximately 1 million in 2015, mainly into Germany. This has an impact on the current population size in Europe with migration flows of two million non-EU immigrants, with foreign citizens making up to 7.5% of persons living in the EU Member States in 2017, and almost 22 million non-EU citizens living in the EU (Eurostat 2017). According to a demographic projection (Lanzieri 2011), by 2060, persons of all nationalities with at least one foreign-born parent are expected to account for about 33% of the EU-27 population. Due to this process, the national countries and their societies inevitably become increasingly diverse in an ethnocultural sense.

The discourse of ethnic culture in its dynamics as a mediator for a “rearrangement of national space due to ‘globalizing’ forces” (Berking 2003) is therefore a logical analytical way to discuss the relationship between current *ethnicization* and *globalization*. With such an approach, a twofold problem comes to the fore: on one hand, what is happening with the *national* in the context of increasing contemporary ethnocultural diversity; and on the other, what is the destiny of the *ethnic* in the contemporary nation state, which is usually multi-ethnic and multinational? Actually, this is the question of *how ethnic the national culture is* today, and, in a more general context, how can the *ethnic* be defined today against the background of mobility, escalating a population’s diversification and cultural variety, since it is beyond doubt that cultural diversity is the main characteristic of today’s “global village”.

With this distinctive characteristic in mind, no wonder that many regions of population's encounters today offer rich diversity in issues of rivalries and conflicts, as well as border and memory issues associated with traditional and new ethnicities and their cultures. The reason is that, in most developing countries, ethnic cultures are expressions of long-established tactics of survival and protection of groups' livelihood, embodying life experiences and adapting useful influences, that today, even more than before, the group chooses to cherish and transmit. While keeping their ethnocultural loyalties strong during the mobility, migration and integration, many communities and group members develop multiple affiliations and more complex group identities. In many cases, the acculturation processes from the past are significantly substituted by the strengthening of ethnic identification and self-identification on a large scale. Remaining an important aspect of group consciousness, the ethnic identity shows its malleable nature in adapting to the new circumstances. The following text is aimed at giving researchers some methodological insights about the ways in which communities and individuals perceive their own ethnic identity under the conditions of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and mobility.

**Designations, denominations and connotations of ethnic categories.**

Identity itself is an immutable, subjective and evolving concept, defined by the process of identification. Among the various identifications, the only ethnic identity that matters is the one that the individuals as members of the group ascribe to. It is socially constructed as self-identified, and is perceived as such. It is constructed under the direct influence and guidance of societal interests and culture in interplay. The process of its establishment draws much of its content and energy from pre-existing and newly added forms of solidarity and multifaceted images of collective belonging. It respectively explores the formation and expression of old and new elements of identity by examining the role of cultural and "culturalized" political and economic factors, and the way these have been shaped, adapted, reordered and changed over time by the mobilizing power of those factors. The scholarly approach should therefore seek the development of contemporary globalized ethnic identities as changes in consciousness brought about by cultural shifts (motivated and driven by societal powers and interests). Recently, some attempts have been made to conceptualize the methodological bases of ethnocultural studies under the conditions of globalization (Tomlinson 1999; James, Mandaville 2010; Lechner, Boli (eds.) 2012).

Both components of the phenomenon - the categories of *ethnic* and *identity* - are problematic in terms of their content and form. Therefore, the need exists for suggesting a more precise scholarly content and an adequate research mechanism from the arsenal of ethnology that are due to replace the often chaotic and incompetent usage in public language. The outset and early development of the globalized world set standards and tried to argue perspectives about the academic future of both these components. However, as already said, the social and political reality produces its own picture and causes significant turns in the line of scholarly research. The variations of ethnic terms such as *ethnic*, *ethnos*, *ethnie*, *ethnicity*, *core/kernel of ethnos*, *identity* and *nation* are today steadily present in the official and non-official lexicon. In scholarly discourse, however, they are sometimes omitted or substituted due to *ethnic nihil-*

*ism*, which was fashionable at the start of the millennium, and especially strong in the Russian social science. “I don’t use the term ‘ethnos,’” wrote V. Tishkov (the most prominent representative of the school which actually invented *ethnos*), “because I don’t know what it is” (Tishkov 2003). Up to the present day, in trying to adequately reflect the processes, the term *ethnos* acquired gradually different nuances: from denotation of a socio-cultural historical group with certain specifics, through bio-cultural and natural-geographic formation with mainly behavioural uniting characteristics, to an ethnic substance present in each individual member of a group (Bromley 2008), the last coming closer to an attributive understanding of *ethnic* as present in the non-Russian schools of thought. Recently, in the global era, some scholars, especially ethnologists, have tended to interpret *ethnic* only as a tool for scholarly analyses, devised and used by academicians (Tishkov 2001).

The potential definitional problems were outlined early in the etymological history of the term (beginning in the 1950s) in Western social science as well. At that time, *ethnicity* was first used to characterize the “quality of ethnic groups”. The conceptual framework elaborated in the United States later saw the alignment of national-cultural particularities within the formation of a homogeneous and culturally standardized society - a society quite different from our contemporary one. It is in the field of socio-anthropological literature and the conceptual apparatus of contemporary ethnology where *ethnicity* is generally defined in terms of a cultural ethos, such as shared customs, institutions, rituals, values, intentions, relations and behaviour. Yet the members of an ethnic group who possess a common “cultural ethos” were always seen as sharing “a genetic and/or a linguistic, religious, national and social connection”. Meanwhile, many years after M. Weber’s successful attempt to combine the cultural and political aspects of *ethnic*, many scholars still think that a distinction should be made between cultural and political ethnicity (the former referring to a belief in shared cultural values, the latter to a political awareness or mobilization).

The further determination of *ethnicity* through cultural identification, but with respect to some characteristics of sociological type, was an advanced way of looking at the phenomenon. In this context, each present study should adopt the idea that ethnic formations cannot exist in isolation but only in contact/contrast to other such groups. That is, the boundaries distinguish between two or more “somethings” which carry their own initial distinctiveness. Respectively, when included in a territorial state of a current European type, “the conflict potential of ethnicity is highlighted” because of the contrasts in the differences of religion, language, descent and history that reflect on groups’ social psychological modes. Living as a minority in a multi-ethnic society builds existing relationships to one’s own ethnicity (both in the foreign country and at home) and the host society simultaneously. This is expressed through identity components chosen for preferable identification in different situations of the new, often hostile, social milieu. Ethnic identity therefore also becomes contextual when forced to communicate these components within the milieu. So, *ethnic* in the era of mobility and migration mobilizes and expresses its *multi-identical*, *situational* and *contextual* nature, and these are the three possible contexts within which it could be studied successfully today (Tzaneva 2019).

To reveal the characteristics of *ethnic* today, both *ethnos* and *ethnicity* have a place for the following distinction in their meaning that seems reasonable and consensual: the first designates the grouping of culturally related people, associated with territory, economy, history, lifestyle, etc., while the latter - their psychological unity based on rationalization of the features mentioned, and expressed in some standards of their behaviour. Some scholars are in search of a combined term: A. Smith uses the concept of *ethnie*, perceived as the prerequisite of a nation, tied to both premodern and modern phenomena (Smith 1986). Also suggested (and used in this text) is the attributive *ethnic*, designating the social category and its symbolic content. In the substantial body of literature on the subject in most schools, the notion and dominant meaning of *ethnic* is considered in continuously developing aspects, although some of its important characteristics still appear to be untranslatable into a language of theory. Even today, after a century-long study, many researchers of *ethnic* recognize that not all its meanings can be grasped through objective scientific methodology, especially those linked to psychological elements such as thinking, will, memory and the main focus of *ethnic* - the *ethnic identity*. Conceptualizing ethnic identity is the general context for the study of *ethnic* today, and it demands the approbation and application of multiple and manifold viewpoints, even if this might sometimes seem eclectic.

**Suggesting a converged research method.** To extract and analyse the cultural essence of *ethnic* today, the two well-known contrasting concepts (approaches) of research still need to be evaluated in regard to ethnocultural characteristics. The “primordialist” (“essentialist”) position emphasized the naturalness and stability of culture, religion, history and emotional links within communities that derived from place of birth, kinship relationships, religion, language, and social practices through members’ lives that are “natural” for them and that provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background. These attachments constitute the givens of the human existence and some of them might be rooted in the nonrational foundations of personality. They develop in childhood and remain with the person throughout his life; consciously or not, they often provide a basis for the formation of social and political groupings. Even in “threatening” moments - for example, when the objective cultural markers do not really exist, including under foreign political domination and forced and voluntary migrations, or in situations when people are removed from their origins or have rejected their childhood identifications (refuge cases) - ethnic loyalties are supposed to continue reflecting not real but imagined, memorized, or idealized uniting/distinguishing factors. Therefore, the resulting identity is often viewed as being “based on national and ethnic factors rather than civilizational ones” with “old heroes and narratives, with ethnicity and religion playing a major role” (Martins 2010). According to C. Geertz, the personal and collective identity of the ethnic groups’ members, although presenting an interplay between contemporary dynamics and past loyalties, is mostly driven by ties of blood, mother tongue and language, homeland, religion, historical memories and images, and traditional attachments (Geertz 1996). So, the main advantage of a primordial perspective, applied to present-day situations, is focusing the attention on the active emotional power of ethnic ties. But in using this view, the

researcher cannot explain the dynamics of past and contemporary *ethnics* or the political consequences sometimes marked by quick changes in political partners, loyalties and preferences and group political behaviour.

The contrary idea that cultural symbols and cultural affinities are used by a certain group of interests, or an elite, seeking instrumental advantage for themselves or the group they claim to represent, is central for the modern perspective on ethnicity in all its branches: “instrumental/situational/mobilizationist”. Ethnicity is seen as strategically “constructed” and susceptible to redefinition in concrete situations, needing to be assessed in each context separately. The mobilization of loyalties obviously affects the self-definition of the group and its boundaries, which can be shifted and extended, so ethnicity appears to be an artefact constructed by political and cultural leaders in accordance with their particular interests. This approach tends towards an idea that *the ethnic* has no content of its own, no independent status; it is “nothing but a tool for pursuing nonethnic goals” for different interest/status-groups. Within constructivist readings of ethnicity dynamics, “material terms” are elaborated, such as: competition for resources, distribution of resources, elite strategies, status and wealth, power and rational choice (Banton 2008). They do not deny the existence of bonding through symbols and loyalties, but view symbols and culture as resources for achieving positions desired by different groups’ elites.

Although this perspective pervades in the modern debates on the subject, ethnic phenomena are much more than just manipulative instruments. No doubt, ethnic boundaries are fluid; they move and change, but some immanent characteristics of the group keep the balance within those boundaries, and maintain them. So, despite the “natural” temptation for researchers to give preference to one or another of the existing approaches, and to apply it critically to their concrete study, and also because of the comprehensive and changing character of the ethnic phenomena themselves, a theoretical and methodological strategy combining these approaches should be employed in the study of *ethnic*. Today, there is no doubt that fruitful ideas and concepts from different approaches and perspectives may be combined to reveal the nature of the phenomenon more adequately. Even in the early 1980s, within the dominant modernist perspective, there were some reasonable suggestions to create “an exploratory synthesis of primordial and mobilizationist approaches” to ethnicity for the purpose of an adequate study (McKay 1982). Later, a huge breakthrough happened by recognizing that “approaches to ethnicity are not necessarily mutually exclusive” (Tishkov 2001).

A fruitful suggestion was offered in the field of anthropology, in which ethnicity was assessed as referring to people’s classification in a context of “self-other” distinctions on the cultural level (Eriksen 1993). Accordingly, the ethnic identity is viewed as referring to: “the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity...” (Hutchinson, Smith (eds.) 1996). The separate existence of a given ethnic formation is defined by the unique balance between universal cultural features (characteristic for the whole of human civilization), the general (characteristic for a large group of neighbouring or somehow related groupings) and the particular (characteristic only for a given local group). In combination, these features create a cultural configuration that makes the

“cultural level” of the group objectively different and unique, and determines it as such in a specific social context; within a spatial frame, corresponding characteristics will be global, regional and local. Because of the distinctive combination of those features, the ethnically determined grouping looks distinct from all similar establishments; it looks different to its “own” people, as well as to “strangers” or “outsiders”. If brought together, the “own” people and the “outsiders” should share the unique notions of the cultural “foreignness and indigeneity” in an effort to create their mutual belonging to a political and cultural community of the whole state (Castles 2000).

To study how these notions develop towards successful co-existence, an approach and research mechanism should be suggested that brings together the expertise of the above dichotomized views. It will help to use the contrasting views and scholarly debates for providing useful explanatory and normative insights for understanding the phenomenon. This approach should combine the earlier established (and often considered “essential”) attachments and loyalties within their historical trajectory and transformation, with their recent (“modernist”, “postmodernist” and “globalized”) applications. This approach, labelled as *ethno-symbolism*, was developed in the 1980s mostly by Anthony D. Smith and his followers within the tradition of historical sociology, stressing cultural continuity and the role of historically preserved and transferred affiliations. As an academic current, the *ethno-symbolic approach* reflects the interest in the creation and representation of complex identities, as well as their adoption and modelling by the ethnic group over time, and therefore contains potentials for application within the constructivist perspective. In recent decades, serious and successful attempts have been made to apply the ethno-symbolic approach as a working synthesis in this perspective (Hutchinson, Smith (eds.) 1994; Guibernau, Hutchinson (eds.) 2004; Leoussi, Grosby (eds.) 2006; Smith 2009; Kaplan, Catterall, Rembold 2011; Tzaneva 2015). Now, “the question is rather how far such synthesis can be empirically helpful” (Hutchinson, Smith (eds.) 1996).

To avoid the controversial debate about its predominantly “essentialist nature”, this text suggests using ethnocultural symbolism not as a methodological viewpoint (competing with primordial/constructivist dichotomy), but as an instrumental research body (a set of contexts, symbols and analytical methods) for studying how a national community, both in the past and globally, could be considered and sustained. Such a view should be based on a consensual idea of *ethnic* that also combines the potentials of the existing concepts, and opens up fields for the study of its symbols. This direction understands *ethnic* as a complex cultural integrity of a group, existing in all individual members as an ethnic substance, with united external and internal components which are ordered and symbolically expressed. Ethnic substance is an attribute of the personality - it is always in the individual, and visible in symbolic signs, even if, outside the main group, the person still carries a certain model of ethnic values and expresses them in sticking to norms, models and certain behaviours. Personal ethnic features are very stable, existing regardless of such conditions as change of territory, language and even religion. Emotions and all their manifestations in loyalties, attachments, endowments, etc., are deeply associated with *ethnic*, and this also characterizes today’s ethnic groups living in multi-ethnic states.

Such a view is obviously a combination of classical *theories of ethnos and ethnicity* through distinguishing objective and subjective ethnic properties. It also comes closer to the representatives of Western ethnocultural symbolism by indicating the presence of some stable ethnic structures in a person that are susceptible to mobilization and change.

**Researching ethnic identity as a dynamic cultural hybridity.** Ethnocultural symbolism in this perspective handles the question of how cultural markers, or complex symbolic practices, appear and function as characteristics of a group. It can be used as a research textual and contextual tool for the dynamics of national identity in conditions of ethnic mobility - not as a theoretical approach (as stated by its founders), but as an instrumental construct for sorting out, tracing the changes, and revealing the malleable position of different identity components. Even serving as “actors” on a “cultural scene”, ethnic symbols have a serious political role when used to enhance ethnic/national awareness, and legitimize self-determination demands (Guibernau, Hutchinson (eds.) 2004). By accepting the changeable nature of ethnocultural symbols, ethnocultural symbolism also provides a terrain for studying their manipulation and the pressure on them from different social forces and interests, and also the mechanisms of their forced or voluntary adjustment to new social, political and economic environments.

An attempt to research *ethnic* as an indexed and dynamic cultural hybridity is successfully made in some papers recently (listed in: Tzaneva 2019). Culture, history, religion, language and other markers not only shape but objectively distinguish ethnic groupings. They are also subjectively distinguishing and uniting indicators as far as group members interpret all these markers according to their different values and standards, and the historical and social contexts of their lives. The sum of these changeable interpretations creates the sense of community, or the sense of identity. For the existence and maintenance of that identity, especially in situation of mobility, the balance of the group’s markers needs to be rationalized. This necessity makes the dichotomy sameness/distinctiveness an element of a consciousness or identity, and a subjective category. It is precisely this rationalization, which provides the content of *ethnic* as a specific sense of identity. Hence the conclusion that *ethnic* is that characteristic of the group which keeps its cultural content and inner integrity sufficiently balanced so that it can exist as a whole, without changing its boundaries as a group. In this light, the main analytical concept concerns the simultaneous historical/chronological alongside the situational/contextual character of the phenomenon, whose constitutive elements undergo change as actors seek to keep *ethnic* alive, or changes in the cultural content within the ethnic boundaries should be studied as a main research problem. Therefore, a suggested synthesis between the essentialist/primordial and situational/instrumental approaches to the *ethnic* in applying ethnocultural symbolism as an instrumental analytical tool, organized around the theory of symbolic boundary’s maintenance and development, seems reasonable.

*Cultural hybridization* is a result of cultural encounters that happen during the increasingly intense mobility of our time. In their fulfilment, ethnic contacts and contradictions, interaction and exchange occur. Both “hosts” and

“outsiders” participate in these processes with their look, dress style, manners and foods, music and dances, followed by more communicational means as feasts and celebrations, religion (faith, beliefs), stereotypes, education, morals and values. Moving around globally, individuals and groups, families and kin, households, companies and neighbours, carrying this set of endowments, try to (1) keep their home identities and (2) construct their new ones. The former process is loyalty to an inherited and approved cultural survival mechanism brought from home, the latter an adaptation to the new environments and experiences with the purpose of survival. This is obviously the interplay between long-established (primordial) and newly learned (constructed) norms, which again is in favour of the ethno-symbolic research mechanism combining the two linked but separate studies. In this interplay, old and new values can mix and change their roles, places, and significance as identity factors, and can also disappear or minimize their presence among the markers.

**Researching ethnic identity in the “global village” through its dynamic symbols.** The application of ethnocultural symbolism to the identities of a “global village” is closely associated with elaborated and approved indexes of *identity markers*. The present reading of those markers sees them as susceptible to disappearance and evolution, to change and variation, over time and according to the particular interests of the people, the members of the group involved. To study *ethnic* through its symbols, the concept of identity construction and dynamics in different socio-political periods should first be “loaded” with concrete and precise content, and then the dynamics should be traced. The study of the identity’s structure as composed of a number of identifiers is the necessary beginning. The distinguishing features of *ethnic* as a sense of identity, and of a multi-ethnically composed contemporary nation, are usually organized in lists of criteria associated with both phenomena.

Those lists show an impressive stability and steady contents through time, beginning from the first attempts to formulate the attributes or “prerequisites” of identity back in 1939, through the more complicated and extended lists of B. Shafer, H. S. Watson, and ending with the one of the latest by A. Smith-J. Hutchinson (all discussed and summarized in Tzaneva 2015). As pointed out by M. Nash, these: “index features ... must be easily seen, grasped, understood, and reacted to in social situations”. The suggested lists usually include such markers as proper name, common ancestral origin and kinship, common history, same culture, territorial boundedness, language and religion (sometimes also race or physical characteristics), sense of peoplehood and endogamy. The effectiveness of symbols in keeping ethnic group identity as distinct derives from the fact that these symbols represent features of the group, which are usually considered objective by the members. During mobility and migration, the group boundaries are threatened and the process of the transformation of some subjectively perceived and fluid traits into more concrete objective ethnic features is more dynamic and strong. Accordingly, the attachment to them can also get stronger, as if they are real, rather than imagined or invented symbols.

Having in mind the present picture of population structure as a result of mass mobilities, the differentiation between the so-called *status* and *auxiliary* symbols of *ethnic*, also called ascriptive (fixed by birth) and achieved (e.g.

through culture, language or religion), takes on a greater role. The first group of symbols consists of visible marks such as skin pigmentation, face and hair type, standardized body gestures and other physical features, and provides an important basis for making the “first-glance” distinction. When displayed, these symbols can differentiate and unite members of the group with both majority and minority status, and in this way play an important part in systems of social composition. The psychological ground for this lies in the fundamental of ethnic groupings - since they are believed to consist of people who are alike by virtue of common ancestry, these conventionalized hereditary markers naturally become symbols of identification. But they cannot be the only or even the most important defining ethnic markers. To be recognized as valid by the members of a group, they must always be combined with other symbols of belonging, such as clothing, decals, adornments, flags, manner of behaviour, language, dietary habits, etc., and this is equally valid for areas where ethnic groups from the same race or population stock have long been in contact, so physical differentiation therefore becomes progressively more difficult. Their role is clearly rationalized today by “hosts” and “newcomers”: The debate in Europe about, for example, the *burqa*, *hijab*, *niqab*, etc., which might serve as a public affirmation of a group’s ethnic claim, becomes significant. In such cases, what Smith calls the “auxiliary symbols” of belonging and identity achieves a greater significance. Ethnic identity is viewed by some scholars along two other axes: a cognitive/affective axis and a specific/universal axis (Cohen 2004), where the ethnic symbols are organized with various presences at ethnic and national levels. The symbols are created in a cultural sense (Smith 1986), and their acceptance by the whole cultural environment is an aim of the civilized efforts of the states. Research through narratives, personal behavioural actions and groups’ social and political activities, as sources for changeable order and meaning of the mentioned marker-indicators of identity, is a precise research path valid for each study in the handling of the problem.

The scholarly thought behind the research in identity dynamics is that the listed components of identity are far from fixed and stable categories. They are in fact very malleable notions, which can be mobilized, activated and rearranged in different discursive contexts. According to the ethnocultural symbolism’s research tool, each case study explores the dynamics of identity in the selectively chosen mobilization forms of collective attachments.

The formation of a new identity consists of the creation of new ethnic categories, possibly through an extension of existing ethnic symbols and loading them with new content. The study of the ethnocultural dimensions of *ethnic* explores the development of those ethnic markers that have a distinct cultural denotation. This involves the further evolution and change of existing symbols (mainly ethnic labelling, the ethno-linguistic and ethno-religious sensibilities of nationhood), as well as the selection of new symbols and their infusion with respective content, resulting in enhanced internal cultural cohesion. The effect of globalization is greater if, using these sets of existing identifications, new group and personal consciousness is built above the old one, which unites people within newly established loyalties. In this sense, globalization appears to be a concept of uniformization. But if approaching cultural processes via the understand-

ing of the effects of globalization “as they are felt within particular localities” (Tomlinson 1999), the process of creation of the united (not uniform), multiple, situational and contextual identities of the ethnic groups living together, will be visible. Therefore, research on ethnic identity issues in the contemporary “global village” is envisioned possible and successful through the dynamics of ethnocultural symbols, and within the conceptual frame of a combined constructivist/historicist approach.

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