Rudolf M. RIZMAN[*]

IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT?

Discussing identity in the age of globalization requires departure from conventional analyses in this area. Such a distancing involves several constituents implying both novel methodological and sociologically substantive approaches. While the first methodological alternation refers to the urgency of applying an innovative sociological paradigm to adequately understand the added and changed complexity of identity, the other, substantive notion implies a recognition of multiple social factors, which frame and determine, respectively, the contemporary phenomenon of identity.

Conceptually, this contribution attempts, in part, to relate to the assumptions that Umut Őzkirimly (2000: 226–233) introduced in his study on the theories of nationalism. The suggested assumptions were as follows: (1) there is no commonly accepted theory of identity; (2) there is no singular identity; (3) common discourse can unite diverse forms of identity; (4) identity can only be effective if it is reproduced on daily basis; and (5) different constructions of identity should inform and lay grounds for its necessary redefinition. Another and more convincing and substantially elaborated conceptual contribution was proposed by Delanty and Rumford (2005). The authors assume a realistic view that identity represents group conscience – emotion that expresses a collective „we." Four salient aspects of identity need to be seriously taken into consideration. *Firstly*, identity as unfolded in its relation to social action can reveal itself as processual or constructed. *Secondly*, identities embody a narrative dimension; they are narratives with the aim to establish themselves as continuous processes. *Thirdly*, identity uses symbolical reper-

---
[*] Rudolf M. Rizman, Dr (Harvard and Ljubljana University), Full Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Faculty of Arts – Department of Sociology, University of Ljubljana

toire by which it emphasizes differences, that is, their persistence in a relational context. *Fourthly*, any deliberation on identities should include the answer to the question about overlapping identities, which do not eliminate themselves; they do in most cases co-habituate. When it comes to personal identities, it should be mentioned that they are rarely limited to just one identity – there are obviously more of them and they are at different stages of expressing their mutual tensions.

In the last ten years or so, social sciences have, to some extent, enabled themselves in coping with such an ambitious task. Quite a number of scholars from different disciplines (sociology, political sciences and others) developed and offered contributions that seem promising in this regard and which can be, and should be, applied in order to unbind and rethink the present unfolding and eventual structuring of identity. One of the most plausible propositions is the call for „a new paradigm" as imperative requirement to fully understand today's world (Touraine 2007). It was argued that, during the last two hundred years and until recently, social world was studied exclusively by an economic and social paradigm while in the post-industrial age there unfolded the obvious need for a new paradigm, which would be able to identify the new actors and processes in this domain.

Post-industrial societies arguably left technological determinism behind and replaced it with information society. The last mentioned dramatic social transformation is cheifly responsible for the withering away of social language about society in favour of cultural language. Thus, one could speak about the paradigmatic shift from society (collective) to culture, which, for better or worse, contributed towards social de-composition, de-socialization and eventually to the triumph of individualism. The establishment of completely new differences between less than solidly imagined actors, individuals in the first instance, has become the prevalent mode of communication in today's advanced societies. It is thus quite obvious that the previous political paradigm was, or should be, replaced by the cultural paradigm.

But this is not the whole truth about the historical trajectory that we are talking about. According to Zygmunt Bauman (2007: 1–4), globalization gives birth to historically new uncertainties, which change the frames of references for both the concerned social phenomena and the contents of human actions. To identity relevant shifts, it is in particular necessary to note the following trajectories: (1) the transition from the „solid" to the „liquid" phase of modernity; (2) the separation and eventually divorce of power and politics; (3) the withdrawal of communal, state-endorsed protection of individuals against failure and ill fortune; (4) the weakening or even elimination of long-

term thinking and, moreover, the disappearance of social structures based on responsible and sustainable human reflection; and last but not least, (5) individual agency and acting do not rely anymore on externally imposed recipes – individuals are taking a flexible stand, which means that they are prone to change their behavioural patterns and styles at a short notice, without regret.

How are these incarnations in particular affecting, either in whole or partly, complex and multifaceted identities? The question can also be posed like this: does globalization make people more similar or more different? Does it encourage homogenization or heterogenization of identities? Jan Aart Scholte (2005: 25–27) does not offer any definitive answers in this regard. Much depends on one's perspective. Both, homogenization and cultural diversity had its day. Neither can be treated in either affirmative or negative way; both can entail progressive universalism or oppressive imperialism. The so-called „glocalization" thesis has stressed that large-scale globalization empowered many national or ethnic groups' strong impulses to further promote their national or ethnic differences. However, there is more of what the defenders of globalization are boasting about: namely, that globalization was instrumental in intercultural constructions of being and belonging, that is, in producing new cultural combinations, which occurred thanks to the increased blurring of distinctions between nations and civilizations. More optimistic scholars in this area suggested that globalization can be easily associated with „creolization" and „hybridization," while some even hinted that such developments gave birth to alternative forms and founded the basis for an ethics of identity politics. The latter clearly distanced themselves from the parochially (in)formed dualistic „us versus them" opposition, where it is routinely clearly defined who belongs to whom and to what.

Studying the fate of identities in the age of globalization presents an opportunity to deepen our awareness of its complexity on the one hand and, on the other hand, to identify the new challenges and opportunities with regard to identities. A fruitful theoretical proposition can be, arguably, found in the thesis that „the global is in good part constituted inside the national" (Sassen 2007: viii, 3–23). This author further argues that globalization should not be reduced to the simple fact of ever-growing interdependence and the emergence of global institutions. Although many core social processes transcend the extant nation (al) states, the latter do still play the role of key container of social processes. Since it is also obvious that national territory implies its correspondence with nation, national institutions can not be other than national. Nonetheless, the transnational processes – economic, political and cultural – as such transcend the confines of national states, which confront social scienc-

es with many new urgent theoretical and methodological tasks. In this sense, Sassen broadens the extant understandings of globalization, which should not be reduced to mere notions of interdependence and global institutions, but need to address the much more sociologically complex content of the national.

The main scholarly effort in this regard should thus be focused on those crucial processes that can be branded as the „localization of the global." Such a framing of this issue, according to Sassen, points to „detecting the presence of globalizing dynamics in thick social environments that mix national and non-national elements." The analytic agenda is thus vastly expanded and offers many and completely new opportunities for a scrutinized research of particular, either nationally or subnationally embedded, formations and processes and, in particular, their „recoding as instantiations of the global." Exploring this diversity involves confronting differences rather than merely hinting to parallels, and this seems to be a much richer and more elaborate research challenge. At this stage, the national and national states still strongly participate in the making of global systems. However, the national in the wider sense is not the only social force, which is challenging globalization (and vice versa); one should take note of the agency of subnational levels as well, which enter the processes of a more definite constitution of global social outcomes.

Considering strictly sociological concerns, the global and the national are part of a variety of negotiations between the global and the national. Even the globalizing and denationalizing dynamics are clothed or represented in most cases as local and national. As a result, we witness multiple and specific structurations of the global within what was until recently conceived as merely national. In order to reveal the deeper insight into these structurations, Sassen proposes that scholars in this area should study the following three instances bearing on their concerned conceptual, methodological, and empirical interests. The *first* studied instance should be related to the role of determinants (circles, circuits, ranges, etc.) that constitute economic, political, and cultural globalization. Not the least important is the *second* instance, which stresses the role of the new interactive technologies in redefining and repositioning the local constituent within the wider globalization context. The *third* instance refers to a specific set of interactions – also linkages – between global dynamics and particular constituents of national states. Altogether, they convincingly demonstrate the limits and suggest ways to move beyond what was, before the advent of globalization, the mainstream usage of methodological nationalism. This aim – to conceptualize national interactions within the global dynamics – is one of the most demanding and critical requirements before a researcher targets (national) identity as a valid topic of scholarly analysis.

The abovementioned assumptions reject the overly simplistic notion about the fatal crisis of the nation for which globalization is supposedly responsible. The reality around us itself rejects such claims: as can be easily noticed, quite a number of new nations (states) have emerged and are still emerging under the present unfolding of globalization. If one speaks about the passing of territorialism, this does not merely imply the passing of territoriality in the domains of geography; the same applies to the claims about the end of nationalism, which according to Scholte (2005: 226) does not entail the end of nationality in the sphere of identity. It is too irresponsible, albeit quite common, for scholars to speak about the rise of a „postnational" era. No more nations would also imply the withering away of those identities that are grounded in historically moulded ethnic material. If we consider globalization as a very novel, recent historical phenomenon, then teleology, in the sense of predicting the ending of this or that social phenomenon, is far from guaranteeing a valid cognitive result. It is nevertheless true that the developments of information technology, particularly in communications, are responsible for the emergence of complex cultures and multiple identities, where it is difficult to recognize immediately the traces or contributions of individual collectives. But such a difficulty is arguably the consequence of assuming that identities and collective groups behind them are immutable and without a potential to undergo substantial transformations.

Moreover, John Hutchinson (in Guibernau and Hutchinson 2005: 89) rightly argued that while in Europe nations and nation-states vary considerably in the social niches they wish to mould, this is not necessarily and automatically determining the potency of national identities *per se*. Here, the author refers to those scholars who claim that a switch from avowedly national to transnational (international) loyalties may not result in changes attributed to national affiliations. In this case, we are deliberating about two issues that must not be confused: on the one hand, strategic decisions of concerned national groups over the range of roles that need to be regulated, and on the other hand, on why, to begin with, there appear certain fluctuations in the salience and instrumentalization of particular national identities. Globalization seems to encourage changes in the manifold manifestations of national identity. Moreover, the much softer grip of nation-states on identities enabled them to enlarge their repertoire of potential forms: the sub-state, trans-state and supra-state ones. Supraterritorial identities now touch more people in the world than in any other period of human history. The pluralization of national and other types of identities under contemporary globalization thus added to the already extant diversification in this area.

A more intellectually productive way to discuss (national) identities in the global context is the one offered by Montserrat Guibernau (in Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001: 257–263). Basically, this approach analyses the strategies employed by the classical nation-state in order to generate a homogeneous national identity among its citizens, which has been substantially transformed in recent times under the impact of globalization. Why is national identity one of the most powerful expressions of collective identity? Guibernau offers a convincing answer by deconstructing its essential building material. It is based upon the sentiment of belonging to particular nation, endowed with its own symbols, traditions, sacred places, ceremonies, heroes, history, culture and territory.

Besides common identity and emotional charge that create solidarity among members of a given community, Guibernau raises the issue of a political dimension embedded in national identity. This dimension is a fundamental condition for the establishment of right and power to decide, more or less on daily basis, about crucial political issues of the nation they belong to. Globalization intervened in the conventional ways of how nation-states promoted cultural (and other forms of) homogenization of their populations. In the past, it was forced through assimilation, and in other cases through even more extreme ways (from crude repression to genocide), that nation-states suppressed internal cultural differences in favour of a core, state-promoted national identity. The officially sanctioned identity was, of course, that of the dominant national or ethnic group.

The intensification of globalization processes forced nation-states to modify, if not transform, their strategy of both conceiving and framing what is usually understood as national identity. To put it differently, national minorities and various ethnic groups have used globalization to promote their distinctive identities. A more pronounced international visibility limits the repertoire of available repressive measures by which nation-states have been treating less privileged group identities to express and promote themselves both internally and in the international arena. Despite attempts in the past to homogenize their cultural spaces, most of the present nation-states stay evidently plural – multinational and multi-ethnic. Thus, it could be said that nation-states, after a (too) long historical process, are becoming real states by abolishing the prefix nation, which was nothing less than an Orwellian attempt to hide the ethnically plural constitution of more than 90 percent of extant states in the world.

Contrary to some claims that globalization threatens the identities as we know them, Tomlinson (in Held and McGrew 2007: 160) argues that it pre-

sents a strong force in creating and proliferating them. Globalization produces identities, where before none existed. This „production", which is pertinent to the modern society, is not, however, anarchic; rather, it is characterized by forming institutions as frames within which identities live their more or less autonomous life. Institutionalization and regulation do not necessarily directly affect identities, since this can be achieved often indirectly, that is, through the agency of regulating cultural practices. Those who regard globalization as a threat to cultural identity ignore its institutional frame and consider it a merely existential possession, a kind of a collective treasure of this or that ethnic community, which needs privileged (political) protection in order to survive in culturally plural and in some cases hostile environment.

Identities in modern societies are not as vulnerable and fragile as some authors argue. Instead, they are, as Castells argued in his widely acclaimed work titled *The Power of Identity* (1997), more robust, which permits one to identify an inner logic between the globalization process and the institutionalized construction of identities. Behind particular identities there lies a powerful existential complexity, which can mobilize more manifest, if not latent, collective demands. Moreover, globalization reveals the relative independence of culture from place against various threats to establish dominance – as was so often the case in the past – with some particular geographically defined culture. This fact alone confirms the view that identity does not merely expresses this or that modality of subjectivity, but another sociologically much more decisive phenomenon of institutional embeddedness of identity in the present establishment of global modernity. According to Tomlinson (in Held and McGrew 2007: 163–164), globalization, by proliferating localisms and sharpening the identity discrimination all over the world, at the same time pluralizes universality. This very well justifies the highly plausible expectation among various scholars that cosmopolitanism may, yet again, this time with more convincing sociological grounds, develop into a viable political project.

Cosmopolitanism enters many and multiple manifestations of everyday individual and social life: the economic sphere, the media and communications technology are entering our homes on daily basis; intensified mobility, foreign travels and, last but not least, our „food culture" are to a greate extent informed by external sources. John Urry (2003: 137) thus rightly observes that the most powerful sets of dispositions in contemporary world are therefore neither localist nor global. They do unfold according to Derrida's idea of „think travel," which Zygmunt Bauman in *Liquid Modernity* (2000: 207) sketched with the following words: „the trick is to be at home in many homes, but to be in each inside and outside at the same time, to combine intimacy

with the critical look of an outsider, involvement with detachment." This condensed statement implies that „local" and „cosmopolitan" are far from being necessarily counterpoised. A cosmopolitan identity mix, as Urry argues further, enables people to live simultaneously in both the global and the local, in the distant and the proximate, in the universal and the particular contexts. We can never detect a pure and simple „cosmopolitanism;" it would be much more appropriate to use instead the notion of „glocalized cosmopolitanism." This, indeed, represents a very vast and rich ground for the emergence of „glocalized cosmopolitan" identities, practices and cognitive patterns, which somehow order the otherwise much chaotic cultural life under the dominion of globalization as such.

These days, identity is no longer fixed, almost „eternal," as it used to be before the advent of globalization. The idea of fluidity takes a prominent role in explaining the vicissitudes and the contingent nature of this often elusive phenomenon. The fluid nature of identity was, for this very reason, deconstructed into the following distinguishing parameters: in terms of its rate of flow, its viscosity, its depth, its consistency and its confinement to some pertinent channels of its unfolding (Urry 2003: 42, 109–110). These are obviously not some wild or spontaneously triggered processes, which could be considered as free from any outside regulation or moulding. This world is still, to a great extent, „state centric," namely in the sense that the turbulent nature of the global complexity, paradoxically, increases the role of the state (s) as the provider or enabler of cultural powers of a given territory and the promoter of new spatial configurations. The point is, however, that states lost their previous capacity to „engineer" identity in the sense of a property of unchanging community of fate (nation). States still set legal, economic and social rules, and will continue to do so for quite some time. The other consequence of their acting since World War II, and in particular under the transformed global circumstances, is their enormous expansion with a view to nation-state structures, bureaucracies, agenda, revenues, military power and regulatory empowerments.

The relationship between globalization and localization is not only synergistic. As any other contrasting social process, it obviously involves conflictual and antagonistic relations. This can, on the one hand, eventually bring new and added identity material that leads to its enrichment, but on the other hand, we should not ignore the fact that such processes also include the notion of imposition or domination, which can be destructive of some identities due to their underprivileged or powerless position. There is indeed a cluster that could be termed „resistance identities" (Castells 1997: 356), which opposes the extant and imposed social ordering and which, if successful, can broad-

en the social space that facilitates freer development for „weak" and therefore vulnerable identities.

Reflecting upon identity issues, one needs to raise a scholarly valid question: how to avoid in this endeavour the pitfalls of „essentialism"? Rigid „identity politics" is certainly destined to end in a flawed direction, burdened by methodological individualism. For this very reason, Arif Dirlik and Roxann Prazniak (1991: 3–12) proposed to distinguish between the claims to identity of the powerful and the powerless – the last being systematically threatened by their extinction. A more proper methodological path towards encapsulating the real nature of identity is by recognizing their concrete structural locations. This path is much more promising than the mere recapitulation of the already tired debates between the primordialist and the constructionist explanations of identity. Although identity enjoys quite a transparent and unavoidable autonomy, two sociological anchors ultimately provide the needed social material for its formation: on the one hand, cultural nationalism per se and, on the other hand, „place-based consciousness." The latter, according to the abovementioned authors, is vitally important for a number of reasons. In a number of different circumstances, place-based determination of identities can help provide more or less lasting solutions to conflicts in this domain, which came about in a much wider social context. What the abovementioned authors have in mind here, then, is the mediating role of the extant nation-states between economic forces and affected places as containers of this or that particular identity.

Several scholars, including Arjun Appadurai (1996: 15–16), introduced into the debates regarding identity the notion of culturalism, which denotes identity politics at the level of nation-state in both the epistemological and the broader practical sense. Besides the nation state, culturalism also encapsulates a number of social groups, which are consciously mobilising themselves according to identitarian criteria. There are several uses of culturalism – most of them with the added prefix multi or inter, thus multiculturalism and interculturalism. The repertoire of this kind of identity spans over many and multiple distributive notions implying various entitlements; these do sometime involve considerations of life and death, but in a general way, that is, in accordance with classification and policies regarding this or that dimension of group identity. Culturalism performs itself both within the framework of a larger national as well as transnational politics. Its ultimate end is obviously clothed into struggles for stronger recognition from existing nation-states or, when this becomes urgent, against various transnational authorities. In the broader sense, as Appadurai suggests, culturalism employs particularly those cultur-

al differences that are carrying more salient social weight, as for example, in the areas of mass mediation, migration, and ultimately globalization. In order to justify culturalist or identity claims, their protagonists rely on a deliberate vocabulary in their struggle with states and other competing culturally focused groups. The available „material," which culturalism vastly exploits, is mainly centred on the issues associated with this or that particular issue of identity, culture or heritage.

Although discussing the matter in different contexts, the concerned actors expose some particular or sensitive content cluster of identity, and one of them enjoys a privileged treatment, namely, national identity. Historically speaking, national identity is of a more recent origin; it replaced earlier notions of national character and national consciousness. Anthony Smith (2001: 17–20) explains the wider uses of national identity within the broader trend of contemporary individualism and, to some extent, as a consequence of anxiety and alienation of many people in an increasingly fragmented world. This concept has a heavily ambivalent load: it can be equally viewed as a core ideal of nationalism (nationalist movement) or as an analytical concept. In order to streamline the scholarly understanding of national identity, Smith proposes the following plausible definition: „the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identification of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements."

To follow the same author's lead, it is of the utmost relevance to distinguish two relationships in the proposed definition. The *first* is between collective and individual levels of analysis, and the *second*, between continuity and change of identity. It is equally important to pay further attention to the situational character of ethnic and national identities in the sense of a variety of collective affiliations, which in today's modern world (re)introduce themselves under the label of „multiple identities." This latter case involves a range of identities starting with the family circle and up to the circle of humanity. Here, one should add that, from an individual standpoint, collective identities offer a number of opportunities for choosing identities according to contingency situation and individuals' cultural affinities. Here, we need to note that some types of collective identities like classes, regions, and interest groups in most cases dissolve after they reach their aims, while cultural collectivities are much more stable due to their longitudinal attachments to memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions. The identity should be viewed as both a stable and dynamic social phenomenon. One could not speak about identity,

if it would not persist (sameness over time) at least for a certain historic peri-od – and changes can only operate within culturally transparent boundaries.

Identities take quite some historic time to be eventually able to reproduce themselves and preserve their cultural core in the future and before new chal-lenges. Some larger political units and cultural spaces at present strive hard to develop it. The most obvious case is that of the European Union, which pro-motes the slogan of „unity in diversity" with an aim to arrive at its own, thus invented, identity. Up till now, it has not been convincingly proven how to es-tablish a European identity and, at the same time, leave national identities un-touchable. One side – the europhiles – in this deliberations argues that it is worth to pay the price in order to establish a European identity for a number of good reasons (from prevention of war to reducing various xenophobias), while the other side – the eurosceptics – fear that the loss of national identity can only serve the aims of greater nations and powers in the European Union and can ultimately break the social and cultural bonds of smaller and medi-um-sized European nations. As it is now, European policies (directives) oblig-atorily proceed through national states and their institutions and it is there-fore hard to believe that the European Union has the means and necessary will to implement the idea of a European identity at the cost of extant nation-al identities.

Global cultural convergence towards a common identity seems to be an even more distant phenomenon than a European culture or identity. There are contradicting contentions regarding the impact of globalization as far as cul-ture and identity are concerned: some claim that it is destructive, particularly for national identity, against those who recognize globalization as „the most significant force in creating and proliferating cultural identity" (John Tomlin-son in Held and McGrew 2000: 236–237). Intensified globalization process-es were largely responsible for a dramatic rise of social movements based on and organized around identity related to gender, ethnicity, nationality, reli-gion and others. Namely, globalization problematized identity in many parts of the world, where previously it did not enjoy any privileged or focused con-cern. Although central, identity was only one among many other expressions of attachments and belongings in contemporary world. In addition to produc-ing and inventing new identities, globalization was equally instrumental in transforming national and other salient identities. How to negotiate this new challenging cultural and political complexity becomes one of the most press-ing issues both in social sciences and political praxis.

Anthony Smith (in Held and McGrew 2000: 278–286) does not expect much with a view to global culture, which is still too vague and imprecise to

deserve serious attention. It could make sense, if national identity would show convincing signs of its waning, but this is (still) far from being the case. According to Smith, „national sentiments and values in respect of continuity, shared memories and a common destiny still pervade many given collectivities, which have had a common experience and distinctive history." A global change in the technical and linguistic infrastructure of communication does not by itself support the expectations that global culture and identity will supersede the world of nations. Instead of increased global affective ties, one can witness the rise of cosmopolitan awareness. Does national identity always trump globally informed patterns of commonality? New networks of international elite (international bureaucrats and multinational business executives, for example) are no doubt more internationally minded and open to global influences. However, this class represents a very small minority, which is far from performing a major impact on their background societies (Pipa Norris in Held and McGrew 2000: 237). What is significant, however, is the generational divide. Generations born after the Second World War, influenced and brought up with MTV, CNN and the Internet, are more inclined toward interpreting their politics as internationalist, that is, supportive of the United Nations system and international legal values as such. This, however, still leaves open the question of whether such a significant generational change is paving, or will pave, the way for a qualitative evolution of present frames of identity in the direction of a globally determined consciousness.

Cosmopolitan perspective should not be viewed through the lenses of either-or, but as complementary to national identity in the sense of softening, if not reducing, its exclusiveness. According to Ulrich Beck (2005: 36), cosmopolitanism does not necessarily exclude national or local identity. To live a cosmopolitan life means exercising dual loyalties: to be both a citizen of the cosmos and at the same time keeping one's loyalty to one's (nation) state. Using the language of metaphors, each citizen possesses both „roots" and „wings." Old distinctions between „us" and „them" lost their sharpness in the global era; they neither prescribe nor establish any absolute exclusion in any deterministic way. Hopefully, the antagonistic „either-or" principle promises to be eventually replaced by the „both-and" principle. In sociological terms, this invites a solid construction of a „dual locatedness" for all. Although quite a fresh insight into the global repositioning of collective and individual identity shifts, Beck's pro-cosmopolitan stand does not elaborate upon what remains of the uneven distribution of power between various (national) identities, which provides economic or cultural support (or lack thereof).

Most national identities can count on cultural self-determination, while the cosmopolitan perspective somehow ignores the question of against whom. How can winners and losers co-habitate when it comes to consummation of the principle of self-determination? Beck (2005: 93, 259) here avoids the ultimate answer by suggesting that, in an era of cultural globalization and ethnic-national plurality, this possibility is dependent on the existence of postnational and plural-national state, which is either neutral towards or tolerant of nationality. This is a highly normative proposition and one can only wonder to which actually existing fragment in the world of nations it can relate. This perspective is obviously dependent on Beck's further presupposition that reality reaches the ideal of a worldwide acknowledgement of both equality and difference at the same time. Ethnically based states hardly recognize any minority within their midst and no validity of universalistic values in this regard. The solution that Beck devises lies in a paradoxical alliance evolving between ethnicists and globalizers, which creates less exclusive and more favourable conditions for its re-ethnicization.

In the context of available plural identities, national identity arguably often plays a functional role with regard to solidarity. Solidarity is particularly important when the cultural group has been victimized and struggles to overcome such an unfortunate fate. In such circumstances the case for national identity is often made by nationalism, which is a modern way of responding to the threat usually represented by the advances of modernization (globalization). To the members of the threatened cultural community, defending identity carries with itself a duty to preserve their collective dignity. The core constituents of identity in the (post)modern world are to gain both internal and external recognition. In this sense, contemporary politics is nothing less, or more, than a species of identity politics *par excellence*. Having said this, we should nevertheless be aware of the fact that every identity is vulnerable to non-recognition from the side of dominant groups, but equally so from other influential international actors. Nations lack something of a crucial and cohesive importance, if they fail to provide their members with a certain sense of meaning or identity. Also, the very governing of nations reflects the characteristic manner of expressing their collective and cultural identity. This is why no progressive stand, in particular liberalism, can be indifferent to concerns about national identity (Beiner 1999: 9, 235–236, 305–310).

Another relevant question concerns depicting the dividing lines between various social spheres. There is no doubt that the dividing line between ethnic and class identity is much sharper than that between religious and ethnic identity. While class collectives rarely overlap with ethnic identity, this is of-

ten the case between ethnic and religious identities. For lower classes to possess some exclusive identity, they would need to rely on elite with appropriate skills and communication competences in order to be able to sustain and reproduce some particular identity within the larger society (Smith 1998: 182–185). Sociological (re)construction of any identity is existentially conditioned upon the boundary between „us" and „them." The great religions in this sense provided vital material and sources for the myth-symbol content of ethnic identities, which is most clearly visible in Islam and Christendom. Religion is, of course, not the only and exclusive contributor towards the whole making of national identity as it also presents a complex matrix of other contributing social factors.

The recent advent of secular societies has significantly diminished, if not eliminated, the role of religious factors and instead increased the salience of the factors shaped by globalization. This shift – we could term it transformative – demands from the researchers in this area a rethinking of the broader social context in which identity and identities are imbedded. Due to the fact that national identity is in many ways dependent on and framed by nation-state (s), one of the crucial issues concerns their fate in the age of globalization. Mainstream social scientists are not of the same mind in this regard. Smith (1998: 213–218), for example, does not share those influential views which anticipate that nation-state, ethnic nationalism, national identities and nationalism in general had run their course. A number of scholars of postmodernist brand claim that, as an ultimate consequence of global economic interdependence and cultural globalization, the nation-state is becoming increasingly irrelevant. More radical voices in this vein even consign nationalism to the „great museum" of tourist history.

It should be noted, however, that nations have much greater durability than other kinds of groups (Hechter 2000: 94–101). On the other hand, not all culturally distinct collectivities necessarily become political nations (nation-states). National or, more accurately, ethnic identities can rely on two vital social anchors: on the nation-state on the one hand, and on the autonomous power drawing from cultural world on the other. In both cases, identity as such derives from a historically generated division of labour, which is pertinent to any human society. Cultural division of labour can be considered the most important and valued source of this kind of identity. In addition, identities fulfil individual and collective choices, which are linked with their specifically and culturally embedded perceptions of what is required for society which pretends to fulfil the idea of imagined or good society. The core aim of

cultural nationalism was to invent national identity and to suborn it to other identities, which were previously centred on family, class and religion.

Identities in general assume some of the markers of individuals (Gilbert 1998: 25–28) and national identity is not an exception in this regard. Much of the content of national identity, however, is determined by the specific nature of this or that nationalism. Aggressive nationalisms leave their marks in appertaining national identities: such a type of national identity is hostile towards any sign of their openness and more or less pluralistic composition. Liberal nationalisms, on the other hand, deliberately invite „foreign" influences and introduce their national identities as multiple identities. While in the first case national identities are characterized by upholding a strong notion of „We" and aprioristic exclusiveness, the later leave much more space for inclusive and continuously transforming nature of identity. Of course, much depends on contextual factors: if some identity is in fact threatened, their aggressive mood will only accelerate, while in the case of a liberal positioning of identity, the emphasis might turn away from its pluralisation toward homogenization. The European Union has been, historically speaking, quite successful in stifling aggressive expressions of national identity, which could lead to the pre-war mentality. It was, however, less successful in introducing alternatives to national identity in the form of a European identity. Most probably, having in mind how long it took national identity to arrive at its present historical station, we should be more patient – historically informed in this regard.

All too often, national identities are not taken enough as seriously as they should be. In a condensed definition, national identity is an individual and group sense of belonging to a larger, national community (Miller 2000: 27–33). Any identity – and national identity in particular – embodies historical (trans-generational) continuity; in this sense, it is neither more nor less sociologically recognizable as an active identity. Another relevant aspect lies in the fact that it connects a distinct group of people to a particular geographical place. This link is considered by the members of the ethnic group as „objective" fact, which pre-empts any considerations that they merely happen to be thrown together in one, usually „sacred," place by mere chance or contingency. National identities arguably embody elements of myth and this fact alone needs further elaboration of its not merely symbolical weight. Much more attention should be paid to, on the other hand, how such symbols perform real and not only imagined power, which fulfils manifold valuable social functions. In this regard, much attention has been focused on ethnic and civic constituents of national identity. All too often in this area, one witnesses openly

biased assumptions subscribing to the notion that „Western" national identities represent a civic alternative to exclusively ethnically constructed national identities in the „Eastern" case. It is, however, quite clear, as Kaufmann (2008: 468) has argued, that the histories of France, Ireland or the United States, even at first sight, prove that these countries have equally so experienced both organic and voluntarist choices.

Far from such views, Smith (1998: 215) points to those new and powerful social innovations that offer different perspectives on ethnicity and identities. The effects of information technology are much more variable in comparison to what the advocates of rigid cultural globalization are arguing. Information technology, and particularly the electronic media, introduces old ethnic identities and facilitates the re-imagining of new ones. Even if the nation-state is really in decline, the revival of ethnic and other identities is likely to happen. Ethnic and individual identification essentially responds to certain collective needs, which start to play an even more important role in complex societies. Politically revived ethno-national movements respond to deep-seated identity needs pertinent to today's complex societies. What we are witnessing already is thus not the transcendence of ethnicity but the revitalisation of ethnic ties and their accompanying identities. This is quite a logical process, if we assume that, as Anthony Giddens has argued a long time ago, the global and the local feed off each other.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
[2] Bauman, Z. (2001) *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
[3] Bauman, Z. (2007) *Liquid Times – Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
[4] Beck, U. (2005) *Power in the Global Age*, Cambridge: Polity.
[5] Beiner, R. ed., (1999) *Theorizing Nationalism*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
[6] Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
[7] Day, G. and Thompson, A. (2004) *Theorizing Nationalism*, New York: Palgrave.
[8] Delanty, G. and Rumford, C. (2005) *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization*, Oxon: Routledge.
[9] Gilbert, P. (1998) *The Philosophy of Nationalism*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
[10] Guibernau, M. and Hutchinson, J. (2001) *Understanding Nationalism*, Cambridge: Polity.
[11] Hechter, M. (2000) *Containing Nationalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[12] Held, D. (2000) *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, Politics*, London and New York: Routledge and The Open University.
[13] Held, D. and McGrew, A. (eds.) (2003) *The Global Transformations Reader – An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, Cambridge: Polity.

[14] Held, D. and McGrew, A. (2007) *Globalization Theory – Approaches and Controversies*, Cambridge: Polity.

[15] Hutchinson, J. (2005) *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

[16] Kaufmann, E. (2008) „The Lenses of Nationhood: An Optical Model of Identity", *Nations and Nationalism* 14, 3: 449–477.

[17] Miller, D. (2000) *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

[18] Prazniak, R. and Dirlik, A. (2001) *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*,

[19] Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

[20] Rizman, Rudi (2008) *Globalizacija in avtonomija – Prispevki za sociologijo globalizacije,* Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta UL.

[21] Sasken, S. (2007) *A Sociology of Globalization*, New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.

[22] Scholte, J. A. (2005) *Globalization – An Introduction*, New York: Palgrave.

[23] Smith, A. (1998) *Nationalism and Modernism – A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London and New York: Routledge.

[24] Smith, A. D. (2001) *Nationalism – Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge: Polity.

[25] Touraine, A. (2007) *A New Paradigm for Understanding Today's World*, Cambridge: Polity.

[26] Urry, J. (2003) *Global Complexity*, Cambridge: Polity.