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Cultural Representation under the Pressure of Ethnicity – The Case of the Hungarian Minority in Slovakia

My dissertation project is about the cultural representational strategies of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, from a historical point of view but also with an emphasis on contemporary discourses on 'what Slovakian-Hungarian Culture is'. The research is concerned with texts that are pursuing to define this minority culture, mainly its borders and 'authentic' features. These texts can be classified into a *dichotomous discursive system* which can be identified as a *representational battle* between different elites with different ideological motivation. This opposition can be found in texts since the 1920s until the most recent times, and the tension of the opposition is a returning topic for theoretical works but also for artists. The aim of the research is to identify this representational battle and its impacts on the narratives of the minority community. It seems that all cultural practices of the minority group has to express and strengthen the borders of the group. Ethnicity is like a pressure on the cultural representation and narratives of different histories (history of the minority, history of popular culture, history of arts, etc.).

The research gives special focus to 'Csemadok',¹ an institution founded in 1949 because of its great influence on cultural representation and its mobilising power. I'm analyzing the Csemadok-supported folkloristic representation (discursive strategies, expropriated traditions and rituals) and it's construction of the image of the minority community, identity and collective memory. The second main question of the dissertation is: what role the Csemadok plays in the continuous operation of the 'representational battle'?

The dissertation addresses the following problems and questions: How is the border-creating cultural practices of an ethnic minority influence the discourses on culture and arts? How can we deconstruct and analyze these discourses and their impact on culture and arts?

I'm using discourse analysis and close reading to identify the ideological layers in the texts of/about Hungarian minority culture in Slovakia. Also I'm doing half-structured interviews with the actors of the cultural field and the main representatives of Csemadok.

While analyzing the discourse of a minority culture I have to take special care for the viewpoint of ethnicity. This special care is provided by the theoretical works of Fredrik Barth, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Steve Fenton and Marcus Banks who all agree on that

¹ *Csemadok - Czechoslovak Hungarian Workers' Cultural Association* was formed in 1949 by the Czechoslovak Communist Party to supervise and control the cultural field of the Hungarian minority living in Czechoslovakia. Nowadays Csemadok is still an active institution with its particular cultural practices: its work is mainly occupied with identity politics through folkloristic culture.

ethnicity is not a primordial state of a person or a group, not even a homogeneous cultural quality but a relational condition. The representation of this relational condition is strongly connected with the motivation of the elites.

The debates about the minority culture are often connected with debates about the borders of the minority community. Thinking about these borders I use the thoughts of Rogers Brubakers on groupism as well as Benedict Anderson's on imagined communities and Anthony D. Smith's on ethnosymbolism.