Revisiting the question of institutional design in ethnically divided societies through the lens of minority education

Comparative perspectives from Europe’s Eastern periphery

Anna Kyriazi

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

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Abstract

This thesis puts in a new light the old problem of institutional design for ethnically divided societies. The lens through which I examine this question is mass education, a key mechanism of cultural reproduction and ethno-national homogenization. In doing so I integrate the insights of various intellectual traditions, including the most recent developments in the field of comparative ethnicity and nationalism, as well as neoinstitutional analysis. The logic and method of the thesis is comparative, based on case studies from Europe’s Eastern periphery. It draws its evidence from a variety of sources, including interview material and the related historiography. I begin by delineating the general research problem, reviewing the existing theoretical and empirical literature, and outlining the place of my study in it. A historical and contemporary examination of the basic demographic and policy frameworks in East-Central Europe follows, with the aim of familiarizing the reader with the overall factual context within which the thesis is framed. This leads to the discussion of the comparative logic adopted and the overall methodological approach. The next three analytical chapters interrogate a different sub-question each, based on the contrasting assessment of a pair of carefully selected cases. Despite their differences in substance, approach, and design, these analyses jointly advance the understanding of the drivers of institutional choice and change in ethnically divided societies. But they also go beyond that in their explorations of the ways culture, identity and politics interlink more generally.

More specifically, the first analytical chapter, Chapter 4, presents the detailed examination of the evolution of interethnic relations in Bulgaria and Romania. It traces the socio-historical process of how minorities have been forged from formerly dominant populations (Turks and Hungarians, respectively) via the
interplay of purposeful nationalizing policies and spontaneous social dynamics, linking this process to the institutional configurations that prevail today. Chapter 5 further elaborates on the role of history and time, exploring the connection between various modalities of “groupness” and the institutional landscape. Specifically, comparing the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia and the Hungarians in Romania, the chapter investigates the variable ways non-dominant social categories may come to feel attached to “their” institutions constructing notions of fairness and/or collective identities around them, and how these processes may underlie ethnicized conflict. By highlighting the role of institutions, both as mechanisms contributing to the construction of collective identities, as well as objects in interethnic contestation, the chapter offers an innovative take on how ethnic identity and institutions interlink. Finally, Chapter 6 directs attention from the past towards present preoccupations and future prospects, by mapping minorities’ education-related preferences, and explaining what drives their formation. The chapter returns to the pair of the Turks in Bulgaria and the Hungarians in Romania and demonstrates that preferences – as articulated by strategically positioned individuals – are highly context-dependent and that they largely depend on three factors: majority opinion, minority political representation and the appeal of migration as a normative path to upward social mobility.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates how constructivist theorizing and empirical analysis can be combined in moving beyond the assumption of clearly defined ethnic groups with clear-cut identities and interests. In doing so, the thesis advocates an institutionalist approach to ethnicity and nationalism as a way to problematize “groupness” and endogenize institutions to identity projects. The thesis also shows how history matters, by paying close attention to timing and temporal order and by connecting the passage of time with the creation of collective attachments to institutions. Finally, the thesis explicitly adopts the viewpoint of the non-dominant social categories as a corrective to the idea that the management of diversity depends overwhelmingly on the majority population, government or state.
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List of abbreviations

**BANU**: Bulgarian Agrarian National Union

**CoE**: Council of Europe

**DAHR**: Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania

**ECE**: East-Central Europe

**ECHR**: European Commission of Human Rights

**EU**: European Union

**FCNM**: Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

**MRF**: Movement for Rights and Freedoms

**NATO**: North-Atlantic Treaty Organization

**OECD**: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**USSR**: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Chapter 1
Education in divided societies

A set of dilemmas confronts the individuals and groups wishing to manage “difference” as well as the individuals and groups that are marked off as “different” – trade-offs between assimilation and inferiority (Hobsbawm 1975: 97), diversity and community (Putnam 2007), equality and difference (Koopmans 2010). While such stark contrasts oversimplify the complexity of social and political reality, they also suggest that, at the end of the day, the institutional arrangements available to both the governing and the governed are limited. One wonders, however, whether these are indeed the only available options and, if so, what is it that pushes to one end rather than the other? Or, to cast the question in more technical terms: What drives institutional design in divided societies? This is the problem that will be driving my research.

In using the term “institutional design” I follow a large body of work engaged variably in issues of democracy and democratization (Lijphart 1968; 2004; Saideman et al. 2016), autonomy, self-governance and federalism (Hale 2004A; Weller and Wolff 2005), peace-building after ethnicized violence and civil war (Noel 2005; Roeder and Rothchild 2005; Simonsen 2005) and voting behavior and ethnic parties (Chandra 2005; Fraenkel and Grofman 2006) – among many others. My understanding of the institutional arrangements is, as I also explain below, explicitly sociological. I define institutional design as the variable degree of the institutionalization of particularistic identities in the state structure and examine its various configurations across time and space. I seek to map these patterns without putting unwarranted emphasis on ethnic or national identification as a causal variable; to pinpoint and emphasize, that is, in which cases particularistic identities do shape outcomes, but also to highlight when they do not, and what other key explanations can be offered in their place.
The “laboratory” where I take my extensive case studies from is Europe's Eastern periphery, a geographical area where “diversity dilemmas” (Jackson Preece 1997) have been and continue to be of particular political relevance. The specific cases I scrutinize in depth are the education of the Hungarian minority in Romania, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia. This is not to say that interethnic relations in this region are somehow incommensurate with those in other parts of the world. Yet, regionally confined analysis is not only methodologically rewarding but also, as I hope to show, theoretically fruitful, and substantively important.

Further, I focus on minority education as a key field where the question of institutional design and, through its prism, the interconnection of identity, culture and politics, can be examined. Contestation around education-related issues in ethnically divided societies is ubiquitous. Which language should be used in instruction, what should be the content of curricula, and whether schooling should be physically separated along ethno-cultural lines are questions often subject to passionate debate, both within and outside of the academy. This lends the study of education in ethnically divided societies a social and intellectual relevance that invites scholarly engagement. While I treat education as a strategically positioned field in cultural reproduction, I do not see a major disjunction between the educational and other policy fields. Thus, I see the former as a point of entry to the wider problem of institutional design, i.e. as an indicator reflecting the overall state of the institutionalization of particularistic identities and interethnic relations.

Studies across the various social science sub-fields – some of which I already cited above, some of which I will discuss later in this introduction – have made important inroads into this problem. Of particular relevance to this thesis are the latest developments in the field of comparative ethnicity and nationalism (in the spirit of the work of Rogers Brubaker, Kanchan Chandra, David Laitin and others), in combination with the insights of the new institutionalism in sociology (Hall and Taylor 1996; Peters 2011; Powel and DiMaggio 2012[1991]), that provide a
perspective on institutions as not only constraining human action, but as being constitutive of it. Building on and expanding on these insights, the thesis demonstrates that institutional configurations and identity projects are co-constitutive and, to a large extent, socially and historically contingent. Another important contribution of the thesis is that it places in the center of the analysis the minorities, analyzing their preferences and behavior, and treating them as active agents as opposed to simple recipients of state policy. Finally, the thesis also sheds light to the role of ethnicity and nationalism in the East-Central European (ECE) context, by demonstrating that institutional and policy change is rooted primarily in domestic arenas, opposing arguments of externally-driven change (e.g. Kelley 2004; Schimmelpennig and Sedelmeier 2005A; 2005B).

The analytical logic of the thesis is comparative. Following the overview of the research problem, the discussion of the state-of-the art and the place of this study in it, a general survey of the historical evolution of minority-majority relations as well as the various contemporary policies of minority protection in ECE follows (Chapter 2) that sets the stage for three analytical chapters. Each of these presents a paired evaluation of two carefully selected cases: the education of Hungarians in Romania and Turks in Bulgaria (Chapter 4 and Chapter 6) and Hungarians in Romania and Russian-speakers in Estonia (Chapter 5). Although the chapters speak to the same broad theoretical problem they engage with diverse aspects of the existing literature and explore separate sub-questions. They can therefore be read separately as stand-alone pieces.

The evidence for my analyses has been extracted from a variety of sources, including a thorough review of the existing literature, from historiographical work, and in-depth interviews that I conducted with individuals involved in minority educational and cultural affairs in the countries of interest. Chapter 3 discusses the logic of case-selection and the methodology of the thesis, though each analytical chapter also contains brief methodological notes.
Beyond the myth of neutrality

Until fairly recently, theorizing on ethnic relations saw the state as impartial – a neutral terrain where various groups engaged in struggles over interests and objectives. Specifically with regard to liberal democracies, it was argued that these rested on the firm decoupling of particularistic identities from the state, which was considered “neutral with reference to language, history, literature, and calendar” (Walzer 1992: 100-1). In another version of this argument, the principle of neutrality pertained only to “civic” nations, distinguishing them from less tolerant and more exclusionary “ethnic” alternatives (Ignatieff 1993). More recently, this claim has been rejected in all its variants, and the myth of neutrality exposed. It has been shown that the state is not a level playing field, but that exactly the opposite is true. That typically one ethnic category (or perhaps more, but never all ethnicities) captures the state and its apparatus (Wimmer 2002), engaging in the promotion of a particular language and the cultivation of a sense of membership in a particular community (Kymlicka 2000: 185). What has obscured, and continues to obscure, the existence of such ethnic favoritism is the principle of nationalism, which tends to unmark and naturalize the particularistic character of the dominant social category, and registers as “different” and “ethnic” only the non-dominant one(s) (Eriksen 2010: 5). Similarly, the nationalism of established nation states has the privilege of invisibility and taken-for-grantedness (Billig 1995; see also: Calhoun 1997; Fox 2017), i.e. it remains unseen, despite it being pervasive.

1 Typologies of nations and nationalism abound (e.g. Heyes 1931[1955]; L. Snyder 1954; Breuilly 1993[1982]). Among these, the distinction between “Staatsnation” and “Kulturnation” (Meinecke ([1908] 1970) or “Western” and “Eastern” nationalism (H Kohn 1946), in particular, continues to be influential both within and without academic circles, though it has become somewhat obsolete (Brubaker 1999). Within-region typologies have also been developed, see e.g.: Sugar (1969) for Eastern Europe. I discuss some aspects of such classifications in Chapter 2.

2 The marked/unmarked distinction comes from semiotics, and has been usefully extended to the analysis of ethnic relations (e.g. by Brubaker et al. 2006). Essentially, the concept captures the asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between two oppositional poles, among which one is dominant and the other is subordinate, including, for example male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black, and where the former constitute the unmarked or “default” categories (Waugh 1982).
Difference, in turn, is implicated in the production and reproduction of unequal social relations via a range of political, economic, social, and cultural mechanisms. This imbalance is particularly striking in the case of language, made central to public life by the rise of the modern, bureaucratically organized state (Brubaker 2015). Namely, while it is, in principle, possible for the state to approach neutrality with respect to religion, for instance, this prospect is far more remote with regard to language, which is the driver of social interaction and political organization (Bauböck 2002: 175–176). Linguistic repertoires, therefore, constitute crucial determinants of people’s life chances, comprising a key form of cultural capital, a focal point of individual and collective identity, and, consequently, a key area of political contestation (Brubaker 2015).

**Minority education and the question of institutional design**

The most important social mechanism that creates and sustains the profoundly “languaged” nature of public culture is mass education. Unsurprisingly, then, when we talk about ethnic diversity very often we almost immediately find ourselves talking about education. To be sure, education, in general and in all contexts, constitutes an important dimension of social life and political contestation: it is an issue on which all political actors have to position themselves; it is an institution that all individuals in advanced industrial societies come into contact with at one point or another. But specialists and ordinary people alike tend to understand very well the vital importance of schooling particularly in ethnically diverse societies. In such contexts education not only reproduces the class structure of society (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990[1977]; Bourdieu 1993; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993),

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3 I employ a narrow conception of “institutions”, which refers to formal organizational mechanisms designed to resolve life problems (as opposed to, for example, a set of norms or regularized behaviors) (Pierson 2000a; see also: Cornell 1996: 271; Jenkins 2008b: Chapter 13).

4 Mass education reproduces inequalities through a multitude of mechanisms (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). In this thesis I am interested in hierarchies that may arise not within the same linguistic and/or ethnic category, but between two (or more) such categories.
but also its segmentation along ethnic lines. In this thesis I am interested in hierarchies that may arise not within the same linguistic and/or ethnic category, but between two (or more) such categories.

At this point it is worth unpacking the mechanisms through which mass education contributes to socio-cultural production and reproduction. This happens largely through two channels, content and form. Clearly, what students learn, i.e. the curricular message and the linguistic medium of education, shapes their sense of belonging to a specific community in a variety of ways. However, where this learning occurs is perhaps even more important as schools by serving as the sites of socialization and by shaping the people's contact probabilities (Brubaker et al. 2006: 269-277). Therefore, while children often acquire a basic competence in a minority language and an inventory of cultural references and practices within the circle of the family and through participation in other forms of organizational life, nonetheless, without comprehensive minority-language schooling, the full reproduction of ethnic segmentation and the durable intergenerational transmission of the markers of minority ethnicity is, sociologically speaking, impossible (Brubaker 2015: 10).

Thusly, Educational systems play a key role in institutionalizing “diversity” transforming it into “division”, by channeling social interaction and by conveying cultural content. The difference between the two terms is subtle, but important. Namely, while both “diversity” and “division” are used to convey a sense of ethnicized heterogeneity within a given political or social unit (along with a plethora of other analytical concepts, such as social distance, classification or categorization, boundary-drawing, “othering” and so on), only the latter describes situations where ethnic cleavages or segments have become socially consequential, politically salient and institutionally entrenched.

This brings me to the question of institutional design. This term usually refers to the sum of legal instruments, policy frameworks and institutional structures that are put in place to channel political conflict and social interaction in ethnically
segmented societies (Lijphart 1968). As I further discuss below, there is immense variation across time and space in the institutional design put in place from one case to another, ranging from the complete administrative and/or physical eradication of (ethnic, national, cultural, etc.) difference to public recognition and the institutionalization of difference in all spheres of life, e.g. in the form of ethno-federalism. From these examples it becomes obvious that the theoretical and/or empirical treatment of the varieties of institutional design for societies structured by ethnic cleavages cannot avoid confronting the problem of separation along those particularistic identities that, in one way or another, gain relevance in the political process.5

From a normative viewpoint, multiculturalist philosophers writing in the spirit of the work of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka have maintained that cultural recognition is an important right, and therefore minority groups should be accorded cultural rights, including, in some cases, collective autonomy (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995). Given that this right can only be exercised in an ethno-culturally separated manner, many have criticized this solution as being ultimately damaging, because it undermines social cohesion and solidarity. As Brian Barry put it in his caustic critique of multiculturalism “a situation where groups live in parallel universes is not one well calculated to advance mutual understanding or encourage

5 Arend Lijphart (1968) describes how almost complete institutional duplication, i.e. pillarization, works in the Netherlands, linking this configuration to democratic stability, more generally. The first articulation of the theory of parallel institutional structures, however, dates further back in time, to the study of colonial polities (Furnivall 1948; Van den Berghe 1967; Schermerhorn 1978), and describes the almost hermetrical separation of social categories along ethno-racial lines. Another way to think about patterns of separate social organization is in terms of the ethnic enclave, which comes from the study of immigrant communities in the United States and elsewhere (for a landmark study, see: Breton 1964; for a more recent review, see: Waldinger 1993). Common to these studies is their focus on institutional duplication as a crucial factor in social reproduction that explains, among other things, the persistence of racial hierarchies, the absence of intergenerational assimilation, and so forth.
the cultivation of habits of co-operation or sentiments of trust” (Barry 2001: 88; for a similar point, see also: Callann 1997).6

Normative considerations aside, it appears that democratic states that are willing or obliged to manage diversity may choose between two types of public policies: integration of all citizens into shared national institutions, or accommodation through separate minority institutions (McGarry et al. 2008). The question that immediately arises from this bipolar split is what it is that drives states to one option rather than another. McGarry and collaborators – from whom I have borrowed this distinction, in the first place – claim that “nation-states are, by disposition, integrationist or accommodationist” (p. 87). But it remains unclear what this disposition actually entails. Are institutional arrangements the products of national identities, conceptions of citizenship, or different philosophies of dealing with diversity (Brubaker 1992A; Favell 2001)? Are they driven by the recourses and opportunities available to minorities for collective mobilization (Stroschein 2012) and/or the possibility and nature of elite-level bargains (Lijphart 1968; Kiss and Székely 2016)? Or do they come from outside the domestic contexts altogether, mirroring a large-scale global paradigm-shift towards minority-friendly accommodative arrangements (Kymlicka 2006), which powerful external actors have diffused to ECE, through the mechanisms of emulation and coercion (Kelley 2004)?

While these works typically engage with overarching institutional architectures, I limit my discussion specifically to public education. To repeat, the dependent variable of interest in this thesis is the way that ethno-national difference is imprinted in the national systems of education in states, where social divisions along ethnic lines (ethnic cleavages) have been made salient and consequential. And the

6 Note, however, that much of the debate on separate versus common institutions originates from the United States, where the legacy of segregation as a form of institutionalized racism still functions as a powerful reference.
question is: what explains the different modalities of the institutionalization of ethnicity in the field of education across the different contexts?

Before getting into the various explanations offered to this problem, it may be useful to provide a systematic classification of possible institutional configurations at hand, which include the aforementioned integration/accommodation binary, but which also go beyond it (summarized in Table 1). While, as will become evident in a moment, these arrangements are atypical as a conscious choice for democracies today, they nevertheless still exist, or have existed in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical environment</th>
<th>Outcome of education</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To set up my typology I cross-tabulate two dimensions on the basis of the distinction I discussed earlier between content and form: what is taught and to whom. The what (horizontal axis) concerns the degree to which ethnocentric content is included in curricula, and whether classes are held in the mother tongue. Along these lines, the aim of education can be either to assign uniform outcomes to all students, i.e. in principle everyone learns and knows the same, or to assign

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7 At this point it may be of interest to note that similar typologies are frequent in the related literature, and are used to systematically analyse the various models or regimes of belonging that may prevail in different societies. Aktürk (2012) provides a typology of nationhood along the axis of membership and expression, which yields three distinct “regimes of ethnicity”: monoethnic, multi-ethnic and antiethnic. Similarly, Mylonas (2013) distinguishes between the politics of assimilation, accommodation and exclusion. In another influential typology Koopmans et al. (2005) differentiate between not three but four state-strategies, by cross-tabulating cultural group rights granted to minorities with the formal criteria for access to citizenship to arrive to assimilationism, segregationism, multiculturalism, and universalism.

8 In this I follow the useful conceptual distinctions made by Callann 1997: Chapter 7.

9 The terminology is from Cole 2006.
different outcomes to specific student categories (in this case students of an ethno-culturally “different” background). The whom dimension (vertical axis) is about physical space: whether schools reproduce, in their student body, all the cleavages of society, or weather they select only one.

This typology yields one equivocally undesirable result: segregation. The imposition of physical separation on the basis of ethnicity, nationality or “race” constitutes a clear case of injustice, and one that is rarely defended today. The typical example for this arrangement is the institutionalization of racism under the banner of the “Separate but equal” doctrine in the U.S. before the Civil Rights movement. On the opposite side of barring entry to common institutions is obligatory participation in institutions unresponsive to the special needs of minority students, which may arise from differences in linguistic competence, cultural traditions, and religious calendar, among other things. Assimilation constitutes the path of eradicating exactly this difference: it is based on the integration of all students into a single institutional framework, regardless of ethnic background, i.e. an integrative physical space and standardized content. The expectation in this case is that the educational process will produce a uniform outcome for all. The typical case that falls within the category of assimilation is the historical formation of nations – the forging of Frenchmen out of peasants (E. Weber 1976), for example.

Nowadays, it is generally believed that one-size-fits-all assimilation is an anachronism, and that educational arrangements have to be made more responsive to students’ needs, showing respect for private preferences and cultural diversity. Moving away from assimilation towards such a tolerant ideal takes me to the third ideal-typical institutional solution: integration. This is an effort to make schools more welcoming to difference by, say, incorporating the histories and perspectives of minorities into school curricula, adjusting calendars and celebrations to diverse backgrounds, providing mother-tongue classes or classes in the mother tongue, to name only a few of the numerous ways this can be achieved. While integrated education expects minorities and majorities to meet half way, given the inherent
asymmetry of minority-majority relations, integration, in practice, amounts to a less coercive form of assimilation\(^\text{10}\). Of course, people of minority backgrounds may find this invitation to blend into the majority society more than desirable, and indeed, well suited for their long-term goals of social mobility, for instance.

Finally, *accommodation* is based on the physical separation of students along ethnic lines, but not as an unjustly imposed measure like segregation, rather, because it fulfills the – purported – desires of a minority category, typically but not only a large, territorialized group with a relatively long historical presence in their traditional place of residence, and as a sign of respect for the specific needs and rights arising from the social reality of ethnic difference. This arrangement is based on the duplication of institutions along ethno-cultural lines, which Arend Lijphart has called *pillarization*. Examples include the granting of territorial and/or cultural autonomy for minority nations such as the Catalans in Spain or the Hungarians in Romania.

It should be noted that in this framework a fine line distinguishes assimilation from integration (both occurring in a physically integrated space) as well as segregation and assimilation (both assigning uniform outcomes to students). Moreover, all of the three arrangements are actually compatible with the aims of nationalizing states: homogenization and/or exclusion. This leaves accommodation as the theoretically most interesting configuration: it is not homogenizing like assimilation and to a lesser extent integration, given the physical separation segmentation and it is not exclusionary like segregation given that the lawmaker’s intention is benevolent. Accommodation, therefore, constitutes a higher order demand than integration, for it seeks to entrench in the institutional structure of the state the markers of a non-

\(^{10}\) The political idea underlying this institutional solution is often termed interculturalism. Multiculturalism’s aspiring corrective – as far as it is not just a restatement of what multiculturalism already stands for – describes, in essence, a more tolerant and perhaps more respectful variant of assimilation and not an alternative to it, in that it foregrounds the intergenerational absorption of “difference” into the mainstream – even if the process is less coercive and the receiving society and culture is also somewhat altered as a result (see the helpful discussion of Meer and Modood 2012 and Kymlicka’s 2012 comment on it).
dominant identity category in a way that integration does not. Put it differently, accommodation makes the incongruence between the imagined community of nation and the administrative unit of the state more evident from the point of the majorities, while at the same time ensures that minority students experience their ethnicity as natural and unmarked (Brubaker et al. 2006). Therefore, this institutional arrangement constitutes the most contentious choice, opposed and defended vehemently both within and without the academy (for a useful overview, see: Banting and Kymlicka 2004).

Research questions and expectations

This typology maps out the different options available to state officials, the demands that minorities can advance, and the institutional arrangements they can make use of. It also suggests the social dynamics associated with each of these options, between intergenerational assimilation to the majority society as opposed to the reproduction of segmentation along ethno-national and/or ethno-cultural lines. To make sense of what drives to one option rather than the other, each analytical chapter singles out and examines one facet of this complex problem answering a separate sub-question, as follows:

1. What are the historical origins of the institutional design?
   My aim in the first empirical chapter (Chapter 3) is to identify the theoretically relevant macro-historical processes and the long-term patterns of the development of the institutionalization of ethnic and national identities. The chapter presents a comprehensive historical comparative analysis showing that, once established, educational institutions exert strong pressures towards perpetuating the status quo.

2. How do collective identities and/or senses of “groupness” shape (conflict over) the institutional design?
Chapter 4 zooms into a specific modality of institutional reproduction, exploring the link between institutions as both objects of interethnic conflict and loci of collective identity-formation contestation. This chapter aims to refine our understanding of how collective identities are formed, whether they can influence the institutional design and, if yes, how.

3. What are minorities’ policy preferences, as articulated by strategically positioned actors, and how do they relate to the institutional arrangements?

The third analysis presented in Chapter 5 further develops the idea that minority collective identities and aspirations for cultural flourishing are an important yet limited determinant of the institutional design. Instead of presupposing that certain social categories (territorialized ethno-cultural minority groups) prefer accommodation to integration, I demonstrate the complexity of the options and perceptions, linking them to the variable institutional configurations.

Outlining a research agenda

In this thesis I build on and expand various distinct, but interrelated branches of literature, including the minority rights scholarship, the sociology on nationalism and ethnicity, the literature on nation-building and institutional design, but also on ethnic politics more generally. In what follows, I outline some of the relevant findings and approaches in these sub-fields, signaling what I draw inspiration from but also in what ways I aim to advance the agenda. Specifically, I see two main ways to extend these insights. The first is to ground the analysis firmly in the social and historical contexts in which ethnic politics and policy-making unfold in an effort to outline an analytical roadmap that reflects on the complexity of experience. The second, which is related to the first, is to focus explicitly on institutional processes and the ways identities as well as all sorts of factors not only shape but also are shaped by these processes, which includes going beyond formal policy analysis and
coordinated identity projects to examining how spontaneous social dynamics unfold on the ground.

**Focusing on processes and dynamics**

“For numerous reasons - such as the degree and nature of the power exercised by political elites and the resistance they encounter - states vary in the intensity of their homogenizing efforts.” – writes Katherine Verdery (1994: 46), expressing perhaps the most characteristic way diversity management has been analyzed: in terms of majority homogenizing projects and minority resistance or, put somewhat differently, as a “dialectic” between majority and minority identity projects (Kymlicka 2001). Furthermore, given that the majority has the power to impose its will by defining when minorities can become like “us” or should remain “others” a substantial part of these works has revolved around majority projects and official policies - variably, on the level of society, government, or the state - seeking to understand what makes the “owners of the state” more or less generous and/or tolerant (May 2012: 175-6).

A particularly influential work in this tradition is Brubaker’s *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (1992A), which traced minority rights and restrictions to definitions of citizenship, based variably on blood and descent (in Germany) and on territoriality (in France). In the spirit of Brubaker’s and other’s work various explanations have been offered for institutional and policy outcomes on the basis of majorities’ collective self-understandings (Koopmans et al. 2005) or the prevailing philosophies of integration (Favell 2001). Analyses more fine-tuned to politics have also focused on the power-struggles and the discourses between the different groups of majority political elites (Aktürk 2012). Similarly, works examining the role of the EU and international actors in bringing about policy change in the field of minority rights protection in ECE focus on post-communist governments and states as the relevant objects for investigation (e.g. Kelley 2004; Rechel 2009; Agarin and Cordell 2016) as do works that examine the same topic from an international relations perspective (Mylonas 2013).
The focus on majority states and governments at times obscures the complexity of the role played by minorities, often featuring as the passive recipients of these policies. For instance, in their examination of institutional design for ethnically diverse societies McGarry et al. (2008: 87) posit that “nation-states are, by disposition, integrationist or accommodationist”, treating minorities as a social fact, whose size and origin (“objective” characteristics) predict their collective preferences and behavior. According to the authors, minorities are weak if they are dispersed and/or “grateful” (i.e. constituted by immigration) in which case they will be integrated/assimilated in state institutions; in case minorities are, conversely, strong, i.e. large and territorially concentrated, the state is forced to enact accommodation “by necessity” (p. 88). This study reflects a general tendency to set up typologies of minority groups and to connect these to different minority rights-claims and policies (see e.g. the influential distinction between national minorities, indigenous people and immigrants advocated by Will Kymlicka 2007; see also: May 2012: 13 on the distinction between ethnic and national minorities to be discussed also later in this introduction).

Of course, ethnic demography and the sociological characteristics of a minority group, including the way it has been constituted, have considerable analytical purchase and socio-political significance (e.g. Posner 2004). Yet, it should be acknowledged that, first, what appear to be objective demographic facts are to a large extent socially constructed and changeable over time (Loveman 2009; 2014; Nagel 1995; Nobles 2000) and that, second, categorizations reduce the complexity of social experience while also contributing to the production of hierarchies of rights (and therefore of social categories), which in turn are embedded in the prevailing structures of authority and power (Jenkins 1994). Significant inroads have been made to shift focus away from such “objective” characteristics and to abandon the assumptions about the even and constant relevance of collective identities and cultural frames of reference, treating the latter as an empirical matter (Benhabib 2002; Modood 2013[2007]; Phillips 2007). In this thesis I build on and simultaneously expand this literature by exploring how ethno-demographic
landscapes and various modalities of groupness, among which collective ethnic/national identity is only one, relate to the institutional design.

Further, the aforementioned emphasis on states, governments and policies also imputes unwarranted intentionality into outcomes that may just as well be shaped by spontaneous social dynamics rather than by conscious design (Brubaker 2009B). An important research tradition stresses the unplanned character of national integration as a by-product of large-scale structural changes such as industrialization and modernization (Anderson 1983; Bendix 1977; Deutsch 1966). Sociological work on assimilation and the “modes of incorporation” likewise focuses on social dynamics beyond the scope of state intervention. It has shown, among others, that incorporation into the “mainstream” is the function of individuals’ social relations and associational patterns. Work done on institutions and ethnic communities (Breton 1964), social segmentation (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Zhou 1993), the niche and dual economy (Logan and Alba 1999), and the immigrant enclave (Wilson and Portes 1980) powerfully demonstrates how social segments form spontaneously, and may persist nested en bloc within the majority society.

Another way to think about unplanned outcomes is in terms of incentive structures and the aggregate effect of myriads of individual choices. Turning back to the example of segregation, for instance, Thomas Schelling has convincingly demonstrated that this particular pattern can be the result of “micro-motives” and “macro-behavior”, even if it is deemed undesirable and it is banned as a legal practice (2002[1978]: Chapter 4). A large literature examines what drives these processes – how and why “similarity breeds connection” – with a special emphasis on ethnic homophily (McPherson et al. 2001). In a similar vein, the work of Laitin (1998; 2003) also directs attention away from government action and towards the underlying processes that structure minorities’ incentives to adopt (or not) majority cultural practices. Finally, it has been also argued that spontaneous social dynamics, though not entirely independent from political design, may follow their own internal
logic, producing outcomes that go beyond the intentions and calculations of any involved actor (Brubaker 2009B). Therefore, while official state policies and majorities’ projects for inclusion and exclusion constitute an important causal force, they are, nonetheless, not without limitations. To put it starkly: sometimes, institutional arrangements fall upon us in unexpected and unforeseeable ways.

**The merits of socio-institutional analysis**

There already exists a branch of literature that is equipped with a rich analytical toolkit making it particularly well placed to capture processes of institutional reproduction and change: the “new” institutionalism in sociology (March and Olsen 1984; Hall and Taylor 1996; Immergut 1998; Peters 2011; Powel and DiMaggio 2012). The insights of this literature, however, have not as yet been sufficiently incorporated into theorizing about minority rights and ethnic politics. These inform us, among other things, that institutions are not simply the contexts where social action occurs, but that they are constitutive of it, and also that institutions are not independent from but endogenous to a variety of outcomes, including interests, identities, and ideas (for the theoretical point, see: Chandra 2001; for empirical demonstrations, see: e.g. Brubaker 1994; Roeder 2007).

One way to go beyond these limitations is to examine how ethnicity, and social identities more generally, link to and arise from within institutional and historically shaped contexts. Along these lines, institutional analysis has been progressively incorporated into constructivist theorizing about ethnicity in recent years. The ways people perceive not only their interests but also themselves are, it is argued, inextricably linked to the surrounding institutional landscapes. These are, for instance, instrumental in allowing people across wide social and geographical spaces to develop and maintain meaningful social ties (Breuilly 1996: 150-1). Further, work on ethnicity and institutions has identified a range of mechanisms by

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11 The terms “institutional design” and “diversity management” signal exactly this intentionality and purposefulness. I adopt them here with the aforementioned caveats in mind, chiefly in order to be congruent with the convention established in the field.
which the latter are capable of structuring ethnic cleavages (Posner 2005); how official statistics and censuses not only contribute to the construction of the categories of people they are meant merely to describe (Loveman 2009; 2014) but also increase the likelihood of ethnicized conflict and violence (Lieberman and Singh 2017); and the ways by which institutions may aggravate or attenuate social conflict, lowering or increasing the likelihood of violence (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Varshney 2001). Bringing in the insights of this literature also goes a long way in explaining the striking resilience of the institutional design.

It is therefore important to take account of the effects of already existing institutions in shaping social agents’ conceptions about the feasibility and/or appropriateness of specific types of arrangements, and in driving their actions. The aim, of course, is not the wholesale eradication of agency from the analysis. But it is imperative to recognize the role of impersonal social mechanisms instead of simply juxtaposing majority homogenizing projects to minority resistance: majorities necessarily homogenizing, minorities necessarily resisting. It is important to recognize, that is, that, having been established at one point in time and under very specific circumstances, institutions may develop in unanticipated ways, bringing about a variety of unplanned outcomes (Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000B).

**Taking history seriously**

Another way to build on and expand the existing approaches is by emphasizing the role of time and historicity. Of course, the importance of past relations between minorities and majorities has been a central element of some of the most influential analyses in the field (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Kaufman 2001; Van Evera 1994). Historical explanations have been especially important in the ECE context, including stereotypical conceptions of purportedly “ancient animosities” and long-standing grievances, which nevertheless have hardly been considered as serious explanations in the scientific literature. The dominant historical explanations revolve either around the status reversal brought about by the reconfiguration of state-boundaries at several points in time (Kymlicka 2001; 2008; Petersen 2002) or the way the
historic politicization of national identities has occurred in direct opposition to each-other (for the general theoretical point, see: Triandafyllidou 1998; for single case studies, see for example: Eminov 1997; Petersoo 2007) or both. Indeed, Evans and Need are right to point out that past relations between the different ethnicities are likely to condition future relations between them (2002: 657). However, explaining interethnic conflict in terms of inherited antipathies is at odds at explaining how change is possible, if at all. It is, I think, also for this reason that a large literature has developed explaining post-communist change in diversity management and the adoption of minority rights frameworks in ECE in light of externally-imposed conditionality (e.g. Kelley 2004; Schimmelpennig and Sedelmeier 2005A; 2005B) – the historical circle can only be broken from the outside, so to speak.

Unlike these accounts I wish to focus on patterns of endogenous development. In doing so I offer an analysis that takes history seriously, i.e. that does not merely state that “history matters”, but that shows how the passage of time has influenced the patterns of social, political and institutional development in order to bring about the observed outcomes (see: Singh and vom Hau 2016). Methodologically, this entails an emphasis on aspects of temporality, including the order and sequence of events, the duration of processes, and the significance of timing (among others, see: Aminzade 1992; Kitschelt 2003; Mahoney 2000; 2007; Pierson 2000A; 2000B; 2004; Thelen 2000; 2003) and the careful consideration of path-dependence (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Page 2006). In this effort I build on several studies that make relative timing arguments about the causal importance of processes vis-à-vis each other. Among these is the ambitious study Ertman (1997), who explains institutional variations in state development with the relative timing of geopolitical competition and vom Hau (2008) arguing that the extent to which popular nationalism became a regular product of state organizations in Mexico and Argentina varied between the two cases, depending on the timing of state development. Kurtz’s (2013) account of long-run institutional development in Latin
America similarly emphasizes the social and political foundations of state-building processes, demonstrating the path-dependent consequences of societal dynamics.

**Narrowing down to a key institution**

Limiting the research agenda to specific policy area, i.e. education, rather than examining comprehensive approaches to diversity can also aid, I believe, our understanding of the problem of institutional choice and change. In the relevant comparative literature one finds studies that focus on state’s general approaches to diversity, comprising a complex bundle of policies and institutions (see the individual case studies in Rechel 2009; see also: Favell 2001; Mylonas 2013). Other studies focus on one key policy field (e.g. Brubaker 1992A on citizenship), or a limited number of policies (Székely and Horváth 2014 contrasting diversity recognition and minority representation across different contexts). The common assumption in all these studies is that the conclusions drawn from one or a small number of policy areas generally apply to entire diversity management frameworks – and vice versa.

In an intriguing research design choice, Aktürk (2012) combines both approaches, by examining a different strategic policy field in each of his case studies (citizenship in Germany, minority language in Turkey, and passport ethnicity in the USSR/Russia). He justifies this choice claiming that conflict over diversity takes different forms and creates different fault lines from one context to another, which makes it unproblematic, in his view, to make inferences from the findings in one policy-field about a more general approach towards ethnicity and nationhood (“regime of ethnicity”). Had I followed his approach, I would have most probably contrasted education in Romania, citizenship in Estonia and political representation in Bulgaria – an exercise that would have doubtlessly yielded interesting results. However, while I do not think it is per se unsound to extrapolate the conclusions gained in one domain to another, comparing different policies across different contexts may be problematic, given the difficulty to tell apart the effects of domain-
dependent factors shaping the different policy fields from the influence of country-specific variables.

Against this backdrop, focusing on education serves the twin purpose of standardizing the policy field under investigation across the cases, while also ensuring that the findings can be also extrapolated to entire frameworks of diversity-management. It is the centrality of public education in the state cultural machinery that allows for persuasively casting it as such an indicator. Social scientists do not need convincing that schooling is a mechanism that profoundly shapes individual and collective identities.\textsuperscript{12} Mass education in particular stands out as the most important institutional mechanism of cultural standardization and the – historic and contemporary – formation and politicization of national self-understandings. On the one hand, schools constitute spaces of everyday encounters where social networks, friendships, and romantic relationships develop. Crucially, in a fully separated minority school-system minority students are able to experience ethnicity as natural and unmarked (Brubaker et al. 2006). On the other hand, mass education is a fundamental mechanism for achieving and perpetuating the reification and homogenization of culture – of making it shared. It does so by developing children’s competence in the mother tongue, by instilling a stock of knowledge and cultural references, by offering a distinctly particularistic viewpoint of history, and by infusing a nationalist ethos (see: Brubaker et al. 2006: 270-71). In sum, education constitutes the organizational nucleus of any given “minority world” for it links to the labor market, it produces political elites and nationally-minded intelligentsias, it shapes the demand for minority press and media, and so forth (see: Brubaker et al. 2006).

“Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands.”

\textsuperscript{12} Two paradigmatic examples of studies that link the two are Gellner ([1983]2006: Chapter 3), also cited in the introduction, and E. Weber (1976: Chapter 18).
Durkheim’s (1956: 70) assessment of education as the most important instrument of social integration is as valid today as it was when he formulated it a century ago. While it is possible that collective identities may be reproduced to a certain extent privately, the intergenerational transmission of ethnic and especially national identities in modern states can only be accomplished durably and fully within the confines of a relatively stable institutional sphere (see: Brubaker et al. 2006: Chapter 9).

To briefly return to the point I made earlier, I want to leave, however, open the possibility that the different policy fields are influenced by sector-specific factors and dynamics. Research instruments that disaggregate diversity management to various indicators, such as the Multiculturalism Policy Index or the Migrant Integration Policy Index, showcase how the different diversity management policies may vary from one policy area to another within a single context as often enough countries score differently in the different policy fields. That said, the various dimensions of diversity management – such as political representation and participation, linguistic and educational rights, and territorial decentralization and autonomy – tend to co-vary.

This is the case in the three states that I focus on in this thesis, Romania, Bulgaria and Estonia. In Romania guarantees for political representation, official language status, and publicly funded Hungarian media accompany the strong institutionalization of minority ethnicity in education. In Bulgaria, conversely, minimal provisions in education combine with limited language rights and no guarantees for minority representation (with the constitution essentially banning ethnic parties). In Estonia there is a somewhat bigger mismatch between the different policy fields. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the status reversal between minorities and majorities, strong institutionalization in education combined with the virtual exclusion from the demos of a significant portion of the Russian-speaking minority. However, in the past two decades or so there has been a gradual convergence between the various policy fields there too, with rolling back
on minority education, on the one hand, and relaxing excessively exclusive citizenship legislation, on the other hand.

The choice of education rather than any other domain is also motivated by the general aspiration of this thesis to focus on patterns of social organization rather than on state-planned policies and legal frameworks. It is quite obvious that the implementation and the enforcement of laws have their limits, and that policy outcomes may be very different from what the lawmaker intended. Further, it is not only theoretically plausible, but also empirically observable that legal frameworks sometimes simply ratify already existing social conventions, rather than the other way around (for a useful overview of these limitations, see: Mylonas 2013: 190 ff.). This, again, makes it an imperative to bring the analysis of minority rights closer to the sociological reality that surrounds it (see: Brubaker 2009B).

**Further conceptual and theoretical considerations**

So far I have delineated a number of ways in which I plan to contribute to the better understanding of institutional choice and change in ethnically divided societies: by grounding my analysis firmly in the social and historical contexts; by focusing on institutional processes and endogenizing identities; and by going beyond formal policy analysis to the examination of institutional dynamics on the ground. I now want to turn to some crucial conceptual and terminological clarifications.

**Ethnicity, nationhood and the “problem of minorities”**

Rogers Brubaker begins his influential review of the literature on ethnicity, race and nationalism, by noting that while it has long been fragmented and compartmentalized along disciplinary and regional lines, more recently, a growing body of works has emerged that treats these phenomena as a single integrated
domain: as a family of forms of cultural understanding, social organization and political contestation (2009A: 22). This approach has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it focuses attention to processes of boundary-drawing and social categorization striving to go beyond the imposition of rigid labels that overly reduce the complexity of experience. On the other hand, the resulting conceptual and analytical fuzziness makes precise analytical distinctions difficult. Getting the terms right is, nonetheless, exceedingly important, not only as tools of rigorous social scientific analysis, but also because of the political and policy implications these labels may imply. For the purposes of this thesis it is, therefore, necessary to introduce some conceptual clarity regarding ethnicity, nationhood and their interrelationship.

Ethnicity is a social construction with real-life implications. It is socially constructed in that it is historically emergent and, in many respects, mutable (Laitin 1998; Chandra 2006; Eriksen 2010). It has real-life implications in that it drives people's interactions (M. Weber 2013[1922]; Barth 1969), and because it constitutes an elementary form of political expression and action (Brubaker 2009A). Further, and related to this, ethnic identity is not merely a matter of internal group identification, but it is also rooted in external processes of categorization and ascription; as such, it cannot be independently analyzed from context-specific relations of authority and power, since it is inextricably linked to them (Jenkins 1994; 2008B). For all these reasons, ethnic belonging shapes people's life-choices in

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13 I am thankful to Mariana Mendes for this formulation.
14 To put this into context, it is important to note that while post-Barthian theorizing on ethnicity has largely dispensed with the idea that ethnicity should be understood primarily in terms of a shared culture, more recently the role of the “cultural stuff” of ethnicity has been, at least partly, rehabilitated. For instance, Nagel (1994) sees culture as a crucial building block of ethnicity that creates collective meaning, constructs a community through mythology and history, and lays the symbolic foundations of collective mobilization. Moreover, not only do groups often develop attachments to a shared culture, but also these attachments are more durable than those based, for example, on shared interests (Cornell 1996). Richard Jenkins, further, asserts that it is the cultural content of ethnicity that drives the interactions between people on opposite sides of a boundary, because cultural difference “really means something” to participants (2008A: 126, his emphasis). These studies and many others show that there are, indeed, good reasons for bringing culture back into the analysis of ethnicity and nationalism.
major ways (Chandra 2012), which also explains the ubiquitous human tendency to think in terms of macro-level identity categories, in the first place (Hale 2004B; Brubaker et al. 2004).

Ethnic ways of seeing and acting pervade people’s lives. Moreover, despite its socially constructed nature, ethnicity is as a rule perceived as ancient and unalterable, based on clearly identifiable and seemingly objective cultural and ancestral attributes. To put it somewhat simplistically, this type of taken-for-granted understanding of identity is what essentialism (or primordialism15), the oldest tradition of explanatory inquiry in the subfield of ethnicity (Varshney 2012), operates with. This tradition generally takes ethnic groups as distinct and enduring social units that developed historically out of extended kinship relations, and whose members share an array of common cultural traits as well as a strong sense of attachment to each other (Horowitz 1985; Connor 1993), and who are embedded in a web of shared symbols (Geertz 1973; A. Smith 2000).

However, while this approach captures important aspects of why ethnic identification may become so forceful socially and politically, it has been criticized on a number of grounds, including, first and foremost, the treatment of ethnicity as a relatively rigid and immutable given, rather than a malleable and flexible construct. Therefore, while the reification of ethnic groups as distinct, cohesive, and durable protagonists of social life (termed by Rogers Brubaker “groupism”16), and the understanding of ethnicity as fixed and ever-important is still very much characteristic of everyday practice17 – it has been generally abandoned as a valid

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15 Essentialism and primordialism describe somewhat different phenomena. However, both draw on a similar ontology, and tend to be criticized from the same vantage points. For this reason I treat them together in my discussion.

16 This is defined as the tendency of the study of ethnicity, nationalism and race “to treat various categories of people as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes; and to take ethnic and racial groups and nations as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.” (Brubaker 2009A: 28).

17 Even though reflexivity with regard to the social constructedness of identity categories may be on the rise in some contexts (e.g. Brubaker 2016), overall this still constitutes the exception rather than the rule.
epistemological position in social analysis (Brubaker 2009A). The claim that ethnicity does not exist as a thing in the world, and that it does not always have the same parameters but, rather, that it may harden or crystallize under certain conditions (Brubaker 2002) directs attention to exactly these contexts as the causal forces that give rise to the formation of identities, and that mediate their effect. However, while in principle, “we are all constructivists now” (Brubaker 2009A: 28), it seems that work on ethnicity – both as explanans and explanandum – has not been able to entirely surpass the inconsistencies and limitations of identity-based thinking (Chandra 2006). Among these are the problem of “groupism”, as well as the treatment of identities as exogenous to their social, economic, and political surroundings (Chandra 2001).

Turning now to nationhood, this is often treated as a variant of ethnicity (Eriksen 2010: 121 ff.). Both constitute systems of social classification, forms of cultural understanding, and political contestation (Brubaker 2009A). Unlike ethnicity, however, nationalist ideology links more directly to structures of authority and legitimacy (Özkırımlı 2010). Nationalism has been famously defined as a political principle, which holds that the imagined community of the nation and the territorial organization of the state should be congruent (Gellner [1983]2006). The specific form of the state-subject relation posited by nationalism, nevertheless, tends to take on different meanings. The two most frequently used among these are citizenship, according to which the nation is a sovereign entity based on political participation, and ethnicity, according to which the nation comprises a cultural community, i.e. all those who share an ostensibly common language, history or cultural identity (Hobsbawm 1990: 16 ff.; Verdery 1993: 38; Brubaker 2009B;). It is the latter variant that the term nationalism most often invokes (Verdery 1993). “According to most nationalist ideologies” – writes Eriksen (2010: 121) – “the political organization should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group. Conversely, the nation-state draws an important aspect of its political legitimacy from convincing the popular masses that it really represents them as a cultural unit.” (emphasis mine). Some nations developed out of ethnic communities
as these moved towards legal, political and economic unity; most nations tend to be imagined as cultural communities and/or societies of metaphoric kinship (Armstrong 1982; A. Smith 1986).

Nationhood links to social integration and homogenization. Nationalism appeals to people on the basis of some putatively shared characteristics and mutual connections. Thusly, even if nations are not always based on common ethnicity or imagined as such, states nonetheless tend to thoroughly institutionalize the markers of usually one ethnicity, while, at the same time, casting what is essentially a particularistic identity in universalist terms (Billig 1995; Kymlicka 2000; Eriksen 2010). In other words, nationalism embeds difference in a broader framework of naturalized inequalities – by representing, for instance, the language and culture of the dominant ethnic group as the civic culture of the nation state (Hobsbawm 1990). This institutionalization and the cultural standardization it engenders casts the dominance of one identity category transparent and taken for granted, marking off, at the same time, those who do not fit the criteria of belonging (Triandafyllidou 1998; S. Hall 1996). As Verdery aptly summarizes it “to institutionalize a notion of commonality is to render visible all those who fail to hold a given feature in common. Thus, by instituting homogeneity or commonality as normative, state-building renders difference sociopolitically significant.” (1993: 43). It is, therefore, within the context of the nation-states system, and only within this system, that the “problem of minorities” arises. The qualifier “national” that is used in the designation “national minority” describing the populations that exist within the political boundaries of some other nation’s state is meant to reflect exactly this interconnection (Jackson Preece 1998; 2005).

**What is a “national minority?”**

Historically, the concept of national minorities was developed in international law as a by-product of the emergence of nationalism as a political principle in order to denote (the portions of) a nation that found itself in the wrong state (Ringelheim 2010). Minority rights were the international legal instruments devised to protect
these populations from arbitrary state-power and that gained special importance in the ECE context after the disintegration of multinational empires. In its first application in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference the term “national minority” referred to “persons who belong to racial, religious, or linguistic minorities”, i.e. to as “objectively” distinct categories (Jackson Preece 1998: 15). Since then several definitions have been proposed, based variably on objective or subjective criteria or a combination of both. However, to this day there exists no consensually agreed on definition of the term, partly because of the complexity of the notion and partly because of its political import, given the power inherent in official categorization.

The label “national minority” is therefore used to denote variably a legal status, a demographic condition, or a form of political claim making. To illustrate this complexity I have summarized in Table 2 four influential definitions from various sub-fields that study “national minorities”.

Table 2 is illustrative of the various ways the definition of the term “national minorities” can be approached, on the basis of objective criteria (MAR 2008), subjective criteria (Brubaker 1993), or a combination of both (Capotorti 1977; Multiculturalism Policy Index). No definition, however, is entirely unproblematic. A focus on objective as opposed to subjective characteristics (such as possessing “ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population” or holding a “distinct national identity” or having “kindred [...] control an adjacent state”) tends to excessively reduce the complexity of empirical reality (e.g. Chandra 2006; 2001) and to conflate groups existing “as such” in anthropological categorization with groups existing “for such” as political actors (e.g. Laitin 2001, going back to the Marxian distinction “class-in-itself’ and “class-for-itself”; see also: Loveman 1999). Moreover, objective definitions do not adequately capture the political nature of labels, which are always entrapped in the power and authority relations prevailing in each context: notions of what groups of people are and deserve are often contingent, historically emergent and inextricably tied to the social structure and the politics it engenders (Jenkins 1994).
Table 2. Influential definitions of the term “national minority”

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<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Capotorti (1977)</td>
<td>“A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the state—possess ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minorities at Risk (2008)</td>
<td>“[s]egments of a trans-state people with a history of organized political autonomy whose kindred control an adjacent state, but who now constitute a minority in the state in which they reside”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism Policy Index (no date)</td>
<td>“[h]istoric sub-state groups who have a distinct national identity and who mobilize politically in pursuit of nationalist goals”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brubaker (1993)</td>
<td>“a dynamic political stance – or more precisely a family of related yet mutually competing stances – not a static ethnodemographic condition. Characteristic (though by no means exhaustive) of this political stance, or family of stances, is (1) the public claim to membership of an ethnocultural nation different from the numerically and/or politically dominant ethnocultural nation; (2) the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethnocultural nationality; and (3) the assertion, on the basis of this ethnocultural nationality, of certain collective cultural and/or political rights”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indeed, it is often the case that external definitions, typically imposed by those in power, contrast the self-understandings of the dominated, which raises the question of non-recognition or misrecognition (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 2007). This is especially relevant in the distinction between ethnic as opposed to national minorities. For, while the legal understanding of the concept of minority was, historically, closely tied to an ethnic conception of the nation (Ringelheim 2010: 103) and, as I have already noted, the two largely overlap (Brubaker 2009A),
Belonging to an ethnic as opposed to a national minority confers a very different legal status. This is based on the principle that minority nations are entitled to more wide-ranging protection, because they have stronger moral entitlements due to the circumstance of imperfect self-determination (see: e.g. May 2012: 13 arguing that “only national minority groups can claim the right of formal representation of their language”). This also means that governments that for one or another reason are unwilling to grant extensive minority rights to a certain population category may make a strategic attempt to label it as “ethnic” (as is the case with the Turks in Bulgaria) or “religious” (as is the case with the Turks in Greece), in order to justify their policies and politics.

Should, then, subjective self-understandings, aspirations and the resulting stances and behaviors be made the defining attribute of national minorities? A focus on the subjective side raises other types of problems. If, as Brubaker (1993) suggests, a national minority is, above all, a claim, who is to make that claim? If it is a stance, who is to take that stance? And, further, if it is true that nationhood crystallizes at specific points in time and fades away in others, how can a definition reflect the dynamism of these processes without becoming too loose to use?

To complicate matters more, it is often the case that the terms “ethnic” and “national” are conflated, especially in expressions such “ethnic party”, “ethnic politics”, “ethnic homeland”, “ethnic relations”, and so forth that are habitually used in reference to both ethnic and national social categories. Further, it is also often enough unclear whether the label “national” should be preferred at the expense of other potentially important markers of identity, such as language or religion, with which ethnicity and nationhood also tend to overlap. For instance, Hungarians in Romania and Turks in Bulgaria can be considered as national minorities by most definitions of the term. However, many studies label and analyze the same groups with a focus on ethnicity (especially in the case of the Turks: Petkova 2002; Liakova 2012, but also the Hungarians: e.g. Atanasova 2004). In the case of the Turks a strong religious element also entwines with other markers of identity and,
depending on their approach, many scholars have studied the Turkish minority as a religious one (e.g. Zhelyazkova 2001; Poulton 2000; Karpat 1995; Merdianova 2006). Contrast this to the case of Northern Ireland, where explicitly religious fault-lines are understood and analyzed as national ones (e.g. Jenkins 2008A).

The Russian-speaking minority in Estonia exemplifies yet another difficulty related to definitions. This social category was constituted through migration, yet, the Russian-speakers tend to not think of themselves as immigrants (Brubaker 2000). At the time of their settlement in the Baltics, Russian-speakers did not cross international borders, even though the legality of the absence of such borders is highly contested. Many researchers would find it problematic to categorize the Russian-speakers as a national minority (as the MAR project nonetheless does – see Table 2 above) sociologically speaking, given the relative weakness of a collective identification as well as the mixed ethnic background those lumped together under this name (see e.g. Kirch et al. 1993). For this reason researchers tend to stick to the designation “Russian-speaker” or “Russophone”, highlighting the linguistic as the most relevant identity-marker. However, more recent evidence suggests that some form of collective group-consciousness is evolving also beyond language (Laitin 1995; Kronenfeld 2005; Tabuns 2010; Cheskin 2010). Of course, the Turks in Bulgaria and the Hungarians in Romania, too, can be labeled as linguistic minorities (e.g. the works of Eminov 1983; Gal 2008). Indeed, the issue of language is crucial (e.g. Bauböck 2001; Kymlicka and Patten 2003). While language is usually seen as one among other markers of identity it is also much more than that (May 2012: 6-10) not only because of its symbolic dimension but also in that it shapes patterns of social interaction and other social dynamics. However, even though this makes a good case for focusing on language-use and linguistic conflict, this would in turn run the risk of obscuring the often explicitly nationalist stances and discourses adopted by minorities and their representatives (at least in certain points in time), of which linguistic rights-claims and demands are only one part. Such designation would,

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18 In historical analyses prior to the establishment of nation states in the Balkans it is indeed more accurate to refer to the religious element (e.g. Bieber 2000).
further, obscure the fact that the challenge minorities pose to their states of residence tends to be perceived by majorities in explicitly national and nationalist terms.

Where does all this leave us? On the one hand, getting the label right is important given that notions of what groups of people are also drive conceptions about what they deserve (Aukerman 2000). On the other hand, striking neat distinctions between such categories may be sociologically problematic and politically arbitrary. We have seen that there can be various designations and approaches towards labeling and analyzing minorities as ethnic, national, religious, or linguistic (not to speak about the also often used compound designations, such as “ethno-linguistic” or “ethno-cultural” or “ethno-religious”). This ambiguity is recognized in the legal and policy sphere where pragmatism frequently substitutes for clear-cut definitions. Examples include the famous declaration of High Commissioner of National Minorities Max van der Stoel “I know a national minority when I see one”19 as well as the FCNM, which being the most important instrument of minority protection leaves, nonetheless, the term “national minority” undefined.

There are, I think, at least two ways, beyond such pragmatic silence, in which this complexity can be overcome, at least in the cases I analyze in this thesis. The first is to use the relatively less well-known term “accidental diaspora”, introduced by Rogers Brubaker (2000) to describe the populations that were constituted by largely unforeseeable border movements. Even though it did not become widely used, this designation captures some crucial socio-political attributes of these populations and is also less politically charged than the term national minority. While migrant diasporas form gradually, accidental diasporas crystallize suddenly following typically abrupt reconfigurations of the political space. Accidental diasporas tend to be relatively large, territorially concentrated and rooted, while their members typically are citizens of the country of residence. Accidental diasporas also tend to be culturally and ethnically associated with external

19 http://www.osce.org/hcnm/38038?download=true
homelands, typically claiming to protect them. Brubaker further notes that this type of minority formation tends to produce national self-understandings and to engender nationalist agitation for cultural recognition, educational rights and self-government.

Another way to go beyond this terminological problem is to emphasize differences in status, instead of trying to determine which is the most reliable and salient identity-marker, by resorting to a simple majority/minority dichotomy (Henrard 2001). While these words draw attention to numerical size, what is crucial here is the reference to differences in rights and privileges; the inequality, that is, that arises out of the specific way nation-states are organized.

**Actors and agents**

In the previous section I briefly touched on the problem of taking claim-making as the defining characteristic (or at least one important attribute) of national minorities, asking: if a national minority is a claim, who is to make that claim? As Eriksen (2010: 144) explains: “certain categories of people may find themselves in a grey zone between full membership in the nation and ethnic minority identity. If some of their members want full political independence, others limit their demands to linguistic and other rights within an existing state. It depends on the interlocutor whether the category is a nation or an ethnic group” (emphasis mine). This is a crucial point. While cultural meaning is in general shared among the members of – ethnic or national – communities, specific actors within these communities play a more pronounced role than others. Studies have typically focused on middle class professionals, the intelligentsia and/or the political class as the groups that tend to be most actively involved in the production of culture, the manipulation of ethno-national symbols, mobilization and collective claim-making (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Handler 1988; Verdery 1991).
Attentiveness to the internal differentiation of a purportedly monolithic ethnic category therefore brings important nuance to the analysis of ethnicity and institutions. Political entrepreneurship, in particular, emerges as a key variable in the cluster of ethnicity, nationalism, culture and politics that I explore in this thesis. An array of important authors have theorized the emergence and persistence of national identities in light of the deliberate intentions of key groups in general, and ethnic elites in particular (perhaps most famously Brass 1997). It is, of course, intuitively appealing that politicians, intellectuals, and other professional brokers of ethnicity may indeed play an exceptional part in the politicization of identities and the ensuing collective action (Tilly 1991: 574).

While, however, the discourse of the participants should be analyzed as an important parameter of ethnicity, it should nonetheless not be accepted uncritically, for at least two reasons. First, by reifying identities, these actors in fact produce what they appear to be simply portraying20. Second, the interests and incentives of ethno-political entrepreneurs might differ in important respects from the interests and incentives of ordinary people. Self-seeking minority elites may be co-opted by their majority counterparts, which facilitates social control over the general minority population and may, on balance, have adverse effects for the minority community (Lustick 1980). Moreover, elites wishing to gain, maintain, or strengthen their position in power have been repeatedly shown to be able to provoke large-scale ethnicized conflict and violence, which, in turn, contributes to the construction of rigid and antagonistic collective identities (for the general point, see: Fearon and Laitin 2000, for case studies, see: Brass 1997; McGarry and O’Leary 1995; Gagnon 1994/1995; Woodward 1995).

Finally, it should be noted there is also a structural dimension to this. Andreas Wimmer (2002) has argued for the centrality of the minority-educated middle strata in driving interethnic conflict, as these are the segments most burdened by

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20 For the performativity of discourse in general, see: Bourdieu 1991; for the specific point about ethnicity, see: Brubaker 2002: 166; for nationalism, see: De Cillia et al. 1999.
the in-built ethnic favoritism of the modern nation state. Eric Hobsbawm has also argued that the key segments that have typically driven ethno-cultural contestation are the educated middle classes: provincial journalists, schoolteachers, and officials (Hobsbawm 1990: Chapter 4) – in sum, all those who are forced “into the choice between assimilation and inferiority” (Hobsbawm 1975: 97). The social composition the minority category, therefore, is also an important variable that it may underlie the parameters of institutional arrangements that exist in a given society.

This thesis builds its methodological approach to these insights, while also trying to expand them. Namely, the historical analysis presented in Chapter 4 adopts the aforementioned structural approach by making an attempt to locate and characterize the social groupings that by rule act as the protagonists of nationalist agitation and identity-projects. Chapters 5 and 6 analyze interview material of individuals involved in minority educational and cultural affairs, in order to draw broader conclusions about preferences, priorities and perceptions relating to institutional choice and change.

**Key findings**

This thesis builds on the recent sociological work on ethnicity and nationalism seeking to explain diversity management by going beyond the assumption of clearly identifiable identities and interests. The way I chose to problematize upon “groupness” is by focusing on institutions as both (re)sources and products of ethno-nationalist projects, and by paying close attention to history and temporal order. Concentrating on minority education as the most important instrument of social reproduction allows me to go beyond formal-legal analysis and to be able to describe socio-political dynamics on the ground. Below I briefly summarize the main findings of the three analytical chapters of the thesis.
Summary of the analytical chapters

I begin my analysis by tracing todays’ institutional landscapes onto their distant past. In Chapter 4 I argue that the current institutional arrangements are the products of the relative institutionalization of ethnicity at the time minorities and majorities switched places. My macro-sociological comparative analysis focuses not only on rival identity-projects, although these are of course important, but also on the forces shaping the minorities’ position in the changing social stratification, including urbanization, industrialization, the spread of literacy and economic development as well as the way minorities were able to partake in these processes, among others.

While the timing of the border movements that turned on their head the existing ethnic hierarchies is the underlying dynamic that has shaped present patters, Chapter 6 focuses on more recent developments. Based on an analysis of original interview material with strategically-positioned individuals, I find that minorities’ current preferences, as articulated by persons involved in minority affairs and/or minority education, the prevailing social, political and institutional contexts do not simply limit, but actually drive preference-formation. I claim that underlying this process is a gradualist mechanism of adaptation: before higher order preferences can be advanced or even conceived, all the lower steps along the way have to be accounted for. In this light, integration, a lower-order preference, comes prior to accommodation, a higher-order preference. I also find that certain conditions may facilitate or impede the passage from one stage to the other. These include minorities’ political representation, the constraints posed by majority public opinion, and minorities’ sense of space, including migration intentions.

The intervening Chapter 5 takes up another aspect of temporality, by exploring the connection between time, the creation of value, and the construction of identity. It builds on the concept of “inalienable possessions”, borrowed from anthropology (Weiner 1992; Harrison 1991; Verdery 1996) that describes precious collective possessions, which – through time – acquire an identity-constituting role. Based
predominantly on interview material but also on other sources, this chapter demonstrates that minority schools and minority education more generally can indeed become part of collective self-definitions and that this is linked to institutional persistence and even ethnicized conflict. However, I also show that identity-based attachments are only one layer that links collectivities with “their” institutions besides two others: simple convention or tradition, as well as an owner-asset relationship. While the three are interconnected, they imply different modalities of “groupness” and potentially link to different conflict-dynamics. This finding is a useful addition to the literature on the power of nationalist discourse, attesting to the fact that this discourse need not necessarily be a grand narrative (e.g. Aktürk 2012: 23), but it can also revolve around the mundane, the quotidian, the ordinary.

A cluster of relations

![Diagram of contextual factors and long-term dynamics]

**Figure 1.** Relationships between the identified explanatory factors.
Figure 1 above summarizes the findings of Chapters 4 and 6. It demonstrates that relative institutionalization of minority ethnicity at the time of the border movements through which minorities and majorities switched places (t0) has shaped subsequent developments. These include both the currently prevailing institutional arrangements (t1) and a set of three factors influencing ethno-political and ethno-social developments, comprising demographic patterns, political strategies and majority public opinions. Finally, the figure also shows that there is these contextual factors both shape and are shaped by the institutional arrangement, given adaptive preference-formation.

The thesis proceeds as follows. The following Chapter 2 provides a socio-historical overview of the politicization of ethnicity and nationhood in the region of our interest, as well as a synopsis of the ethno-demographic, geopolitical and legal context, setting the stage for the case-selection rationale and methodological approach discussed in Chapter 3. The cumulative findings of the three analytical chapters that follow (Chapter 4, 5 and 6) are brought together in Chapter 7 that concludes this thesis.
Chapter 2

Culture and politics in Europe’s Eastern periphery

Having introduced the main problem this thesis deals with I now turn to the overall factual context in which my study is framed. This includes the overview of the historical evolution and current state of ethno-demographic and ethno-political situation in ECE. Without wanting to reify the distinction between Europe’s Western core and Eastern periphery – a juxtaposition to which more often than not stereotypical value judgments also apply – I nevertheless want to argue that there is considerable purchase in the regionally confined analysis I have opted for. To be sure, this choice does not reflect a belief that ethnic relations in ECE are somehow incommensurable with ethnic relations in other parts of the world, and that therefore any comparison would be misconceived. As this chapter will show, however, taking a regional approach has significant advantages, both in terms of methodology and substance. On a more personal note, I think that it is important to continue discussing ECE ethnic relations, with the aim to go beyond clichéd analyses of a region that both commentators and scholars have often treated as inherently problem-laden, replete with “questions” and “dilemmas”, and mired by “bad nationalisms” (see: Spencer and Wollman 2002). This uniform and predominantly negative view paints with a broad-brush variation across time and space, and obscures the complex interconnections that underlie the observed patterns.

ECE, in many ways, has served as the laboratory in which scientific concepts and theories and policies have been developed and/or tested, especially in the field of ethnicity and nationalism. The region-specific path to post-imperial state-formation and the consequences of the belated diffusion of nationalism, the need for instruments of protection against arbitrary state power, the state-socialist attempt to go beyond ethnically and nationally-conceived modalities of social solidarity and
cohesion, and the forceful resurgence of nationalist movements afterwards have all provided fertile ground for an important scholarly literature, which has produced widely cited landmark studies in the field of nationalism and ethnicity (Brubaker 1996B), identity-formation (Laitin 1998), and ethnic and nationalist violence (Petersen 2002), among others.

Methodologically, regionally confined analysis has a significant practical advantage, because it aids comparability by limiting variation on some potentially important dimensions. Before elaborating more on regional patterns of development, I want to pause for a moment to remark on the usefulness not only of the analytical distinction between Eastern and Western Europe, but also on the specific designation “core” and “periphery”. This is not a neutral binary. Conversely, it is a variant of a long-standing valorized east/west dichotomy that goes beyond purely geographic distinctions to also signify varying degrees of civilization (Melegh 2006; see also: Todorova 1994; Bakić-Hayden 1995 – all going back to Said 1979). The distinction between ethnic and civic nationalisms – as I already mentioned – is a variation on this theme. Why, then, one might ask, perpetuate the core/periphery designation, especially when this thesis explicitly aims to critique rather than reinforce stereotypical representations of ethnic relations in this part of the world?

While in this thesis I also use alternative labels – mostly the designation East-Central Europe (ECE) – I generally stick to the core/periphery label as analytically useful for two reasons: first, because it captures the region-specific pattern of the evolution of ethnic relations, which was the direct consequence of imperial control in the area and, second, because due to its flexibility I find this to be the best among the other alternatives, including the normatively likewise loaded “post-communist” or “former Eastern block” – that are also unsuitable for historical analysis prior to 1989 – as well as the numerous overlapping geographic descriptions that are used to describe the region or parts of it, and that while seemingly neutral, nevertheless, also carry value judgments: the more conventional “Eastern Europe”, the more recent “Central Europe” as well as “South-Eastern Europe” (for the Balkans) and the
“Baltic states/countries/republics”, located at the North-East. As the facts of ethnic demography and the patterns of ethno-political contestation in the states under consideration have not arisen from their objective geographic location, but rather, from their particular position in relation to the European core, it is, I think, not only justified but also illuminating to use the core/periphery binary. In doing so I follow a branch of literature mostly concerned with patterns of political and economic development that has used widely the concepts of the European “core” and “periphery” (Szűcs 1983; Chirot 1989; Bunce 2000; see also: Brubaker 2009B).

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In the following section I outline the large-scale historical transformation that has rendered culture politically consequential, and the modality this linkage took in Europe’s Eastern periphery. Having presented the patterns of the historic politicization of ethno-national identities and the pathways to post-imperial nation state-formation, I then provide a snapshot of the current ethno-demographic and ethno-political situation in the region, followed by the discussion of the geopolitical context and especially the role of kin-states in minority policy-making. I close by zooming in to the contrasting discussion of the prevailing minority protection arrangements in ECE EU member states. This review sets the stage to the justification of the case-selection, which is described in detail in Chapter III along with a general methodological discussion.

The historic politicization of ethnic and national identities in ECE

Ethnicity and culture did not always have the pervasive political and social relevance they have today. Prior to modernity, it would have been preposterous to assert that the culture of the rulers and the ruled should be the same. For most of world history, peoples claiming distinctive identities have coexisted within states
that typically employed indirect, paternalistic control. Rulers made little effort to homogenize these subjects, who, in turn, did not actively seek to be governed by sovereigns of their own culture (Tilly 1994; Wimmer 2002; Brubaker 2009B).21

Ethnic and cultural pluralism as a socially and politically relevant condition is a historically rooted phenomenon, brought about by the large-scale structural transformation that was the rise of the centralized territorial state in the late 18th century (Tilly 1994). The ability to keep track, manage and control people became increasingly important, as state power penetrated and embraced societies to a hitherto unprecedented extent (Verdery 1994; Torpey 1998). According to the emergent principle of national self-determination, states had to correspond to homogenous peoples, who had distinctive political interests and who owed strong loyalties to their states (Tilly 1994). An integral part of this new type of centralized control was cultural control, reflected in linguistic standardization, the development of literary canons, and the establishment of a range of institutions that displayed and transmitted the “national culture”, including the academy, mass education, and the arts (Ibid.).

The historic politicization of ethnicity and the emergence of nations and nationalism have, nonetheless, varied across time and space. Namely, in many places of the world, including Western Europe, the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) of the nation and the administrative unit of the territorial state were largely coterminous, because in these contexts the state was temporally prior to society (“the nation”). But this was not the case in the European periphery, where the sequence was the reverse: where society (“the nation”) came before the state.22 In this part of the world, stateless national communities formed within the confines of multi-confessional, multiethnic and, gradually, multinational empires. Here, the diffusion of the Western-type statist nationalism from the mid-19th century onwards

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21 This is not to say that such ethno-culturally tolerant order did not come with a price: these polities were based on a strict hierarchy and rigid social inequality (Wimmer 2002: 7).
22 I borrow this formulation from Valerie Bunce (2000).
morphed into state-seeking forms, giving rise to the so-called “national question”.\textsuperscript{23} Hence, at the time the forerunners of nationalist movements set out to realize their projects of “properly” aligning the nation with the state in this part of the world too, ethnic landscapes had already gained a political significance and had solidified into intricate mosaics. This made it comparatively harder to correlate the cultural boundaries of the community with the territorial confines of the state.

Since then, whenever the spatial framework of the state-system was modified in ECE, this was accompanied by the emergence and/or intensification of diversity dilemmas, including the resurgence of ethnicized and nationalist conflict over control of the state (Jackson Preece 1997; 2005). After the First World War the three multinational empires that had dominated this geographical area for centuries – the Ottoman, the Romanov, and the Habsburg – collapsed.\textsuperscript{24} The ensuing redrawing of borders lead to the formation of independent nation states for the first time in the region, leaving, at the same time large portions of these nations “on the wrong side”. This misalignment continues to be an essential condition in ECE ethnic relations. Though minority rights clauses were included in all peace treaties closing the war with the aim of protecting these political outsiders from arbitrary state power, these arrangements were perfectly compatible with assimilationist tendencies (Jackson Preece 1997). Accordingly, the political elites of the newly nationalizing states introduced everywhere measures that promoted the language, economic preponderance and political hegemony of the core nations in whose name they claimed to govern (Brubaker 1996A). This, in turn, contributed to the further alienation of members of formerly dominant minorities, who saw their rights and social status diminishing. Further, the economic dimensions of the national question

\textsuperscript{23} Historical work on nation-state formation has traditionally distinguished between state-led (core) and state-seeking (peripheral) nationalisms. As Tilly (1994: 133) explains, state-led nationalism developed first through the efforts of “[r]ulers who spoke in a nation’s name [who] successfully demanded that citizens identify themselves with that nation and subordinate other interests to those of the state” and subsequently diffused to areas the “[r]epresentatives of some population that currently did not have collective control of a state claimed an autonomous political status, or even a separate state, on the ground that the population had a distinct, coherent cultural identity.”

\textsuperscript{24} Signs of decay could be detected much earlier, especially in the case of the Ottoman Empire, dubbed the “sick man of Europe” already in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century.
came to the fore in postwar ECE, reflecting in part the increased significance of statist intervention in the economy throughout the continent and in part the determination of the elites of post-imperial nationalizing states to gain economic preponderance. This included the redistribution of land according to the economic interests of the core nation, and squeezing out the minorities from public administration and the state bureaucracy (Berend 2000), among other measures.

A replication of more or less the same pattern occurred after the fall of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. While state-socialism, with its expressly internationalist ideology, was framed as an opportunity to leave behind the troubles of a supposedly retrograde particularism once and for all, nonetheless, in the aftermath of its demise, nationalist politics resurfaced with earnest intensity in the region. A main reason for this resurgence was that the Soviet regime had destroyed all bases for political organization other than the party-state, while, at the same time, enshrining a national basis as the principle of social organization (Verdery 1993). Indeed, in the USSR national and ethnic diversity were not only tolerated, but actively encouraged and thoroughly institutionalized (Brubaker 1994). The formula “national in form, socialist in content” served as a general guideline in this respect: nationally-based organizational structure was expected to lead to the more efficient inculcation of socialist values leading to the eventual eclipse of nations and nationalism (Connor 1984). This was the prevailing approach to diversity management also in the USSR's satellites, where the first period of state-socialism saw the extension of minorities prerogatives, including mother-tongue education, language use and cultural activities. However, in the second half of the Communist period many of these policies were reversed and the political relevance of nationalism increased.

Even though the outbreak of violence in ECE outside the former Yugoslavia was rare, the transition to capitalist, socially and economically liberal democratic systems in ECE was typically carried out in the name of “nation”, in marked opposition to foreign oppression and, often enough, domestic “fifth columns”. Hostility towards the Russian Federation and the Russian-speaking populations in
Russia's so-called “near abroad” was especially pronounced in the former socialist republics, attached to the USSR. All in all, the instrumental force of nationalism in the creation of new political orders, in combination with the immense levels of uncertainty immediately after the collapse, heightened the political salience of ethnicity across the region.

It should be clear from this brief overview that the patterns of ethno-political contestation in Europe's Eastern periphery have to be understood within the framework of the particular historical course of events that was the dissolution of empires (both after the First World War and, perhaps more controversially, the fall of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact). The reconfiguration of the political space brought about by their demise has profoundly impacted ethnic relations. This impact has been, in part, demographic since millions of people found themselves suddenly on the wrong side of an international border. While it is difficult to put these populations into a single rubric, they generally constituted large, territorialized communities who have resided in their places of residence for several generations, and who differ from the titular nationalities in terms of language, place of residence, ethnic origin, religion, and cultural practices. Moreover, as a result of the phase-lag with which nationalism diffused in the area, not only were the newly configured states conceived as being for and by a particular core nation, but also these legitimate owners were defined predominantly in ethno-cultural terms (Brubaker 2009B). In has also been argued that the historical memories of oppression and domination engendered the pervasive securitization of minority rights in this part of the world (e.g. Kymlicka 2008) or, at minimum, a generalized unease with ethnic diversity across the region.

**Ethnicity and nationalism in contemporary ECE**

This brief overview has drawn attention to the enduring significance of the misalignment between the social (imagined communities) and the political (structures authority and legitimacy) as the concomitant of nation-state formation and post-imperial legacy. Importantly, this mismatch has involved, as already
discussed in the previous chapter, not only minorities and majorities, but also minorities’ external homelands (Brubaker 1993). Moreover, international influences played and continue to play an important role in the region. The rest of the chapter provides an overview of the contemporary ethno-demographic and ethno-political situation in ECE along these four sets of influence.

**Minority protection and the “international community”**

ECE has been an area where external forces have customarily held a strong influence in managing diversity (and not only). Older forms of this involvement include indirect imperial control, the imposition and monitoring of certain minority protection standards by the Great Powers, including, famously, the League of Nations (Jackson Preece 1997) as well as Soviet nationalities policy (Connor 1984). Further, in recent times, minority rights have become more internationalized than ever (Kymlicka 2008), and the safeguarding of vulnerable populations is now seen a legitimate cause for the intervention of the international community in domestic affairs. Indeed, the idea that minority politics and policy are externally determined has been so influential that several commentators have criticized Brubaker’s tripartite analytical framework – national minority/nationalizing state/external national homeland (discussed in Chapter 1) – because it failed to take account of the crucial, arguably, role of international organizations, including the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and especially the European Union (EU), (e.g. D. Smith 2002).

A voluminous literature has taken up exactly this idea, examining how the EU and other external actors have influenced domestic developments in the field of minority protection, highlighting the mechanism of *accession conditionality* as an instrument of externally-induced policy-change (e.g. Rechel 2009; see also: Grabbe 2001; Kelley 2004; Schimmelphennig and Sedelmeier 2005A; 2005B; Spendzharova and Vachudova 2012). Indeed, accession conditionality required the transplantation of a voluminous legal body regarding the protection of human and minority rights, made an explicit precondition for EU membership by the Maastricht Treaty, the
Copenhagen criteria, the Europe Agreements, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the Amsterdam Treaty. Moreover, the protection of the same rights is the primary focus of the CoE, an institution that all EU candidates are obliged to join prior to accession. Indeed, there exists an impressive amount of interlocking legal instruments that form part of the acquis on anti-discrimination and minority protection that all member states are obliged to transplant into national legislation, including, among others the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and Recommendation 1201 of the CoE. The Commission’s 1997 Opinions and the subsequent Regular Reports, as well as numerous councils and committees were intended to transmit domestically the EU’s expectations in the field of minority protection.

Note, however, that this extensive but vague international legal framework, when transplanted into domestic legislation, was adapted to the prevailing demographic, institutional and historical contexts (Rechel 2009; Agarin and Cordell 2016). Moreover, the concrete minority protection arrangements that were put in place reflect, beyond domestic factors, also variation of input on behalf of the EU. The uneven stance of EU bodies, that is, towards the different governments and minority categories based on varying priorities and concerns (e.g. Hughes and Sasse 2003), also complicated by the fact that there are no obvious Western analogues to ECE “hard cases”, such as the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltics (Kymlicka 2001, p. 75). While the extent to which conditionality was as efficient as initially thought is therefore disputed, it also seems implausible to assert that it did not have any effect at all (as Gallagher 2009 seems to suggest in the case of Romania). Besides, despite variation, membership in the EU is also an indication of some crucial contextual characteristics beyond the narrow field of diversity management and minority protection, including also liberal democratic governance and levels of economic development. On these grounds, I have decided to limit the subsequent discussion to those ECE states that are also EU member states, eleven in total: Bulgaria, Croatia,
the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

*National minorities*

What ethno-demographic patterns do we observe in these states? This section uses the most recent census data available\(^\text{25}\) in order to provide a general picture about the ethnic demography of ECE EU member states. I should note at this point that any quantitative evidence on ethnic affiliation ought to be used cautiously, as it constitutes an imperfect oversimplification of a complex social reality. This is especially the case with official censuses that constitute potential instruments for social engineering. Indeed, as we shall see, there are numerous reasons to treat official populations statistics cautiously. That being said, the methods of population counting and accounting are indicative of the socio-political contexts in which they arise and, as such, are highly relevant for this investigation. Moreover, information on the ethnic make-up of a territorial unit (region, municipality and/or a state) usually plays an important role in informing both state policies and minority rights-claims, as well as the strategies of international organizations involved in minority affairs.

No state among this set of countries is ethnically homogenous, with the number of ethnic categories officially reported in censuses ranging between 8 in Hungary and 65 in Latvia. These numbers are, of course, not a precise reflection of social reality, since official censuses vary enormously in the way they collect and report data: some statistical offices make available detailed information on tiny census categories – comprising only a few hundred or even a few dozen of people – while others subsume in general categories much larger populations. This, as

aforementioned more often than not mirrors state strategies of dealing with diversity. There is of course a huge difference between the 24 Serbs and the 577 thousand Russians that are reported in the Latvian census in terms of social and political impact. To get a better grasp of the magnitude of diversity, I have singled out in Table 3 the sizeable minorities across the region, i.e. those with a minimum membership of 30 thousand people.

<table>
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<td>SK - Hungarian</td>
<td>PO - Silesian</td>
<td>RO - Hungarian</td>
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<td>PO - Ukrainian</td>
<td>LI - Polish</td>
<td>CZ - Moravian</td>
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<td>CZ - Slovak</td>
<td>ES - Russian</td>
<td>BU - Turkish</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO - Ukrainian</td>
<td>CR - Serbian</td>
<td>BU - Romani</td>
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<td>CR - Bosniac</td>
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</table>

Source: UN Population Statistics

As is evident, a total of 34 minorities belong to this category. Many of them have held a formerly dominant position in the past. Almost all are associated with an external national homeland, with the notable exceptions of regional minorities (Ruthetians in Slovakia, Moravians in the Czech Republic and Silesians in Poland) and the Roma. The latter are Europe’s largest, poorest and most politically
marginalized minority. While there have been some attempts to define and mobilize the Roma as a national minority – not least because of the advantages this status confers, as discussed in the previous chapter (see e.g. Vermeersch 2003) – the Roma find themselves in circumstances that are substantially different from those of national minorities, and that arguably require differentiated institutional and political arrangements. For this reason I decided to exclude this category from further analysis.

What becomes readily apparent from this table is that the vast majority of the largest minority categories in the ECE region are national minorities that have been left out from the boundaries of their national homelands. In terms of their origin, these populations constitute *accidental diasporas* in that they have been created border movements and/or internal migration within federal or imperial state structures and are spread across several states in the region, located in the neighborhood of “their” homelands. Further, note that the 34 minority categories included in Table 3 can be aggregated to only 18 unique ones (under the assumption that they form part of the same ethno-nation). Figure 2 ranks the largest minority categories across the region, showing that the most numerous among them are the Hungarians, the Roma, the Russians26, the Silesians and the Turks. If one looks at the relative size, shown in Figure 3, the high proportion of the Russians in Estonia and Latvia as compared to the overall population becomes particularly striking.27

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26 Note that the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian censuses refer to “Russians” as opposed to Russian-speakers.

27 I have included all census categories that comprise approximately 2 per cent or more of the total population in any given country, except in Poland, where the German minority makes up only around 0.5% of the total population, but Poland being a large country, Germans constitute a demographically robust group.
Figure 2. Largest minority categories in ECE EU member states.

*Source: UN Population Statistics*

Figure 3. Largest minority categories in ECE EU member states as a percentage of the overall population.

*Source: UN Population Statistics*
Several identity-markers distinguish these populations from the majorities, including place of residence, language, ethnic origin, and religion. In some cases minority-majority relations have been enduringly calm and the political significance of ethno-national difference relatively low (e.g. Germans in Hungary). In most cases, nevertheless, interethnic relations have been strained, especially in states where ethnic and nationalist violence occurred and/or where minorities held dominant status in the recent past. Though the democratic institutions established after state-socialism have been largely successful in channeling ethno-political conflict, contestation around ethnic issues persists. This may explain at least in part the apparent demographic decline, shown by Figure 4, which presents the percentage change in the size of minority populations between the first and the last recorded censuses.

![Figure 4. Percentage change of largest minority categories in ECE EU member states since the early 1990s. Source: UN Population Statistics](image-url)
Evidently, the proportion of minorities as compared to the overall population has decreased across the region since the early 1990s, in some cases dramatically. We observe a population increase only in the case of the Roma, reflecting most probably the relatively high fertility rates among this population group. Methodologies of counting are also part of this, as demonstrated by the case of the Germans in Hungary, the increase of which is because the 2011 Hungarian census allowed for multiple self-categorization. In any case, Figure 4 clearly demonstrates a declining pattern overall.

*External national homelands*

The historic movements of state boundaries mentioned at the start of this chapter did not only create minorities but also external kin-states. As national(izing) states replaced the disintegrating multinational empires in ECE, new international borders separated external homelands and their accidental diasporas; the links between the two were, nevertheless, sustained (Brubaker 2000). The triangular relationship between states of residence, minorities and “their” kin-states constitutes a deviation from the international state-system, based on the Westhalian congruence between territory, sovereignty, and population. Accordingly, this link between kin-state and minority has traditionally been seen both within and outside academic circles as not merely an anomaly, but also as a threat to this system (e.g. Brubaker 1996A; van Evera 1994). It is therefore not incidental that this triangular relationship attracted the attention of international relations scholars who have posited a causal link between kin-state interventionism and inter-state conflict and war (e.g. Gagnon 1994/1995; Mandelbaum 2000).

While this is far from an exclusively ECE phenomenon, it is also true that exactly because of the aforementioned pattern of nation and state-formation, ECE kin-state nationalism and the political engagement of populations beyond a state’s borders on the basis of ethnic kinship is an important variable to reckon with in analyses of
ethnic politics and minority rights. The disintegration of Yugoslavia was the par excellence case demonstrating this potentiality. Apart from this case, however, following the fall of the Iron Curtain, the involvement of kin-states in domestic ethnopolitics in the European context has been relatively soft; it has not challenged the integrity of borders and it has induced no major inter-state conflict (Kantor et al. 2004). At the same time, a new mode of kin-state engagement emerged in the integrating Europe, that seeks to integrate external minorities in the imagined community of the nation by setting up and supporting economic and cultural connections, without, however, explicitly aiming to modify borders or encourage migration (Csergő and Goldgeier 2001).

Following the post state-socialist transformation there has been an increase of kin-state engagement in the region (Pogonyi et al. 2010). The aim of such policies is, on the one hand, to strengthen external kin communities culturally, institutionally and socio-economically and, on the other hand, to encourage cross-border interaction thereby fostering the political, cultural and economic membership of diaspora populations in the kin-state community (Csergő and Goldgeier 2013: 90; Waterbury 2009: 1). Diaspora-engagement policies are, of course, not only designed for national minorities, but also for immigrant diasporas, especially in light of the large-scale emigration of ECE citizens predominantly towards Western Europe. These policies include variably benefit laws and special constitutional provisions for co-ethnic minorities abroad, the provision of citizenship for non-residents or by waiving test requirements, the creation of official bodies of representation, or the provision of transborder subsidies and exchanges (Pogonyi et al. 2010).

Mirroring the recent proliferation of kin-state policies a social scientific distinct sub-field has developed that examines the causes and consequences of cross-border ties and interconnections between minorities and homelands (e.g. Waterbury 2011; Jenne 2006; Saideman and Ayres 2008), fuelled also by the latest turn towards transnationalism in ethnic and migration studies (e.g. Tarrow 2006; Bauböck and Faist 2010). Within this scholarship special attention has been paid to the activities
of three states in ECE that have the largest external diasporas in the region and that have assumed a particularly activist role in aiding (economically, politically, culturally) these populations: Hungary, the Russian Federation and Turkey. The rest of this section is devoted to a brief survey of the ways in which these states engage their diasporas.

**Hungary**

The relative indifference exhibited by the Hungarian party-state in relation to the Hungarian diaspora for most of the communist era contrasts sharply both interwar irredentism (Brubaker 1995) and post-communist Hungary's complex and active diaspora policy (Kántor 2014). Following the 1920 Treaty of Trianon which dethatched two-thirds of Hungary's former lands and one third of the Hungarian population, the fate of this diaspora has been a central concern in Hungary, including tensions with neighboring governments and even the re-seizure of part of the lost territories during the Second World War. The geopolitical context of the Warsaw Pact and the ideological restrictions imposed by the official rhetoric of socialist internationalism prevented Hungarian governments to engage their diasporas abroad, even when they faced severe discrimination (as in Romania during Ceausescu's rule). Moreover, closed borders also prohibited migration towards the kin-state, or elsewhere. In the immediate aftermath of the system change, however, Hungary turned with a renewed interest towards its kin in the Carpathian basin. As early as 1989 the new constitution assumed responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond Hungary's borders. In 1990 Prime Minister Jozsef Antall famously declared that he wished to be the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians (Hungary proper then comprising about 11 million inhabitants).

Hungary's diaspora policy has been formulated under the conditions of a polarized power-struggle between the left-liberal and right-conservative political camps (Waterbury 2011) that have alternated in power until the 2010 landslide victory of Fidesz. Among the main developments in this field was the adoption of the so-called Status Law (Law Concerning Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries), in 2001.
with the aim of providing benefits to external kin. The law declared that transborder Hungarians constituted members of the Hungarian nation, while also outlining a wide-ranging legal framework that strengthened these national ties across borders – and was adamantly opposed by both the Romanian and the Slovak governments. The Venice Commission, which was asked to comment on the law, produced a series of reports and recommendations, upholding the international practice that places the responsibility for minority rights on the states where the minorities reside (Cseregő and Goldgeier 2013: 109). The controversy was resolved as a new socialist-led government came to power in the 2002 Hungarian elections, which amended the initial version and compromised with the Romanian government.

The next major episode occurred in 2003, when the World Federation of Hungarians initiated a referendum on granting citizenship to transborder Hungarians. Fidesz, now in opposition, led the Yes-campaign against the left-liberal government coalition that favored a No-vote. Thought the Yes-vote prevailed, the referendum was invalid due to low turnout. During its tenure, the left-wing government did however pass some important measures to support transborder Hungarians (Cseregő and Goldgeier 2013), but the real break came with Fidesz’s landslide electoral victory in 2010 and that opened a new chapter in Hungary’s diaspora-engagement. A mere 3 days after having been elected, the national-conservative government submitted a proposal to parliament offering dual citizenship without any residence requirements for transborder individuals with Hungarian ancestry. The Orban government also amended the Status Law, and the extension of the right to vote to Hungarian citizens living abroad followed in 2012. Further, a plethora of diaspora offices and institutions were strengthened or established, with the aim of strengthening national ties across borders and helping Hungarians outside Hungary maintain their cultural heritage through financial, political and symbolic aid (Kántor 2014).
Turkey

Turkish kin-policy has gone through considerable change over time. In the period immediately preceding the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, and especially after the formation of the Turkish nation-state, until 1940, Turkish policy was focused on the repatriation of external kin on grounds of primarily ethno-linguistic criteria. In the Cold War context and given a weak economy and scarce resources Turkey engaged its kin to a limited extent, stepping in only under conditions of severe crises. In yet another reorientation, from the 1990s onwards, Turkey resumed an activist role, while also shifting the basis of kinship from an ethno-cultural understanding towards more civilizational conceptions, centered predominantly on a shared Ottoman history and belonging to the Muslim *millet* (Okyay 2015). In this context, Turkish political leadership massively increased its engagement with its neighborhood, promoting transborder trade and business activity, as well as the establishment and cultivation of civil society, cultural and educational links (Kirişci 2012: 320).

Especially since the coming to power of the AKP government, Turkey’s image has been recast as the inheritor of the Ottoman past, and a predominantly Muslim country. In terms of the external kin targeted by the aforementioned policies, this has been also redefined in a broader cultural-civilizational perspective and includes ethnic Turks and non-Turks alike. Related to this, no Turkish government has ever affirmed constitutionally the state’s responsibility towards its transborder kin. Neither did any government adopt a “Status Law”, granting this kin some form of citizenship status or a set of rights and entitlements. Moreover, the recent 2009 Citizenship Law eliminated the (already relatively mild) preferential naturalization conditions of persons of Turkish descent and culture (Kadirbeyoğlu 2010: 15).

Generally, the Turkish state discourages the immigration of these populations to Turkey. Its stated aim at present is to support the socioeconomic and political life of the members of this broadly defined diaspora as equal citizens in their countries of residents (Yurtnaç 2012). The Turkish government operates an extensive
organizational network to this end, including the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities as well as the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA – a government department of the Prime Ministry responsible for providing development assistance to developing countries with external kin presence) and other organizations and agencies whose organizational reach stretches from the Balkans to the Middle East and from South Asia to Africa.28

Within the “diasporic universe”, the Balkan populations, concentrated predominantly in Bulgaria (but also in Macedonia, Albania and Romania) have occupied a symbolically important place in Turkish kin-state initiatives (Okyay 2015). Between 1923 and 1934 Turkey attempted to contribute to developing an explicitly national consciousness among the Turks of Bulgaria through a variety of transborder cultural, linguistic, and educational activities (Simsir 1988). In the state-socialist context, Turkey aided the emigration of this kin during severe crises. In the post-Cold War period, it developed friendly bilateral relations with Bulgaria, fully supporting its membership in the Council of Europe, NATO, and the EU. Already in the early 1990s, Bulgaria and Turkey signed a series of agreements on confidence building and on military cooperation (Bechev 2012: 145) and continues to maintain close ties with the Turkish political and business elites in the country.

The Russian Federation

Unlike Hungary and Turkey, the Russian Federation is a relatively new kin-state. Following the sudden collapse of the USSR a 25 million-large Russian diaspora was left outside the borders of the Russian Federation. The Russian political leadership committed to protecting the cultural, linguistic, educational, and political rights of these communities early on. The first tangible expression of the concern with the diaspora the decree “On the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Russian

Citizens outside the Russian Federation” issued in 1992 by president Boris Yeltsin. At the same time, the Russian parliament also passed a citizenship law that provided for fairly easy access to Russian citizenship for populations of the former Soviet Union. The law stipulated that anyone born in Russia or any former Soviet citizen who did not hold citizenship by another state was entitled to Russian citizenship. Government also permitted unobstructed migration of Russians from the former Soviet territories to Russia, aided also by a federal migration service assisting relocation and to regulating the inflow of new immigrants. Though the citizenship law was temporarily tightened (between 2002 and 2006), former Soviet citizens can today acquire Russian citizenship via fast-track procedures and with relaxed residency and language competence criteria (Csergő and Goldgeier 2013).

Reflecting the unique power-imbalance between host-states and the external homeland are the policy instruments chosen by the Russian government to intervene in domestic affairs in the name of its diaspora. The Yeltsin government linked the civic rights of the diaspora to the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Estonia and Latvia, which finally occurred only in 1994 (Simonsen 2001). Moreover, in protest of Estonia’s restrictions on citizenship Yeltsin also halted supply of natural gas to the country in 1993. In 1998, the Russian government announced that it would significantly reduce oil exports to Latvia because of perceived rights-violations of Russians (King and Melvin 1999/2000). More recently, under Putin’s leadership, the general aspiration of the Russian government has been to take on increased influence, both within and outside Russia. The Russian government has been accused for propaganda and for exploiting ethnic and social discontent abroad, for instance in the case of the Bronze Statue riots in Estonia (Ciziunas 2008: 289). Russia has also pursued aggressive diaspora engagement in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria. The most dramatic fresh

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29 The same issue did not arise in Lithuania, which, having a much smaller Russian-speaking population (around 10 per cent), adopted a rather favorable citizenship law, based on residence criteria.

demonstration of the coercive power of the Russian government and its use of the diaspora in achieving foreign policy aims was the annexation of Crimea.

Unsurprisingly, then, Russian kin-policy is often framed in terms of a post-colonial/neo-imperial legacy (e.g. Kuzio 2002; Wallander 2007; Ciziunas 2008). Within this frame that revolves predominantly around Russian military prowess, great power aspirations and the security threats they pose, the legal inclusion of former Soviet citizens in the Russian demos is often seen as an attempt to project Russia’s geopolitical influence in the “near-abroad” (King and Melvin 2000); a readiness, even, to instrumentalize the diaspora as a “foreign policy weapon” (Mühlfried 2010; Natoli 2010; Simon 2013). It should also be noted, nevertheless, that the ambitions of this top-down political project, however, combine with a relatively weak interest and low expectations of the diasporic community itself. In fact, studies regularly find that the majority of Russian-speakers across the Soviet space do not perceive Russia as their homeland nor are they characterized by a sense of shared historical fate with their putative homeland (Laitin 1995; Barrington et al. 2003) and that official Russian policies have failed to evoke any diasporic sentiment among these populations (Kosmarskaya 2011), or, at minimum, that the putatively straightforward link between diasporas and homelands is uneven and complex in this context (Diener 2008).

**Nationalizing states**

While minorities and their external homelands as well as the international community may jointly or independently influence the direction of diversity-management, it is generally accepted that the most powerful actor in this constellation are those who control the apparatus of the state. However, the extent to which ECE EU member states have introduced majority-friendly nationalizing policies as opposed to minority-friendly diversity managing policies has been variable. In what follows I provide a general overview, sketching the ethno-
demographic profile of each state as well as the various minority policies that have been adopted since the transition to democracy across the different contexts.

Beginning with demographics, **Figure 5** below presents the proportion of the “core nations” in those ECE states that are members of the EU. The figure shows that the historical redrawing of borders has had an uneven ethno-demographic effect across the region, leaving some states exceptionally homogenous (Poland) and others exceptionally heterogeneous (Latvia), with varying configurations between the two extremes. These demographics, in combination with the historical course of events that have crystallized political conflict around them, have informed the process of post-communist transition in the region, which became entwined with ethnic and national issues (Csergő 2002). The proper conceptualization of the demos, in particular, has been especially challenging in those states that restored statehood with the dissolution of the USSR (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), or broke-up along federal structures (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Croatia).

![Figure 5. The proportion of “core nations” in ECE EU member states.](image)

Following the collapse of state-socialism and as integral part of the transition to liberal democracy, ECE states without exception rewrote or amended their pre-
1989 basic laws. While the main aim was to create a solid constitutional framework for democratic consolidation and a free market economy, these constitutions also tended to express and solidify ethno-culturally and/or ethnoreligiously defined national identities (Hayden 1992; Batory 2010: 46). The newly adopted basic laws also by rule emphasized the historic continuity of the nation and safeguarded the core nations’ claims on the state (Elster 1991). Underlying these constitutional pledges was a stance that Rogers Brubaker (1993: 12) has termed “nationalizing” and that reflects

“[...] the tendency to see the state as an ‘unrealized’ nation-state, as a state destined to be, but not yet in fact (at least not to a sufficient degree), a nation-state, the state of and for a particular nation; and the concomitant disposition to remedy this perceived defect, to make the state what it is properly and legitimately destined to be, by promoting the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, and/or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation.”

One aspect of this stance is a region-wide tendency of adamant resistance to territorial decentralization, federalism or the granting of any type of territorial autonomy for national minorities, even in states that otherwise provide rather extensive minority protection (Kymlicka 2002). Post-communist Romania, for example, refused to restore the short-lived autonomy of Transylvania (established in 1952 and revoked in 1968) demanded by the Hungarian minority. Similarly, in 1993 Estonia rejected a referendum supporting the autonomy of the almost exclusively Russian-populated Narva region. In other cases, such as Slovakia and Croatia, administrative boundaries were redrawn in such a way as to divide the territories where minorities concentrate, making it more difficult for autonomist claims to be put forth. Underlying this resistance is, arguably, the “pervasive securitization” of minority nation-building projects in the region, based on the perception of minorities as secessionist fifth columns, supported by potentially hostile (revisionist, irredentist) external kin-states (e.g. Kymlicka 2004; Džankić 2015; Skulte-Ouaiss 2015).

Further and related, it has been argued that the core nations in ECE, which acquired independence through the post-imperial redrawing of borders, despite their current
dominant status, tend to view themselves as weak, victimized and in existential fear for their survival (Kymlicka 2008: 26). These “minoritized majorities” are, it is argued, more reluctant to support and protect minorities who are viewed as undeserving and potentially threatening (Ibid.). Moreover, negative perceptions directly link to national identities, which virtually all core nations have constructed and continue to construct in categorical opposition to the formerly dominant national minorities currently residing on their territory and “who have come to represent the loss of a feeling of wholeness.” (Verdery 1993: 200). For instance, in Bulgaria, the narrative of collective suffering under the “Turkish yoke”, elaborated by the nationalist Bulgarian intelligentsia and popularized through public discourse and education, continues to inform majority collective self-understandings, perpetuating negative perceptions of the Turks living in the country (Elchinova 2001). While the exact content of such framings differs (albeit surprisingly little) from one context to another, the process of identity-formation is largely similar across the board.

What has been said until now may give the exaggerated impression of intractable ethnic conflict, discrimination and minimal minority protection in the region. This is, however, not the case. All ECE EU member states have committed to the protection of minorities, including national minorities, at least on the level of formal legislation. Following the demise of state-socialism and in direct relation to the preconditions of EU accession there has been a general convergence towards the adoption of wide-ranging minority protection legislation, including anti-discrimination measures, the establishment of governmental bodies and agencies for minorities and the ratification of international legal instruments I have already discussed above (Rechel 2009: Chapter 1).31

31 Note, however, that the recent liberalization of minority rights is not a unique historical achievement, since all nationalizing states in the region have alternated between minority-friendly and majority-friendly policies – a fact that a too short time frame focused only on the post-Communist period tends to obscure. I closely examine this historical continuity and discontinuity in Chapter 4 through the lens of the Bulgarian and the Romanian cases.
But apart from this general trend, there has also been a divergence in terms of the macro-political methods of the regulation of ethnic conflict, and, in particular, the scope of the rights granted to various ethnic or national categories (Ibid.). The generally uniform legal framework does not prevent domestic preoccupations and idiosyncrasies from transpiring (Agarin and Cordell 2016). A striking example is the way some states have decided to define the term “national minority”, which the FCNM left intentionally undefined.32 According to the Bulgarian declaration the ratification and implementation of the FCNM “do not imply any right to engage in any activity violating the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the unitary Bulgarian State, its internal and international security”, which reflects a generalized preoccupation with territorial integrity. Both Latvia and Estonia limit the same definition to citizens which is problematic because of the restrictive citizenship policy pursued there until fairly recently; Slovenia specifies the three groups to which the Convention applies, including the Hungarians, Italians and the Roma (a borderline case of national minority) but leaving out the Serbs, who are numerically the largest national minority in the country. It is also noteworthy that Bulgaria and the three Baltic States have not signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) of the CoE that aims to protect and promote languages used by traditional minorities and which complements the Framework Convention. The next section presents in more detail the varying state contexts across the region, including the current ethno-demographic profiles and the historical processes that created them as well as the main axes of interethnic conflict as they have shaped the legal, institutional and policy framework adopted in the post-communist period. In order to make the discussion more easy to follow, I subdivided the eleven ECE EU member states into four groups: the Baltics (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), the Western Balkans (Croatia and Slovenia), demographically relatively homogenous states (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic) and, finally, demographically relatively heterogeneous states (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia). I

end this chapter by discussing a few comparative points that emerged out of these overviews, which will prepare the ground for the discussion of the case-selection rationale in the beginning of the next chapter.

The Baltic States

Lithuania

Conforming to the dominant regional approach, post-Communist governments in Lithuania have committed to the preservation of the core nation's ethnic identity, perceived as weak and endangered (Budryte and Pilinkaite-Sotirovic 2009). Nonetheless, Lithuanian minority protection is the most extensive in the Baltic States and across the broader region. The country's comparative ethno-demographic security explains large part of this (Brubaker 1992B), since Russians and Poles, who are the largest minorities, make up only about 12 per cent of the total population (approximately 6 and 6.5 per cent, respectively). The most politicized ethnic cleavage is the Lithuanian-Polish one, and the autochthonous Poles are currently the country's most vocal and politically active minority. There exists also a powerful Polish party, the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL), which has had permanent presence in the Seimas following the regime change. Moreover, unlike in Estonia and Latvia, the lack of heavy immigration from other parts of the USSR has lead to a comparatively much smaller and better integrated Russian-speaking minority here (Brubaker 1992B)

Post-Communist legislation in Lithuania established an extensive minority-rights framework. The 1989 Law on Ethnic Minorities recognized the rights of minorities to cherish and promote their cultural traditions, history and language. The 1990 citizenship law was acclaimed for extending citizenship to all persons residing in Lithuania – though it did not allow for dual citizenship (Popovski 2000). The 1991 Law on Education granted access to minority language education for the Russians and the Poles, and a high percentage of school children have continued to receive
education in their mother tongue. Indicatively, in 2015 there were 124 primary and secondary schools in the country, where the language of instruction was one or several national minority-languages\(^{33}\). The new 1992 constitution, similar to other countries in the region, defines the Lithuanian people as the utmost source of legitimacy and explicitly protects and promotes Lithuanian public culture.\(^{34}\) Nevertheless, the basic law guarantees cultural minority rights, while prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity. Lithuania’s national minorities enjoy wide-ranging rights also in the field of media and associational life (Budryte and Pilinkaite-Sotirovic 2009).

* The politics of ethnicity, and especially the citizenship issue, took a very different shape in Estonia and Latvia, driven primarily by perceptions of ethno-demographic threat, due to the large size of Russians and Russian-speakers in the two countries. Having proclaimed the Soviet occupation illegal, the Estonian and Latvian political leadership reinstated the constitutions of the pre-Soviet period, which lead to the complete exclusion of a large part of the Russian-speaking minority from the citizenry (a phenomenon termed “legal restorationism”, see: Pettai 2004). Specifically, while citizens of the core nations and their descendants were granted automatic citizenship, all others were formally defined as aliens, their naturalization tied to strict criteria. Furthermore, as I briefly describe below, both states set out to drastically reduce the organizational and institutional bases of “Russianness” in a variety of ways. Consequently, while a snapshot of the current state of Estonian and Latvian minority protection arrangements suggests that minority protection is extensive, a longitudinal examination focused on the direction of change yields a different picture. This has been unequivocally towards protecting the core nations and reinforcing the official national public culture.


\(^{34}\) The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, available online at http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm
By the end of state-socialism approximately 35 per cent of the population of Estonia comprised Russian-speakers (Pettai and Kallas 2009). Residential, economic and social segmentation had led to low levels of inter-ethnic contact, and very limited Estonian-language knowledge among these residents (Aptekar 2009). Regardless, after the system change, the Estonian political leadership set out to create an independent, Estonian nation-state, introducing the restrictive citizenship policy discussed above. As a consequence, the first free elections held in the country were ethnically biased, and not a single non-Estonian representative was elected into office. Simultaneously, the Estonian government encouraged the emigration of Russian-speakers both directly and indirectly. Further, in the 1990s a series of legal measures were introduced that adversely affected the Russian-speaking minority, including the 1995 amendment of the citizenship law that tightened naturalization criteria even more, a new language act that declared Estonian as the sole official language, and legislation that tied running for national and local office to official language competence (MAR 2009).

That said, the 1992 constitution enshrined numerous rights, including permanent residents’ right to vote in municipal elections, cultural autonomy (also enforced by the 1993 Cultural Autonomy Act), the right to use the minority language in local government in areas with more than 50 per cent of minority presence. Estonia also ratified the FCNM in 1997, and was generally found to be in compliance with its guidelines in subsequent monitoring cycles. These positive steps were, however, limited, especially in light of the persisting problem of statelessness, as well as perceptions of growing ethnic inequality among the Russian-speakers (Aptekar 2009). Estonia remained a regime without any major collective recognition of minorities: an "ethnic democracy" (G Smith 1996; Pettai 1998; Järve 2000) or an "ethnic control regime" (Pettai and Hallik 2002).

From 1997 onwards the integration of minorities became an explicit governmental priority. In 2000 the cabinet approved a full-scale program, followed by the
“Estonian Integration Strategy for 2008-2013” and “Integrating Estonia 2020” after that. According to the Ministry of Culture, these integration programs aim to “foster a situation where other nationalities living in Estonia, as well as Estonians themselves, are ensured a cohesive and tolerant society where everyone can feel comfortable and safe – to work, study, develop their culture, be a full member of the society.” Part of this was the implementation of a law obliging upper secondary schools to teach a minimum of 60% of the offered subjects in Estonian, including also in schools where the mother-tongue of the overwhelming majority of the students was Russian (Chapter 5 discusses in detail the reform). As a result of these – essentially assimilative – programs Estonian language knowledge among the minorities has increased and naturalizations per year have also soared (Pettai and Kallas 2009).

Latvia

Latvia is the most ethnically heterogeneous state in the set of countries that is of interest here, with only about 60 per cent of the total population belonging to the core nationality. A large (11%) Russian-speaking community was already present on Latvian territory before 1944, and the subsequent massive relocation of Soviet workers has shaped the ethno-demographic landscape prevailing today. Demographic threat-perceptions here too are central in explaining the post-communist governments’ preoccupation with restoring the status and power of the Latvian nation, and protecting its culture and language (Brubaker 1992B; Galbreath and Muižnieks 2009).

Similar to Estonia, Latvian leaders also opted to reinstate the country's pre-war 1922 constitution. Like most basic laws, the constitution ensures fundamental civil rights to non-citizen residents (e.g. freedom of movement, expression, and religion), but it does not confer political and social rights to them, such as the rights to vote, to work as a civil servant, or to buy land (Verdery 1996: 295). Further, as already

discussed, Latvia adopted a restrictive citizenship law in 1994, which included quotas on the naturalization of minorities and barred non-citizens from political office (MAR 2009). The early backlash against the Russian-speakers, however, was gradually scaled back, a move explained at least partly also by the activist involvement of international actors (Galbreath 2006; Elsuwege 2004; Muižnieks and Brands Kehris 2003). In 1998 the Law on Citizenship was somewhat liberalized, though statelessness and low naturalization rates have remained an acute problem, mainly due to the high Latvian language proficiency standards they are tied to (MAR 2009).

This brings me to another major area of interethnic conflict: educational and linguistic rights. The 1999 Language Law made Latvian the official language of the state in which all official communication has to take place as well as the sole language of instruction. In 1998 parliament passed a law that called for switch to Latvian as a primary medium of instruction in all public schools. Minority opposition against the law peaked between 2003 and 2004 (the period when the change was implemented) with numerous protests, rallies, sit-ins, and walkouts, despite government restrictions on group members’ ability to engage in public demonstrations (Galbreath and Muižnieks 2009: 142-143; MAR 2009). However, as the school year progressed and the Latvian government made some concessions, opposition deflated. Today all upper secondary minority schools are required to teach in Latvian at least 60 percent of the time, as in Estonia.

The elimination of strict language requirements, many of which have been deemed discriminatory by the ECHR and the Latvian Constitutional Court, has been at the core of the Russian minority’s demands since the early 1990s. Unlike in Estonia, a number of parties have voiced these complaints, including the powerful electoral alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia founded in 1998, the Latvian Russian Union, an ethnic minority party that broke away from the alliance in 2007, and the Social Democratic Party “Harmony”, founded in 2009 as a party of general appeal that nevertheless also seeks to represent the Russian-speakers. Like in Estonia,
however, the intergenerational assimilation of the Russian-speaking minority seems to have remained the general goal of all the successive Latvian governments.

Western Balkans

Slovenia

Slovenia’s minority protection framework is based on a strict dichotomy between “old” and “new” minorities. It provides extensive rights to historic groups: Italians and Hungarians, as well as the Roma. Despite their tiny size (the three together make up around 1 per cent of the total population), they are extensively protected by over 70 pieces of related legislation, including the FCNM and the 1991 Constitution (Zorn 2009: 210). While the Roma, as everywhere in the region, continue to face obstacles in all spheres in life despite having been made a legislative priority, the Hungarian and Italian national minorities enjoy truly wide-ranging rights, including bilingual public institutions in areas with high minority concentration, guaranteed representation in parliament, and education in the mother tongue. Uniquely in the region, Slovenian children living in these areas are also obligated to learn the minority language.

Conspicuously absent from the aforementioned legal instruments are references to the numerically much larger Serbian (2%), Croatian (2%) and Bosniak (1%) minorities that originate from the territories of the former Yugoslavia. While at the moment of Slovenia’s secession from Yugoslavia, the political leadership framed this action not solely on grounds of ethnic nationalism, but also in terms of democracy, human and minority rights and economic reform, allowing all permanent residents to vote in the referendum for independence, this goodwill proved short-lived, the nationalizing aspirations of the Slovenian state becoming apparent already in 1991, with the passage of a restrictive Citizenship Act. This piece of legislation left more than 18 thousand people of minority background without citizenship (either because they did not apply for citizenship or because their applications were
rejected), who subsequently were erased from the Register of Permanent Residents altogether. In the eyes of the law they became illegal immigrants, with no economic, social, or political rights, while approximately 10 thousand people opted for emigration (Vezovnik 2013).

In the framework of the 1999 Act Regulating the Legal Status of Citizens of the Former Yugoslavia Living in the Republic of Slovenia – brokered by the European Commission and the Slovenian Constitutional Court – the majority of the “erased” were finally able to acquire permanent residence permits, though they continue to be in a vulnerable situation, facing wide ranging social and political discrimination and are often framed as disloyal and potentially dangerous (Kralj 2009; Zorn 2009: 220).

**Croatia**

The recent past of armed ethnicized conflict during which an estimated 20,000 people lost their lives has left its mark in the country’s management of ethnic diversity and minority rights (Trifunovska 1999: 463). Croatia’s ethnic demography changed considerably because of the war. An estimated 300,000 to 350,000 Serbs and 220,000 Croats were displaced, and while the return of the latter is virtually complete, thousands of Serbs remain displaced. Indicatively, while the 1991 census recorded 12.2 per cent of Croatia as ethnic Serbs, this dropped to 4.5 in the 2001 and 4.4 in the latest 2011 census (approximately 190,000 people). In addition, after the outbreak of hostilities in 1991, approximately 40 per cent of the Hungarian population also left the country. The Serbs are still by far the largest minority in Croatia, along with the Roma, followed by some smaller groups (Bosniaks, Hungarians, Italians, Albanians, Slovenes, Czechs and others) – collectively making up around 3 per cent of the total population.

The road to independent statehood through secessionist war intensified ethnic divisions and increased the political currency of ethno-nationalism in the country. During the presidency of Franjo Tuđman little progress was made in the field of
minority rights. Indicatively, the 1990 constitution made reference to the “millennial national identity” of Croats, claiming that “the Republic of Croatia as the national state of the Croatian people and the state of members of other nations and minorities who are its citizens.” Similar to Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia, the new citizenship law adopted in 1991 contained restrictions that excluded large part of the minorities, mostly Serbs from the Croatian demos (Štiks 2010). Specifically, it turned all lawful residents who did not possess Croatian republican citizenship into aliens, subject to strict naturalization criteria. Croatian Serbs who lived in the Serbian-controlled breakaway region (Republika Srpska Krajina) during the war were also deprived of Croatian citizenship. In this initial phase improvements in the legal framework of minority protection were concentrated in the international arena, with Croatia becoming party to major international human rights treaties, the FCNM, as well as signing bilateral minority protection agreements with Hungary, Italy and Slovakia.

The weakening of the Croatian Democratic Union and the death of Tudman in 1999 opened the door to more extensive minority legislation, including the 2002 Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities (Tatalovic 2006). The Law on Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities provides for a mandatory co-official use of minority languages in municipalities where minimum one third of members belong to an ethnic minority. Further, the National Minority Language and Script Education Act ensures education in and of the minority language from kindergarten to secondary school (though a minimum of 50% Croatian-language instruction is required). Minorities’ political representation is also facilitated with 8 reserved seats in parliament, depending on their size (Croatia 2014).

36 Constitution of Croatia, available online at: http://www.constitution.org/cons/croatia.htm
Ethnically relatively homogenous ECE states

Hungary

The extensive minority protection system in Hungary was motivated by a concern for the Magyar diaspora located outside the country, rather than by a genuine preoccupation with the rights of the numerically small, linguistically assimilated, and politically largely irrelevant historic minorities that live in the country. Specifically, according to the results of the 2011 census only around 6 per cent of the total population expressed affiliation with a national or ethnic minority, which is actually an overestimate, since people could give more than one answer for this item. Apart from the national minorities, the Roma are the largest minority in the country, and make up an estimated 8 per cent of the total population (only around 3 per cent according to the 2011 census).

Pre-1920 Hungary was an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse state where only approximately 50 per cent of the population belonged to the dominant nationality. In theory, the 1868 Act on Nationalities granted cultural autonomy and rights for political participation to the minorities residing on Hungarian territory, even though in practice an almost exclusively Hungarian and fiercely nationalistic political class pursued policies of ethnic assimilation and repression. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon gave Hungary its relative ethnic homogeneity while at the same time, detaching one third of its ethnic kin. A final wave of homogenization came during and after the Second World War, with the extermination of two-thirds of Hungarian Jews and around ten thousand Roma, a population exchange with Czechoslovakia, and the expulsion of the Germans from the country (Vizi 2009: 120).

While for most of the state-socialist period the question of minorities was largely ignored, towards the late 1980s concerns with transborder Hungarians intensified, leading to the promotion of extensive minority rights domestically as well as internationally. The principles of this approach were outlined in the 1989 constitution, which recognized the minorities as distinct constituent parts of the
nation. The 1993 Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities elaborated on the basic law, granting personal cultural autonomy and the free choice of identity. The law explicitly recognized 13 historical minorities: Armenians, Bulgarians, Croats, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Roma, Romanians, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes, and Ukrainians. These minorities can freely establish publicly funded local and regional minority self-governments or national assemblies. In the same year a Parliamentary Ombudsman for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities was also established (and has since been terminated by the Fidesz government). In 2011 Hungarian parliament also passed a law on minorities’ political participation, which contains considerable concessions and eased rules for minority representation, e.g. by waiving the electoral threshold and easing the fielding of minority candidates (Horváth and Székely 2014: 435-436).

More recently, the 2010-2011 legislative changes introduced by the Fidesz-led government mirror the increasing role of nationalism in Hungarian politics and policy-making. While historic minorities are still recognized as an organic part of the Hungarian political community it is possible to detect some degree of retrenchment in minority rights provisions (Szente 2014; Dobos 2016). At the same time, demographically speaking, the potential of the historic minorities for ethno-cultural reproduction has decreased even more, except from the Roma, who, however, remain marginalized.

**Poland**

Poland is one of the most ethnically homogenous states in the ECE region, with 98% of the population declaring ethnic Poles. Given, however, the large size of the Polish population, even relatively small minorities are demographically robust: the German minority makes up only 0.4% of the overall population, but this corresponds to a fairly large demographic group (approximately 130,000 people) that is also territorially concentrated (mainly in the Opolskie voivodship). Moreover, it seems that the Polish census severely underestimates actual figures, as is
evidenced by the mismatch between official census data, and other estimates. Various minority organizations report as many as 300,000 Germans, 400,000 Belarusians and 300,000 Ukrainians (Vermeersch 2009: 169).

Perhaps more important than demographic facts is, as Vermeersch observes, that “mainstream Polish politicians are usually unwilling to listen to minority claims for their own particular historical reasons: they have often relied on historical narratives about the fragile position of Poland between large forces to justify their suspicion about the presence of minority populations (especially Russians and Germans) within the country.” (2009: 167). To understand this attitude, one has to go back to the circumstances from which Poland’s relative homogeneity emerged: coercive social engineering, that is. The murder of a large part of the Jews and the Roma in the Holocaust was followed by massive forced resettlement campaigns and national homogenization projects in an effort to “re-Polonize” the state, i.e. to make it culturally, linguistically and ethnically uniform. In the context of “ethnic unmixing” and the building of “ethnic communism” (T Snyder 2003: 187, 207 ff.) minimal minority protection arrangements were put in place promoting a folkloristic version of cultural flourishing rather than substantively empowering Poland's minorities (Vermeersch 2009: 171).

Current institutional arrangements reflect the continuing legacy of this homogenizing project. While the 1997 Polish constitution defines the holder of sovereignty in “quasi-civic” terms (Horváth and Székely 2014: 431), the prolonged legislative process on minority protection, which began in the early 1990s but concluded only in 2005, underscores a political stance stressing the homogeneity of modern Poland (Vermeersch 2009: 168). By comparative regional standards the 2005 Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language offers limited protection in the fields as culture, education and language (Ibid.). Specifically, the law allows the use of a minority language in municipal institutions in areas where minimum 20 per cent of the local population belongs officially to a national

37 A similar obstructiveness has prevented the ratification of the FCNM in 2000 – five years after the Polish government signed it.
minority. Mother-tongue education is also available for the German, Lithuanian and Ukrainian minorities, with education of the mother tongue as a supplementary language being, however, more widespread (Poland 2012). The political participation of minorities is also guaranteed by the related legislation\textsuperscript{38}, including the easier registration of minority parties and their exemption from the electoral threshold. These provisions have benefited especially the German minority party, which was consistently able to secure presence in parliament.

\textit{Czech Republic}

Similar to Poland, the drastic simplification of the ethno-demographics of the Czech Republic is the result of the Second World War, including the Holocaust, the Soviet annexation of Ruthenia to Ukraine, and the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czech territories. Moreover, just like in Poland, Czech censuses have also tended to exaggerate ethnic homogeneity, by underreporting the actual size of minorities. For instance, according to some estimates in the mid-1990s there were as many as half a million Slovaks and 200,000 Roma in the country (Rhodes 1995: 351) – as opposed to roughly 315,000 and 33,000, respective, registered in the 1991 census. Another indication of the politicized nature of censuses comes from the populations of especially Moravia and Silesia (approximately 14 per cent and 4 per cent of the total population in the 1991 and 2001 census) that are not recognized officially as national minorities and are counted as ethnically Czech (OSI 2001: 173).

In terms of the legal framework, currently an extensive minority protection system exists in the Czech Republic, as specified by the constitution and other domestic laws, international treaties and bilateral agreements concluded with neighboring Germany, Poland, and Slovakia (Sobotka 2009: 91). As a result of this, the Slovaks who make up about 2 per cent of the Czech population (approximately 200,000 people) are politically, economically and culturally well integrated and enjoy wide-

\textsuperscript{38} 1997 Act on Political Parties (amended in 2008) and 2001 Act on Elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland.
ranging protection. This is in contrast to the country’s Roma minority, who have face social exclusion and deprivation but also they are targeted by xenophobic and racist violence.

More specifically, the Czech Republic acceded to the FCNM in 1997 and to the ECRMN in 2006. The constitution, drafted in advance of the separation of Czechoslovakia in 1992, is exceptional in the region in that it is founded on explicitly civic principles (Horváth and Székely 2014). In addition, the 1991 Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms contains, apart from general non-discrimination clauses, also minority rights provisions, including the right to develop one’s culture, the right to mother tongue education, and the right to use of minority languages in public (Sobotka 2009). These rights are further elaborated in the 2001 Act on the Rights of Members of National Minorities (the “Minority Law”). The Council for National Minorities, was also established with the aim to provide consultation between the national minorities and policy-makers. The Council includes representatives of the 12 officially recognized national minorities: Bulgarians, Croats, Germans, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Roma, Russians, Ruthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, and Ukrainians. There exist also minority self-governing bodies in localities, where minimum 10 per cent of the population belongs to a national minority. The electoral legislation does not make any special provisions for national minorities and members belonging to these categories vote for broader political parties.

**Ethnically relatively heterogeneous states**

*Bulgaria*

Among ECE states that have relatively large minority populations the most restrictive in terms of minority protection is Bulgaria (Rechel 2009: Chapter 6). Bulgaria has a large Turkish and Roma population, as well as a smaller Pomak (Bulgarian-speaking Muslim) and Macedonian minority. Pomaks and Macedonians are generally seen as ethnically Bulgarian and are not officially recognized and protected. While in most ECE states the direction of change has been towards the extension of minority protection, in Bulgaria we have seen a relative stagnation
and/or a very slow progression in this field. The legislative framework that was established in the early 1990s is still more or less in force as it was adopted at the moment of the transition. When put in a historical perspective, this framework is, nonetheless, still more permissive than the one established under the Zhivkov regime and which practically denied the existence of ethnic heterogeneity in the country and set out to erase it with repressive means.

Against this backdrop key policy changes in the area of minority rights have revolved around non-discrimination, including the reversal of the aforementioned assimilation campaign (the so-called “Revival process” to be discussed in detail in Chapter 4), the adoption of the “Framework Programme”, specifically aimed at Roma integration, and the passage of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in 2003. Measures going beyond that, however, have been limited mainly to the educational field – with the partial re-introduction of minority language education in the 1990s (as an elective subject and not as a medium of instruction) – and the ratification of the FCNM, which nonetheless has yet to be translated into substantive positive change (Rechel 2009).

Further, post-Communist Bulgaria’s constitution was among the most illiberal in the region (Elster 1997: 135). Not only did the basic law of the country not recognize national or ethnic minorities, it did not even use the word minority in its text, referring, instead, to “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian”. The constitution also famously limits the political participation of these groups by prohibiting political parties established on “ethnic, racial or religious lines”. After much controversy the Constitutional Court exempted the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) from this restriction. In exchange, the MRF, initially founded as a genuine ethnic party representing the interests of the Turkish and Muslim population in the country, reinvented itself as a liberal formation of general appeal. This shift, however, did not curtail its ability to gather the minority vote, which has

made the MRF one of the most stable and powerful formations in the Bulgarian political scene (considering its base).

Romania

The largest minorities in Romania are the Hungarians – 6% of the population or approximately 1,220,000 people – and the Roma – officially 3% of the population or 620,000 but estimated between 1.4-2.5 million (Ram 2009: 181) There also exist some smaller minorities (Germans, Ukrainians, Russian-Lipovans and Turks), but Hungarians and the Roma have featured centrally in the debate on minority protection both domestically and internationally. While the prevailing minority protection arrangements are not exhaustive (when compared, for example, to Western European cases), Romanian governments have gone a long way to satisfy key demands of the Hungarian population as well as to address the socio-economic situation of the Roma, though further work remains to be done.

In December 1991 a new constitution was adopted by referendum. It employs an exclusive definition of the people by equating the source of political sovereignty with the Romanian nation, while also defining Romania as “a nation state, sovereign, unitary and indivisible”. Nevertheless, the basic law also affirms equal rights and freedom from discrimination to all citizens and minorities’ right “to the preservation, development and expression” of identity as well as guaranteeing a seat in parliament for all national minorities. In 1993 a Council for National Minorities was established consisting of ethnic minority organizations with the purpose of advising the government. Zealous to show its commitment to democracy and minority rights, the Romanian government signed the FCNM on the day it was opened for signatures and became the first country to ratify it. Romania has also signed and ratified the ECRMN.

Due to the influence of nationalist parties, however, substantive improvement in the legislation protecting the minorities began after the 1996 elections, when the DAHR was included in the governing coalition (Csergo 2002). Since then the DAHR has
been a permanent presence in the Romanian parliament and senate and its members regularly take up positions state secretaries and leaders of key institutions, such as the National Council Against Discrimination, established in 2002. A 1997 emergency ordinance declaring the right to use minority languages in the public administration in areas with minimum 20% of people officially belonging to a minority replaced a law from 1991 that allowed only Romanian as the language of public administration (the ordinance was later incorporated in the 2001 Public Administration Law) – though implementation has been sluggish. Minority education has also been a high priority for the DAHR (as I discuss in detail in Chapter 5). In 1997 an emergency ordinance relaxed the restrictive 1995 education law and in 1999 and again in 2011 legislation was further improved, guaranteeing mother tongue education from kindergarten to university. The 2003 amended constitution further codified and reinforced the rights of the minorities. Since 2000, Romanian governments adopted several laws addressing the restitution of property confiscated under communism, which has been another central demand of the Hungarians.

Slovakia

The establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993 is often presented by nationally minded commentators and politicians as the culmination of a thousand-year-long struggle for independence against the Hungarians and, later on, the Czechs. The separation of Czechoslovakia, in particular, brokered by Vladimír Mečiar, placed the country onto a nationalist trajectory at the start of its democratic transition. Mečiar’s right-wing authoritarian governments ruling between 1992–1999 delayed the adoption of extensive minority protection legislation, and were detrimental to the country’s minorities in general and the large Hungarian minority in particular (approximately 8.5% or 460,000 people according to the latest census). Progress in the field of minority protection was accomplished by the two liberally minded government coalitions between 1998–2006, which included the Hungarian minority party as a junior partner (Auer 2009).
The language of the 1992 Constitution also reflects this divide between majority political elites – running deep also in the broader Slovak society – on issues of minority protection and diversity management, as it waivers between ethnocentric and civic principles. The constitution contains explicit provisions for ethnic minorities, including the right to develop their culture, to deal in their own language with state officials, and education in their mother tongue.\(^{40}\) Yet, the State Language Act adopted in 1995 was a major blow to minority rights. Apart from enhancing the preponderance of Slovak as the sole official language of the state, the law included the stringent requirement to Slovakize female names in official documents (by adding a suffix “-ová” at the end). It would take more than a decade to amend this law and to repel its restrictions (Auer 2009).

From the late 1990s, as more liberal governments took office, allied with the Hungarian parties, minority-friendly legislation was progressively introduced. The 1999 Law on the Use of National Minority Languages now permitted the display of minority language names of streets and other geographical names as well as enabling minorities living in municipalities where they constituted minimum 20 per cent of the population to use their native language when addressing local officials (Csergő 2007: 137). The legislation affected mainly the Hungarians, but also the Roma, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Croats and Germans. Other key changes have been the 2001 a constitutional amendment, which provided for international treaties to have precedence over Slovak law (including the FCNM, the ECRML and bilateral treaties with Hungary), the establishment of the Hungarian János Selye University in Komárno/Komárom in 2004, and the passage of anti-discrimination legislation in the same year. Finally, while no special rules exist with regard to minorities’ political representation, which means that ethnic parties have to compete under general conditions applying to all, earlier restrictions from the Mečiar era have also been lifted (Horváth and Székely 2014).

\(^{40}\) The Constitution Of The Slovak Republic, available online at: http://www.slovakia.org/sk-constitution.htm
Some comparative points

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a general overview of the ECE region in terms of its ethno-demographic make-up, the patterns of domestic governance of ethnic and national diversity, as well as placing it in the broader international and geopolitical context. I began my discussion by underlining the usefulness of striking an analytical distinction between the European “core” and “periphery” in that it highlights the relational character of the distinctive path to post-imperial state-formation and the modalities of the historic politicization of national identities in the region of my interest. I then proceeded to briefly describe exactly these processes that have given shape to the current ethno-national landscapes in ECE EU member states, both as social facts and as forms of political claim making. I examined these from three different perspectives: from the perspective of “national minorities” or “accidental diasporas”, from the perspective of external “national homelands” or “kin-states” and, finally, from the perspective of “nationalizing states”.

Despite significant overlap, each viewpoint gives different information by conveying a different sense of space. A focus on minorities directs attention to the ethnic heterogeneity and diversity of the region and shows the extent to which state borders and national boundaries are misaligned: more than seven million people belong to one of the dozens of minority groups to which an explicit census category has been assigned. Moreover, the vast majority of this diversity is the result of historic border movements in combination with some kind of internal migration (i.e. movement within imperial or federal structures). Most minorities constitute transborder categories, i.e. are divided between different states, typically adjacent to each other. This overview has also shown that, historically, the direction of ethno-demographic change has been towards simplification – through assimilation, migration, expulsion and extermination – driven by both spontaneous social dynamics and coordinated political action. While radical methods have generally not been applied after the most recent regime-change in the region, it is nonetheless
noteworthy that minorities virtually everywhere have shrunk as a percentage of the total population (as shown by Figure 5).

It is also worth noting that roughly half of the total number of people with a national minority background (not counting the Roma) in ECE EU member states belong to three categories: the Russians in the Baltic states, the Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania and the Turks in Bulgaria. The Roma constitute the largest demographic group in ECE without an external homeland. Most minorities, and all the largest national minorities, in the area are associated with a kin-state, which in most cases shares a border with the state, and even the traditional place of residence, in which they reside. Kin-state involvement has a long history in the region, but in the past 25 years, diaspora-engagement instruments and policies have proliferated. This is especially the case for Hungary, the Russian Federation and Turkey that have the largest diasporas in the region. However, while kin-states can potentially play a key role in minority affairs, the mode and the outcomes of their involvement are highly variable. More than anything else, it appears that kin-state politics are governed first and foremost by power constellations and concerns in the political arenas of these kin-states and only secondarily by a genuine concern for minorities (Waterbury 2009).

The overview of the legal frameworks developed in the aftermath of state-socialism in the eleven ECE EU member states has also revealed a number of regularities. To begin with, there is the prevalence of “constitutional nationalism” (Hayden 2002) across the region, irrespective of the extent to which minority-friendly or majority-friendly policy is adopted. In its most benign form, this is an affirmation of the sovereignty of the ethno-nation, the protection of its territorial integrity and the promotion of its language and culture in addition to acknowledging national or ethnic minorities as constituents of that nation. In its most restricted form, it misrecognizes minorities or does not recognize them at all (e.g. Bulgaria, Slovenia).

In terms of longitudinal patterns, in most cases a generally negative attitude towards minorities at the immediate aftermath of the state-socialist collapse was
gradually relaxed (as in the case of citizenship policy in Estonia and Latvia), especially when minority parties were included in governing coalitions (as in the case of the Hungarian minority parties in Romania and Slovakia). Parallel to domestic legislative work, virtually all post-communist governments in the region signed agreements of good neighborliness with each other early on that in most cases included provisions guaranteeing the protection of minorities. As all countries stepped immediately onto the road to Euro-Atlantic integration, they invariably signed and ratified international legal instruments of minority protection, such as the FCNM.

Generally, unless specific restrictions are made, legal frameworks are one-size-fit-all constructions. That is, the same rules apply to all minorities that have identical rights and privileges. In practice, however, the treatment of the different minorities varies considerably not only between but also within states. This is most evident in the case of the Roma, who face the most discrimination and are socio-economically the most disadvantaged virtually everywhere. But even within the group of what under most definitions constitutes national minorities, some are subject to more preferential policies than others. Cases in point are Estonia, Latvia, Croatia and Slovenia that have all enacted laws that with the explicit aim of putting in disadvantage a specific category of people. Typically, those were in each case large formerly dominant populations, perceived as potentially threatening and generally undeserving of special protection. In yet other cases, the determination of one large and well-organized minority – most notably, the Hungarians in Romania, but also to some extent the Poles in Lithuania – to secure extensive rights has lead to the adoption of minority-friendly policies for all similar categories.

With regard to the specific provisions for minority protection, the eleven states of interest here without exception ensure cultural, linguistic and educational minority rights. These are, however, often tied to a specific proportion of language users or prospective students in a certain administrative unit. Moreover, requirements to study the majority language are also extensive in some cases, most notably in
Estonia and Latvia, while in Bulgaria Turkish is only a subject and not a medium of instruction. Further, many states also provide special arrangements to ease minority political participation by lowering the electoral thresholds or having ethnic quotas. Bulgaria, once again, stands out as the most restrictive in this policy-field, with a constitution that prohibits the founding of ethnic parties. Finally, note that while the territorial concentration and the former experience with some type of self-government makes many of the studied cases candidates for territorial devolution, this does not seem to be a viable option in the region.

Some variation between the different policy-fields as well as the differential treatment of minorities within the same context makes classifying and ranking the eleven states under consideration difficult. Moreover, in addition to the current patterns of minority protection standards, the direction and the pace of change also matters greatly. And while demographics and past experiences go some way in explaining the observed patterns, let us not forget that these are most likely endogenous to a host of socio-political circumstances. Demographic threat-perceptions tied to relatively large, territorialized minorities are associated with more restrictive policy outcomes, as in the case of Latvia and Estonia. Violence and war fought along ethnic lines has a similarly negative connection, as in the case of Slovenia and Croatia. In Poland and Bulgaria the emancipation of the formerly dominant German and Turkish minority, respectively, has also been perceived as a threat. However, the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia are an important exception to this rule: large and formerly dominant minorities have wide ranging minority rights, despite the presence of some – or even considerable – resistance against minority rights.
Chapter 3
Research design and methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and methods employed in the three analytical chapters of the thesis (Chapter 4, 5 and 6). I begin by providing a justification for the selected cases based on the insights of the theoretical and empirical literature presented in the preceding Chapters 1 and 2. I then turn to the specifics of my methodological approach, which combines macro-historical analysis with the interview method. This chapter complements the shorter methodological notes that I included in each of the analytical chapters.

The logic of comparison

In this thesis I seek to map up and explain the different modalities of and the longitudinal changes in the institutionalization of ethnicity in the field of education. For this I use case study methodology, which directs attention to the individual distinctiveness of important historical configurations as well as allowing for rich characterization and in-depth analysis (Gerring 2007). The logic of the thesis is comparative, based on the contrasting assessment of carefully selected cases, intended to sharpen my arguments and propositions. These are the education of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (Chapters 4 and 6) and the Hungarian minority in Romania and the Russian-speakers in Estonia (Chapter 5).

These cases combine some general similarities with differences in outcome – Chapters 4 and 6 – or other important aspects – Chapter 5 (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Table 4 below singles out eight theoretically relevant dimensions that are commonly present across in ECE in general and in the three cases of interest, in particular, along with a few key publications that link these factors to outcomes.
similar to what interests me here. Of course, what appears as a similarity on a certain level of abstraction breaks down to numerous differences on a less aggregated level (M Kohn 1987: 716). Nonetheless, limiting the number of conditions that may be plausibly linked to the institutional design, even on a relatively high level of aggregation, usefully restricts the general lines of interpretation that my comparative analysis can take.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. General similarities across the cases and their theoretical relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minority factors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large ethno-cultural minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denominational, linguistic, cultural distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formerly dominant minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State factors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of state-seeking nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU member state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighboring kin-state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I now want to further elaborate the rationale of case selection by discussing more systematically the universe of cases (Table 5 describes the strategy step-by-step). From among all post-communist states located in Europe’s Eastern periphery, I focus exclusively on EU member states in order to standardize the dimension of liberal democratic governance, and to ensure a baseline level of commitment to the protection of human and minority rights. In a next step, I exclude the successors of the former Yugoslavia, due to the legacy of exceptionally intense ethnic confrontation and violence there. Further, I focus only on countries with (numerically and proportionately) large, territorially concentrated national/ethnic minorities or “accidental diasporas”. This leaves me with the cases of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the Hungarian minority in Romania and Slovakia, and the Russian-speaking population in Estonia and Latvia.

From this point on, the specific research questions and aims of the individual chapters have guided the selection. Bulgaria and Romania offer opportunities for a particularly fruitful contrasting assessment because largely similar conditions and a comparable sequence of historical development combine with considerable outcome variation. Namely, the degree to which formal institutions in general and educational institutions in particular are built around ethnic categories varies greatly between the two contexts: Romania’s comprehensive parallel Hungarian school system contrasts sharply with the minimal educational provisions that are set up for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, raising the question: What explains the variable degree of the institutionalization of minority ethnicity across these generally comparable contexts and between largely comparable minorities? The dissimilarity becomes even more interesting when put in a historical perspective given that minority education has a long history in the two countries. Why was Turkish education eliminated in Bulgaria while Hungarian education persisted in Romania? The puzzling variation in outcome in the context of numerous commonalities makes this pair of cases particularly fruitful, explored in detail in Chapters 4 and 6.
The comparison between the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and the Hungarian minority in Romania (explored in Chapter 4) is interesting for other reasons. This chapter is concerned primarily with the crystallization of collective identity around schools as valuable shared possessions. As these are created and reinforced through the passage of time, the temporal dimension becomes of key importance, justifying the contrast between a relatively new institutional framework and an historic one. I chose the case of Hungarians in Romania rather than in Slovakia because of the long and prestigious history of Hungarian education in Transylvania and because this case is already discussed analyzed in the other

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41 United Nations provisional designation "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia."
42 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
chapters. The Russian-language education system is of more recent origin in both Estonia and Latvia. I chose former rather than the latter, because the exceptionally large proportion of Russian-speakers relative to the overall population in Latvia limits comparability with Romania. Moreover, on average, Russian-speakers have lived longer in Latvia than in Estonia (Muižnieks et al. 2013), which is an important detail for the purposes of my study that focuses on the creation of attachments through time. But the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia is attractive also for other reasons. A decade after the collapse of state-socialism, ethnic polarization in the country regarding minority rights issues was the highest across the region (Evans and Need 2002: Table 1). Moreover, since the democratic transition the educational attainment of Russian-speakers in Estonia has diverged from that of the native population (Lindemann and Saar 2012) and the Russian-speakers have been acquiring Estonian language skills at the slowest pace among the three Baltic States. These processes make the study of minority education in the country particularly interesting.

**Minority profiles**

An advantage of the selected set of cases is that it includes the three largest minorities in ECE (apart from the Roma), located in three different states. This serves the additional purpose of providing a rich and variegated picture of ethnicity and nationalism in the region. Having presented the general logic of case-selection I now want to describe in more detail the historical, demographic and political presence of these minorities their countries of residence, with the aim of providing additional background information for the analytical chapters.

**The Hungarian minority in Romania**

There are approximately 2.2 million European Hungarians living outside the borders of present-day Hungary, forming the largest national minority in Europe. Almost half of this population, approximately 1.2 million people, lives in Romania.
They are predominantly concentrated in the historical region of Transylvania, where they make up around 20 per cent of the population overall, but in some administrative districts they are the majority (85% and 74% in Hargita and Covasna, respectively). Part of the Hungarian population also live in the border region adjacent to Hungary constituting the so-called dispersed communities or “szórvány” in Hungarian. As I have already discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the Hungarian minority in Romania came into being through border movements following the First World War, when territories that had traditionally belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary and later Austria-Hungary, were dethatched in 1920. During World War Two, Transylvania was annexed to Hungary, but was returned to Romania once again with the Treaty of Paris.

The Romanian communist authorities were generally tolerant of the Hungarian minority. Indicatively, in 1952, a Magyar Autonomous Region was created, only to be dissolved in 1968 following the administrative re-organization of the country. The communist leadership, and especially after Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power, restarted the policy of Romanianization or national communism (Verdery 1991), which curtailed the rights of the minorities as part of a generalized repression (Culic 2006). The concomitant of the end of communist party rule in Romania – as elsewhere in the region – was the appearance of colliding national sentiments and national movements (Verdery 1993). Mass mobilization of Hungarians for minority rights and especially minority education was characteristic of this initial period and, in one instance, there were even some violent clashes between Hungarians and Romanians some violent clashes (the Târgu Mureș events of March 1990). Conflict along ethnic lines was nonetheless channeled into the political arena.

Hungarians in Romania are politically well organized, with an influential and long-standing minority party, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) gathering most of the Hungarian ethnic vote (Kiss and Szekely 2016). As shown in Table 6, the DAHR has been elected to the Romanian Senate and Chamber of Deputies consistently since the regime change, while from 1996 onwards the DAHR has also served as a junior coalition partner in several governments. Hungarian and
Romanian governments also signed a bilateral treaty in 1995 in which the former renounced all territorial claims to Transylvania, while the latter reiterated its commitment to the rights of its minorities. Despite some controversies, relations between the two countries improved as Euro-Atlantic integration progressed.

Table 6. The DAHR in Romanian National Elections (Chamber of Deputies), 1990-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N of votes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>991,601</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>811,290</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>812,628</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>736,863</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>638,125</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>425,008</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>380,656</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>435,969</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Romanian Chamber of Deputies, http://www.cdep.ro/*

In demographic terms, during the past century, the proportion of Hungarians as part of the overall population has declined significantly (Table 7), while their social position has also changed. Hungarians used to control the public administration, the economy, and urban life before 1918 and they partially succeeded at keeping this position for a long time. Today, the societal positions of the Hungarians are less favorable than those of ethnic Romanians, with lower proportions of individuals with higher education, lower average income, and lower proportion of city-dwellers (Kiss 2014). Nonetheless, ethnic inequalities are not excessive, and Hungarian ethnicity is not a marker of status position in the country (Kiss and Székely 2016: 6).
Table 7. Hungarian population in Romania, 1930-2011 (census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Hungarians</th>
<th>Hungarians as % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>14,280,729</td>
<td>1,423,459</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>13,597,613</td>
<td>1,499,851</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>17,489,450</td>
<td>1,587,675</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>19,103,163</td>
<td>1,619,592</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>21,559,910</td>
<td>1,713,928</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>22,810,035</td>
<td>1,624,959</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>19,399,597</td>
<td>1,431,807</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16,792,868</td>
<td>1,227,623</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Turkish minority in Bulgaria

The same cannot be said for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, which occupies a markedly unfavorable social position in relation to the majority. Most Turks residing in Bulgaria today are concentrated in two areas, where they also constitute the local majority: Silistra – Varna in the northeast and Haskovo – Kurdzali the southeastern corner of Bulgaria. Economically, the Turks are disadvantaged relative to the Bulgarians in terms of income, presence in professions and presence in the commercial sector (MAR 2008). The highest illiteracy rates are observed in districts where the concentration of minorities is large, while the activity rate is also the lowest in these districts (Bulgaria 2011). Reflecting the general tendency across the region, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria has been shrinking (see: Table 8).

Similar to Hungarians, this minority is also of post-imperial origin, created by the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Note that currently about 1.1 million Turks live in Southeastern Europe. More than half of them reside in Bulgaria (approximately 590 thousand), but large Turkish communities can also be found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, the Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Greece. Historically, the Turkish population in the Balkans formed through both
The ancestors of these populations arrived to Southeastern Europe following the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans, between the 14th and the 16th century. With the conquests of Thrace, Macedonia and Bulgaria, significant numbers of Turkish-speaking Muslim populations from Anatolia settled in these regions.

Table 8. Turkish population in Bulgaria, 1900-2011, (census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Turks</th>
<th>Turks as a % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3,744,283</td>
<td>531,240</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>4,035,575</td>
<td>488,010</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>4,337,513</td>
<td>465,641</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,846,971</td>
<td>520,339</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>5,478,741</td>
<td>577,552</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>6,077,939</td>
<td>591,193</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>7,029,349</td>
<td>675,500</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>7,613,709</td>
<td>656,025</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>8,227,966</td>
<td>780,928</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>8,727,771</td>
<td>730,728</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8,487,317</td>
<td>800,052</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,928,901</td>
<td>746,664</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7,364,570</td>
<td>588,318</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dominant cleavage distinguishing majorities and minorities in the Balkans until the nineteenth century was the religious one. This was based on a rigid division between Muslims and non-Muslims justified by the Islamic foundation of the empire (Bieber 2000). The formation and politicization of national self-understandings among the Muslim communities in the Balkans developed later than in Western and Central Europe, around the nineteenth century (Ibid.). This is not to say that religion was antagonistic to national identity-formation. In fact, the two components took different, but generally reinforcing, modalities across different cases. The Bosnian Muslims developed a national identity based on religion; Albanians have a national identity that supersedes religious identification; national and religious self-
understandings have been closely tied in the case of the Bulgarian Turks (Mentzel 2000).

The nationalist movements that developed within the decaying Ottoman empire, including the Bulgarian one, led to ethno-nationalist uprisings across the region, inducing, in the last quarter of the 19th and the early part of the 20th century, a great migratory movement of as many as 7-9 million Muslims/Turks, mainly to Anatolia (Brubaker 1995). Since the formation in 1878 of the Bulgarian Principality the social position of the Turks in Bulgaria as compared to the majority has steadily deteriorated. The attitude of the Bulgarian leadership, which has been intermittently minority-friendly, significantly deteriorated during the Zhivkov era, culminating in a coercive assimilation campaign, the so-called Revival process, which was initiated in the mid-1980s and reversed only after the fall of the regime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>N. Votes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>491,596</td>
<td>8.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>418,168</td>
<td>7.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>283,094</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997*</td>
<td>323,429</td>
<td>9.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>340,395</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>467,400</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>592,381</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>400,466</td>
<td>11.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>487,134</td>
<td>14.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>315,976</td>
<td>8.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Running as part of the “Alliance for National Salvation”

In terms of political representation, there exist a strong party that gathers the majority of the Turkish vote, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), which has had constant presence in Parliament and, like the DAHR, has also served as a junior coalition partner in governments (see Table 9). It was originally founded as a
genuine ethnic party, yet, the MRF swiftly moved away from a strong minority rights agenda towards liberal, individualistic rhetoric and positions (Rechel 2008; Fatkova 2012), because of the legal restrictions imposed on it (recall that Bulgarian legislation prohibits founding political parties on the basis of religion, ethnicity or race). Seemingly paradoxically, the MRF remains a generally detested party in Bulgarian public life, while, at the same time, having achieved objectively little in terms of improving Bulgaria’s minority rights record.

The Russian-speaking minority in Estonia

At present, the Russian-speaking populations in the three Baltic States comprise more than 1 million people, making up one of the largest minorities in the EU. About a quarter of the total population of Estonia, or approximately 300,000 people, are Russians or Russian-speakers (see: Table 10). These populations are territorially concentrated in the North East of the country around Narva and in the capital of Tallinn. They are predominantly clustered in urban areas and work mainly in industry and in manual occupations. Compared to the Hungarian and the Turkish diasporas, the Russian-speaking communities in the Baltic States are of more recent origin. Following the annexation of the Baltic countries during the Second World War to the USSR, hundreds of thousands of Soviet workers arrived to the Baltics, mainly to operate the industrial projects. These blue-collar workers and their families settled compactly in urban and industrial areas and mingled little with the local communities. Since these populations were ethnically diverse it is an established practice in the literature to refer to “Russian-speakers” rather than Russians (e.g. Hogan-Brun et al. 2008; Muižnieks 2006; Schmid 2008; Vihalemm and Masso 2007).

As the Baltic States regained independence in the early 1990s Russian-speakers – who otherwise supported the change (Kolsto 1995) – became minorities, loosing abruptly the power and prestige they held during the Soviet era (Pavelson and Luuk
The Russian Federation established a right of return to protect its new accidental diaspora, but few Russian-speakers left for the economically less prosperous country (Aptekar 2009).

Table 10. Russian population in Estonia, 1922-2011 (census data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Russians as % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>1,107,059</td>
<td>91,109</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,126,413</td>
<td>92,656</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1,196,791</td>
<td>240,227</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,356,079</td>
<td>334,620</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1,464,476</td>
<td>408,778</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1,565,662</td>
<td>474,834</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,370,052</td>
<td>351,178</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,294,455</td>
<td>326,235</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the presence of several conditions that could potentially serve as the bases of group identification, including a shared mother tongue and territorial concentration, Russian-speakers are a rather fragmented social category with relatively low levels of internal solidarity and cohesion. It is difficult to assign to them a common set of collective interests or even a collective ethnic identity, underlined also by the weakness of the civil society failure of any minority party to become a relevant actor in the country (Cianetti 2014). The vast majority of non-Estonians support the Centre Party, which has a centrist, social-liberal agenda. That said, ethnic polarization on minority rights issues has been high (Evans and Need 2002), with conflict arising around citizenship, linguistic rights and education reform. Moreover, similar to Romania, in Estonia too there have occurred ethnicized clashes (the “Bronze Night” in 2007).

Several studies show that the Russian-speakers currently are on a trajectory to intergenerational assimilation (Laitin 2003) and/or integration (Antane and Tsilevich 1999; Pisarenko 2006) throughout the region. Further, Russian-speakers
have generally exhibited relatively weak interest in kin-state support (Csergő and Goldgeier 2013: 95) their identities have been geared more towards the EU, with migration to more prosperous EU member states being an attractive path to upward social mobility (Hughes 2005; Aptekar 2009).

**Data collection and analysis**

Methodologically, this thesis links macro-historical analysis with the examination of current practices, preferences and discourses. The purpose is two-fold: on the one hand, to take history seriously by going beyond the tokenistic reference of “legacies of interethnic strife” detailing, instead, social and political change as it unfolded in time, and the way the transformations of the past continue to influence the present. On the other hand, I also want to convey the minorities’ perspective, highlighting and at the same time seeking to explain their role in shaping the institutional design. The interview method is, I believe, ideal to map up the way participants perceive their options and constraints, how they formulate their strategies and how this connects to the institutionalization of minority ethnicity in each context.

**Interviews**

For this thesis I conducted a total of 62 interviews: 22 in Romania (Cluj and Bucharest), 18 in Bulgaria (Sofia) and 22 in Estonia (Tallinn and Narva). I did most of the interviews during the course of 2015, except for 4 interviews in Narva that I conducted in January 2017. While all have been crucial in developing this thesis, by providing first-hand background information that I used in the conceptualization and the evaluation of the findings, I decided to systematically analyze a subset of the total number of interviews: those that express the perspectives of the Hungarians, Russian-speakers and Turks respectively, 48 in total (see the box with the distinctive borders in **Table 7**).
### Table 7. Interviewees, by ethnic background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RO</th>
<th>BU</th>
<th>ES</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Bulgaria I have included in this subset three human and minority-rights advocates (under the heading “other” in Table 7) who ethnically belong to the majority, but who can reasonably be hypothesized to speak in the interest of the minority. In the case of the Russian-speakers, who are a more diverse category than the Hungarians in Romania and the Turks in Bulgaria, I classified as “minority” all individuals who are of non-Estonian origin and whose mother tongue is Russian. I provide a full list with the interviewees with information on their background and affiliation in the Appendix of the thesis. For reasons of confidentiality, I refer to the interviewees by a codename, composed by the initials of the country of residence and a serial number.

Each interview lasted between 30 to 120 minutes – with the typical interview being approximately one hour long – during which time I took detailed notes. Interviews were conducted in a language in which interviewees could express themselves comfortably. This was Hungarian (in Romania) and English (in Estonia and in Bulgaria). In the rare instances interviewees’ did not speak English, I used the help of interpreters translating from Bulgarian, Turkish and Russian.

To identify my informants I used a purposive sampling method (Judd et al. 1991) by selecting *strategically positioned individuals* (a term to be further unpacked below) from the institutional, political, civil society and academic sphere, who are involved in minority affairs in general and minority education in particular. In later stages I also introduced the chain-referral method, asking at the end of the interview every individual to point out further potential interviewees who may contribute to my research (Babbie 1992), while also continuing to identify further interview subjects on my own. With regard to the number of interviews I followed the principle of
saturation (Saumure and Given 2008; Fusch and Ness 2015). I completed the data-collection when the marginal contribution of each interviewee with new information had decreased considerably. Saturation was not independent from the size of minority educational structures prevailing in each country. Given that in Romania there exists a large Hungarian minority educational system, this also means that there are much more individuals involved in minority education, including teachers and academics, inspectors, members and leaders of professional organizations, political actors with an education/minority rights portfolio and so forth. Conversely, in Bulgaria, where minority education is minimal, saturation was achieved relatively early and with fewer informants with Estonia lying somewhere between the two. Moreover, the existing educational systems also influenced the ethnic composition of my sample. Namely, while in Romania ethnic Hungarians can be found in practically all spheres related to minority education, including positions of power, this was not the case in Bulgaria, and somewhat less so, in Estonia which is why there I also conducted interviews with persons of majority background.

Like every method, interviewing has its advantages as well as its disadvantages (Weiss 1994). Among the most significant benefits is that it provides an opportunity to engage in-depth with the object of analysis by conveying participants’ perceptions in all their intricacy and complexity. More specifically, even though large-scale representative surveys and/or formal modeling deliver information that is more easily quantifiable or generalizable than interview data, the latter is better placed to capture the multifarious thought-processes underlying participants’ attitude and behavior – an exercise that is quite unmanageable with surveys. Moreover, in the field of ethnicity and nationalism, interviewing is a key method in that it allows for a plurality of voices and perspectives to be included in the analysis, thusly contributing to de-essentializing the research design and to go beyond the assumed homogeneity of a minority group as a monolithic block. Conversely,

43 While this is a relatively small sample, it is worth noting that basic elements and metathemes may become clearly distinguishable already in single-digit number of interviews (Guest et al. 2006) – depending, of course, on the research topic and objectives.
interviewing is admittedly more problematic when it comes to sampling bias and representativeness. Being aware of this limitation, I do not claim that the opinions of my informants correspond to those held by the entire minority populations, only that they constitute important points of entry to the problem of ethnic and nationalist politics that is of interest in this study. The choice to focus on those who, in lieu of a better term, I call strategically positioned individuals is, ultimately, a decision driven by the specific research questions I seek to answer.

As discussed in Chapter 1, some individuals play more important role in collective mobilization, in increasing the salience of ethnicity and crystallizing groupness than others – which is why these actors should be accorded special attention in scientific analysis, acknowledging, of course, that their incentives, preferences and positions may likely deviate from those of the general minority population. What makes such analysis complicated is to delineate with precision the sociological profiles of these strategically positioned actors. Political elites and/or “policy-makers” are perhaps the most obvious and least controversial category given, and they constitute frequent interview subjects in social science research. However, a number of studies show that those located in the space between the elites and the ordinary individuals also play a key role in shaping ethno-political ethno-social dynamics. In an early formulation, for example, Tilly refers to “ethnic entrepreneurs” who he defines as “professional brokers such as intellectuals and politicians” (1991: 574). Rogers Brubaker echoes this choice of words, making mention of “ethnopolicy entrepreneurs” who he defines as specialists living “off” as well as “for” ethnicity (2002: 166). Other analyses that provide clues as to who these individuals may be include Kiss and Székely (2016), who speak of a sub-elite “stratum of intellectuals and activists” as having influenced minority politics (specifically in the case of the Hungarians in Romania, but the point can be generalized) and Agarin (2011), who conducted interviews with the officials of civil society organizations pursuing a minority rights advocacy in Estonia and Latvia. In an interesting methodological choice Anke Weber (2009) conducted expert interviews with local academics and experts in order to test her explanations of the politicization of ethnicity.
My method to focus on a diverse group of overwhelmingly minority informants on the basis of their engagement with educational and minority rights issues is an effort to include in the analysis all those groups that the aforementioned studies have focused on, with the aim of providing a complex and variegated picture. Accordingly, part of my informants fall squarely into the category of elites, in that they possess some form of control over valuable resources (economic, organizational, political, social, or cultural). Others can be more accurately categorized as sub-elites, typically activists and/or intellectuals who are organizing around minority rights issues but who also operate in an elite-challenging mode. Many of my interviewees have been involved in some way or another in the building and maintenance of ethnic institutions, including minority education, in variable roles. I pay particular attention to academics, relying not only on their professional expertise, but also seeing their intellectual activity as being potentially entangled with political projects. This is not to say that the boundaries of these categories are not blurred – in fact they are often interlinked and/or overlapping, which is a known feature of minority communities (Lijphart 1968).

A final point with regard to the interview subjects relates the extent to which an actor can claim that they are speaking on behalf of/in the interest of “the minority”. Given the highly contentious nature of ethnic politics, including internal divisions and antagonisms, this is, admittedly a particularly difficult judgment. That being said, thorough contextual knowledge and background research can provide significant guidelines in this respect. Further, in order to identify these respondents I also heavily relied on the advice of local experts. In particular, the degree of visibility of a certain actor – corporate or individual – in the domestic and/or the international arena in the field of minority rights in general and education in particular is a key indicator. My interviewees hold or held in the past important positions as political representatives, government and state administrators, and officials of recognized minority rights advocacy organizations. Among them were also published academics and/or widely known intellectuals and experts.
Coding and analysis

Having described the data collection methodology, I now turn to the discussion of the method of their evaluation. My approach was exploratory, driven predominantly by the content of the primary data the interviews generated (Guest et al. 2012). This approach conformed to the stated aim of my project to examine participants’ perspectives with no prior presuppositions or assumptions. That said, I did have some broad guiding questions in mind: how do participants think about the trade-offs between “equality” and “difference”? How do they evaluate the existing minority protection arrangements? Where do they attribute causality? What kind of preferences or priorities do they hold and with what kind of arguments and justifications do they support these? I did not start out with a fixed and rigorous coding scheme, because I wanted to proceed inductively, i.e. allowing for the analytic categories to emerge freely from the data (Boyatzis 1998). However, interviews were not entirely unstructured. More specifically, I included in every discussion three main topics, while allowing, at the same time, for the interviewees to bring in additional issues that I did not foresee. The themes that I incorporated in all conversations were the following:

1. history of minority education;
2. relevant actors (organizations, parties, European Union, etc.);
3. minorities’ education-related aims and problems.

Already during fieldwork some returning elements, keywords and themes arose from the data. When I finished data-collection, I set up a more rigorous coding scheme in order to classify and analyze these patterns, which I further refined by reading and re-reading the texts.

The precise form this scheme took depended on the specific questions explored in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, which are the two chapters that analyze the interview material. Chapter 5 compares the narratives of Hungarian respondents from Romania and Russian-speakers from Estonia, exploring the idea that minority
schools, under certain circumstances, may come to be seen as identity-constituting collective possessions, and speculates that such collective attachments may underlie ethicized conflict over education. In order to operationalize attachments, the variable ways that is, that people may come to relate to “their” ethnic institutions as collective possessions, I drew on empirical studies from the field of anthropology (e.g. Weiner 1992, Harrison 1999). On the basis of these studies I singled out three themes whose presence and frequency was related to attachments: (1) the passage of time linked to the production of value, (2) self-other definitions on the basis of ownership, and, finally, (3) attribution of intent, i.e. how did minority participants evaluate the majorities’ education-related actions. Subsequently, I linked the variable configurations of these themes to the potential for ethicized conflict over education. I discuss this method in detail also in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 analyzes data from interviews I conducted with in Romania and Bulgaria. It is geared to mapping up minorities’ education-related preferences through the lens of strategically positioned individuals and understanding how these are formed. I coded this material in three steps. I began by looking into the argumentative patterns, dissecting the statements of participants into two parts: what the expressed preferences or positions are (“What do we want?”) and on what grounds are these justified (“Why do we want it?” “Why should we have it?”). Generally, my aim was to understand education-related positions and desires, on the one hand, and the reasons for supporting these on the other hand. I was interested I questions like: Would respondents use more cultural-identitarian or economic-utilitarian arguments in justifying the need for minority education? Drawing on comparisons from the interview material as well as using the existing literature on minority rights (mainly following Aukerman 2000 and May 2012), I then set up a classificatory scheme against which to evaluate my findings. More specifically, I identified three stages of education-related preferences (“What do we want?”): official affirmation of “difference”, the expansion of minority education and gaining control over it, as well as four main argumentative themes (“Why should we have it?”), relating to minorities’ distinctive vulnerability, utilitarian arguments,
historical arguments, and arguments constructed around the conviction that cultural difference constitutes a value in and of itself. I was also interested in understanding how participants’ preferences are formed. In this step I searched for attributions of causality in the narratives of the participants. I singled out the three most frequent explanations they offered: the role of the political elites, majority public opinion and prospects of emigration. Not wanting to fully adopt the perspectives of participants, but rather, seeking to explain them, I relied on my own expertise as well as the existing scholarship to examine the extent to which these explanations were plausible and/or valid.

**Comparative history and neo-institutional analysis**

In Chapter 4 I use a different type of evidence and method of analysis. On the basis of historical data that I extracted from dozens of scholarly articles and monographs on Romanian and Bulgarian history and the history of minorities therein I first build up two narratives regarding the historical evolution of minority-majority social relations over time and, subsequently, I put them into a comparative light, in order to draw my theoretical conclusions. In doing so I follow a vast literature that uses comparative history to analyze a wide range of phenomena, from systems of government (Moore 1966; Linz 2000), revolutions (Skocpol 1979; Goldstone 1991), welfare state development and social provision (de Swaan 1988; Esping-Andersen 1990), processes of state formation and development (Ekiert 1996; Ertman 1997; Tilly 1990) industrialization and economic development (Evans 1995; Seidman 1994), and – particularly relevant for this study – national identities and ethnic and racial relations (Brubaker 1992; Calhoun 1997; Hechter 2000; Lustick 1993).

Further, I also adopt on the epistemological assumptions and the analytical toolkit of the “new” institutionalism (e.g. Hall and Taylor 1996; Pierson 2000B; Goldstone 1998; Béland 2010). On the one hand, I posit that institutions do not merely
constitute the contexts of political action, but that they are constitutive of it. Accordingly, particularly in the case of ethnicity, this can be seen as being inextricably linked with contextual and institutional variables, and not independent of them. Institutional analysis offers a unique opportunity to de-essentialize research, by directing attention away from the purported importance of particularistic self-understandings and towards other variables that underlie ethno-political and ethno-social dynamics, including institutions themselves (Brubaker 1994; Bunce 1999; see also: Broschek 2013).

On the other hand, neo-institutional analysis is particularly well placed to capture the dynamics of change and continuity through a sophisticated toolkit that describes the various aspects of temporality, such as timing and sequencing (Grzymala-Busse 2011: 1268; Thelen 2000). Careful consideration of temporality is a key analytical attribute also in the study of path dependence that highlights the resilience and determinism of institutions (Mahoney 2000). Institutional arrangements tend to lock in, become resilient and “sticky”, persisting even after the initial power-dynamics have shifted and/or circumstances have changed. This equilibrium is by rule upset by exogenous shocks occurring at critical junctures, i.e. large-scale watershed events that are able to alter earlier patterns and to initiate new causal chains (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). More recent scholarship has tried to incorporate agency and power into this otherwise rather static account showing that change can be provoked endogenously and incrementally, too, through internal contestation and struggle (Thelen and Streeck 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

Focusing on power-relations between actors and the ways institutions are able to mediate these is a way to incorporate agency, defined as “a temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998) in the analysis. Power-centered explanations of path-dependency posit that institutions distribute resources unequally between the different actors, and that they are therefore subject to ceaseless contestation (P. Hall 2010). It can be hypothesized that this is even more so in societies based on sharp distinctions, such as deep ethnic cleavages.
Once locked in, institutions influence agents’ behavior and the overall distribution of power, by conferring, for instance, certain expectations or by allocating specific resources to them. Put in this light, even institutional stability and continuity require on-going support underlain by power-struggles. Following these insights, in my historical analysis I concentrate on specific social categories whose interests I see as being tied to the institutionalization of particular identity-markers in the state apparatus, tracing the longitudinal changes in the position these categories occupy in the social stratification (Mahoney 2000: 521 ff.).
Chapter 4

Change and continuity in the institutionalization of ethnicity: a comparative analysis of the historical evolution of Hungarianness in Romania and Turkishness in Bulgaria

In the 1949/50 academic year there were as many as 1200 Turkish schools in Bulgaria, where more than 3000 educators taught roughly 100,000 ethnic minority students (Simsir 1988). Today, the number of separate Turkish schools in the country is zero. There are no Turkish departments within majority schools, either. By startling contrast, in neighboring Romania there currently exists an extensive Hungarian-language school system from pre-primary to tertiary level. In the 2014/2015 school year there were 956 separate Hungarian institutions and/or Hungarian departments within mixed institutions and the total number of Hungarian students enrolled in minority education was approximately 130,000 (Barna 2016: 14; Márton and Kapitány 2016: 36).

Schooling is only one field in which there is such striking difference between the two cases. Hungarianness, in general, is much more thoroughly institutionalized in Romania than Turkishness in Bulgaria. What explains this contrast? The question becomes even more puzzling if put in a historical perspective. This reveals that both Hungarians and Turks inherited a significant institutional infrastructure from the time when they constituted the dominant social categories in what was to become the nation states of Bulgaria and Romania. However, having persisted for a while, minority ethnicity was eventually almost entirely erased from the Bulgarian institutional landscape, although the same did not happen in the case of Romania. Why was that so?
I argue that this pattern is the result of a divergence initiated at the moment of the reconfiguration of the political space amidst imperial dissolution. I find that the institutionally entrenched minority ethnicity at the time of the border movements that gave Romania and Bulgaria their current outlines significantly delayed the complete nationalization of the previously multinational modes of socio-political organization in both cases. This change, however, came early in Bulgaria, finding the Turkish nation-building project still in a nascent phase. In combination with the continuous emigration of the most educated among the Muslim/Turkish minority, these initial conditions morphed into a downward spiral that has inhibited the formation and consolidation of exactly that social stratum, i.e. an educated Turkish middle class and intelligentsia, that would have been able to put forth and coordinate a minority counter-nationalist project. Conversely, at the moment of the border movement, a strong, nationally minded Hungarian middle class and a corresponding extensive institutional infrastructure had already developed in Romania, which could withstand nationalizing pressures to a comparatively much higher degree. In other words, Hungrianness was so powerfully instituted at the moment of the border movement that it could lastingly endure subsequent nationalization, the result being the extensive minority protection arrangements that are today in place in that country.

This chapter seeks to go beyond much of the conventional research on minority protection in the East-Central European (ECE) context (e.g. Kelley 2004; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005A; 2005B; Vachudova 2005) that typically operates under two key premises. Namely that, on the one hand, the relatively recent liberalization of diversity management in the region constitutes a singular historical achievement, engendered by the diffusion of universal notions of individual and group rights, and, on the other hand, that this development has been predominantly externally driven, because of historically constituted and seemingly indissoluble ethnic antagonisms between large and alienated minorities and
“minoritized majorities”44 (Kymlicka 2001; Kymlicka and Opalski 2001). However, while path dependency is indeed a helpful concept for analyzing ethnic politics today, nonetheless, if conceptualized as an unbreakable cycle of endurably hostile majority-minority relations this, in effect, restates the identity-based argument that the sociological literature on ethnicity has striven to go beyond of, given its limitations and inconsistencies (Chandra 2001; 2012). The historical comparative analysis presented here likewise takes previous developments seriously, emphasizing the continuity of social experience. Yet, contrary to the thesis of externally driven change, it highlights the ways that today's arrangements grew organically from the pre-existing patterns of social organization and institutional landscapes. Theoretically, the study is grounded in the vast intellectual tradition that links nationalism to modernization, explaining the transformation of political authority in terms of basic changes in the social structure: the emergence of the bureaucratic state, urbanization, secularism, social and geographical mobility and the spread of literacy (e.g. Deutsch 1966; Nairn 1981[1977]; Gellner 2006[1983]).

**Institutionalized ethnicity in time**

The broader theoretical problem this paper speaks to is the complex interconnection between ethnicity and politics. Part and parcel of this is the question of conflict over the control of the state: accessing its institutions, benefiting from its resources, and influencing the way it operates (Wimmer 2002: Chapter 4). Given that the different ethnicities’ capacity to capture, through their representatives, the state, is variable, this severely impacts their position of power. The dominant ethnicity (commonly referred to as the *majority*), having seized the state and its apparatus, is better placed to thoroughly entrench in the state structure

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44 The term refers to majorities that “think and act as if they are weak and victimized minorities and, therefore, continue to live in existential fear for their survival” (Kymlicka 2008: 26).
the markers of a particular ethnicity – language, culture, historical symbols, and so on – in a manner that the non-dominant social categories (commonly referred to as *minorities*) are unable to. Granting minority rights is, then, a typical way to acknowledge that justice necessitates compensating for the advantaged position of some categories of people over others in the social hierarchy of the state (cf. Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 2007).

However, while legal arrangements are an important measure of the majorities’ tolerance and respect towards difference, their examination does not go to the heart of the matter: the state and its institutions. This is the reason why I prefer to focus on a sociological concept: the *degree of the institutionalization of ethnicity*, defined as the way in which ethnic markers are entrenched into the state-structure, including its territorial, political, and administrative organization. For even if minorities lack legal recognition per se, minority ethnicity may still be ingrained in the state structure. And vice versa: minorities may nominally enjoy the most extensive constitutional and legal rights, yet be unable to make substantive use of these rights because of their socially weak position and the incomplete institutionalization of their identity-markers, especially language. Kiss (2015: 48) makes essentially the same point, when he writes in relation to the Hungarian minority in Romania: “the separateness of ethnic segments and their institutional completeness constitutes the basis of all accommodationist/autonomist political projects.” The case of Hungary comes to mind, where an extensive minority protection system is in place that accommodates the country’s national minorities. Yet, according to the 2011 census 98 per cent of the population in Hungary identifies (also) as Hungarian (Hungary 2013).\(^{45}\) Given, therefore, their small number, the minorities’ marks on the state structure are practically negligible – considerable formal rights notwithstanding.

Moreover, looking at the degree of institutionalization of ethnicity relativizes – renders historically and sociologically variable – the extent to which ethnicity has been ingrained in a state-structure, not only in the case of minorities but also in the

\(^{45}\) “Also” because the census allowed respondents to choose multiple affiliations.
case of majorities, thus challenging the tendency to unmark and naturalize the ethnicity of the dominant social category, and to register as “different” and “ethnic” only the non-dominant one(s) (cf. Eriksen 2010: 5). As we shall see, when the Muslims/Turks in Bulgaria and the Hungarians in Romania became minorities following border movements, markers of their ethnicity had been thoroughly institutionalized. At the same time, the state itself was a relatively weak construct, though the (uneven) penetration of modernizing forces had already been under way. It follows that if we want to map the process of the nationalization of the state structure, then we have to trace two parallel processes: the pace and mode of de-institutionalization of minority ethnicity, on the one hand, and the pace and mode of the institutionalization of majority ethnicity, on the other. It is these developments that, as I argue, explain ethno-politics generally and minority protection specifically, in their current form.

The way I construct my argument is by tracing the patterns of change and continuity on two entwined but analytically distinct levels: legal, official and purposeful action and spontaneous, social-structural dynamics (see: Brubaker 2009B). Changes in minorities’ legal status and other aspects of formal policy are an important measure of the nationalizing pressures to which minorities may be subjected at any point in time. This is the realm of official ideologies and centrally sanctioned nationalist projects. Nonetheless, the significance of such coordinated undertakings should not be overstated, given the obvious complexity of drafting, passing, implementing, and enforcing laws (Mylonas 2013: Chapter 9). Further, and more importantly, such an approach imputes an unwarranted intentionality into outcomes that are often largely contingent. A prime example for this contingency comes from the study of nationalism, where it has been compellingly demonstrated that the historic formation and politicization of “national identity” was the unplanned by-product of the large-scale socio-political transformation engendered by industrialization (e.g. Gellner [1983]2006; Tilly 1990; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991).

The way I map these social dynamics is by examining (1) the relative positions of minorities and majorities in the social stratification and (2) the internal
differentiation of the minority category. With regard to the first, I hypothesize that the more powerful the social position of the minority relative to the majority is, the more the former are able to counteract the de-institutionalization of their ethnicity, i.e. the process of disembedding particularistic identities from the established mechanisms ordering society. I operationalize power as the ability to resist de-institutionalization, reflected as the degree of political organization, economic dominance, and cultural eminence, and captured by indicators such as occupation, income, and urban living. In addition, also because of the thematic focus of the thesis the most important indicator of interest here is the level of education. The birth of nations and nationalism is often seen as the process of the spread of the expansion of education to the lower strata of society. There are indeed good reasons to pay special attention to standardized mass schooling as a strategically positioned social mechanism that both drives and is driven by nation building. On the one hand, ethnically separated education prevents minorities’ assimilation into the majority. This, in turn, creates a feedback loop that renders minorities especially resilient to the de-institutionalization of their identities from within the educational domain. Moreover, the stronger the minority educational system the more likely it is that minority ethnicity remains institutionalized, not only in schooling, but in other spheres too. On the other hand, minority education may have perverse effects that over time contribute to the erasure of the minority ethnicity from the state structure. For instance, minority education, under certain conditions, may increase the pay-off of emigration, creating a feedback loop that causes the system to unravel over time. If, therefore, the most educated segments of the minority move away, this contributes to the weakening of the institutionalization of minority ethnicity in education, as well as in other domains. Generally, this depends on the overall proportion of the population that participates in minority education, i.e. whether a critical mass is reached or not (Laitin 1998: Chapter 1; Schelling 2006) as well as on the attractiveness of migration also in terms of pull-factors. The latter hangs hugely on the geopolitical environment and especially on minorities’ kin-states, which, again, influence these processes directly through coordinated diaspora-engagement, or indirectly based on their economic and cultural attractiveness.
With regard to the second, in the spirit of the work of Hroch (1985) I assume that nationalist projects have specific social preconditions. My aim, then, is to identify those social segments whose interests are tied to the politicization of ethnic identities more than others. Historically, the official recognition of the national language has not been equally important for all strata or groups within a state or nationality. The key segment that appears to have driven contestation against ethnic favoritism is the educated middle class: provincial journalists, schoolteachers, and officials (Hobsbawm 1990: Chapter 4) – those who are forced “into the choice between assimilation and inferiority” (Hobsbawm 1975: 97). It is the educated middle classes that are both interested and able to formulate and coordinate political projects against majorities’ exclusive ownership over the state (cf. Wimmer 2002: Chapter 4; see also: Breuilly 1996). Other interested actors that have been shown to be crucial in the politicization of identities and the brokerage of ethnicity are the political elites (Brubaker 2002) as well as intellectuals and the producers of culture (Verdery 1991). The presence of these social groupings, then, increases the probability that minority counter-nationalisms will develop, and, all else being equal, can be expected to be associated with a relatively high level of institutionalization of minority ethnicity in the state structure.

**Comparative perspectives from Europe’s Eastern periphery**

This paper presents the juxtaposed histories of ethnic relations in Bulgaria and Romania through the lens of modernization, nation state-building and the concurrent social (re-)stratification. More specifically, it first traces and then contrasts the historical evolution of institutionalized Turkishness and Bulgarianness on the one hand, and Hungarianness and Romanianness, on the other hand. The combination of broadly similar conditions with markedly divergent outcomes has motivated the selection of these cases. Important controls include a history of imperial rule; the presence of large, territorially concentrated, once-dominant minorities; and the existence of neighboring kin-states (Hungary and Turkey,
As I already discuss in Chapter 3, Romania and Bulgaria have gone through a similar sequence of historical developments and large-scale socio-political transformations, schematically summarized as follows: (1) nationalist emancipation within an imperial political space is followed by independent statehood and the reversal of minority-majority status; (2) the thus formed nationalizing states set on to de-institutionalize the ethnicity of the formerly dominant ethnicities, and to replace it with the ethno-cultural identity of the core nation; (3) the communist party-state temporarily disrupts this process, initially advocating for (qualified) toleration of ethnic diversity, yet, ends up repressing it even more; (4), the transition to liberal democracy and EU accession directs considerable attention to the welfare of minorities in terms of rights and liberties. As for the minorities in question, they also share some important similarities. They constitute the largest ethno-culturally differentiated, territorially concentrated social categories in their respective states of residence, formed through post-imperial border-movements. The numbers are: 1.4 million Hungarians (or 6.5% of the total population) in Romania and 590,000 Turks (or 8.8%) in Bulgaria.

**Tracing historical processes**

The data for this analysis has been extracted from dozens of scholarly articles and monographs from the related historical and social scientific literature. Drawing on the vast tradition of comparative history (Skocpol and Somers 1980) in this paper I seek to explain the different degrees of institutionalization of minority ethnicity that prevails today in two reasonably similar contexts, though the juxtaposition of divergent historical trajectories. Contrary to conventional research on “imported” minority rights standards, I want to stress the centrality of pre-existing social and institutional order, organic development, and historical continuity. Comparative

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46 Note that the academic treatment of ethnic relations in the region (and elsewhere) has been strongly partisan, and that my own historical narrative is likewise inevitably positional: While I have striven to present a dispassionate account reconstructed from historical sources and facts, I do not claim to be presenting an “objective” history.
history’s approach to time, timing, and sequencing provides a frame for understanding exactly this: how an occurrence at one point in time may strongly affect the developments that follow (commonly termed “path-dependence”, see: Mahoney 2000; see also Grzymala-Busse 2011).

I see institutions as not merely framing (i.e. constraining or enabling) social action but as being constitutive of it (Granovetter 1985). There is an obvious endogeneity in this argument in that it takes institutions as both sources and products of outcomes. However, within the constructivist analytical tradition, the appreciation that ethnicity is embedded in and not independent from outcomes constitutes an important conceptual improvement, rather than a drawback (cf. Brubaker 1994; Chandra 2001). In other words, demonstrating this circularity and exploring how it operates is theoretically more useful and epistemologically more valid than supposing that ethnic identities are fixed and exogenous to any given outcome.

A final point to consider relates to the analysis of identities in time. During the long period covered in this chapter particularistic self-understandings underwent momentous transformation, and so did their political significance. The most notable such change has been the development of a national awareness and, in parallel, the declining significance of religion and other markers as identity-components, principles of social organization and sources of political authority and legitimacy. In other words, the stated aim of tracing through time Turkishness and Hungarianness (as well as Bulgarianness and Romanianness) runs the risk of oversimplifying the referents of these labels, which have taken on different meanings at different times and are highly variable also today. This shortcoming can be overcome through historically and contextually sensitive investigation, which is certainly my objective here. That said, my analytical emphasis is less on the content of these categories and more on the relations they denote (M. Weber 2013[1922]; Barth 1969); it is Hungarianness in relation to Romanianness and Turkishness in relation to Bulgarianness that are of primary interest here as markers of hierarchized social distance. Some kinds of self-understandings are, of course, more consequential politically than others, with nationalist claims being perhaps the most forceful of all.
Accordingly, I do treat the timing and pace of rival nation-building projects as key variables. However, the larger point I am making is that these nationalist projects are to a considerable extent the products of social hierarchies and group relations themselves.

**Turkishness in Bulgaria**

The first states established on the territory of modern Bulgaria were the medieval Bulgarian kingdoms. These entered under Ottoman rule from the fourteenth century onwards. The migration of the Muslim population from Anatolia to Europe (Roumelia) followed the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman state the control of all subjects was indirect, based on the so-called millet system. Millets (literally “nations”) were self-governing autonomous communities organized around religion (Braude 2014). There existed three millets within the empire: the Greek Orthodox, to which Bulgarians were assigned; the Armenian Orthodox; and the Jewish. Sharia law did not apply to these communities, which were headed by religious leaders and were allowed to have their own institutions, such as separate schools. Bulgarian historiography has tended to emphasize that the Orthodox millet “represented the specific ethno-cultural interests of the Greeks alone” (Hupchick 1993: 76; see also: Poulton 2000). Therefore, the first collective demands advanced in the name of the Bulgarians regarded religious emancipation to be achieved within the institutional framework of the Ottoman Empire in the form of a Bulgarian Exarchate (established, after long and bitter disputes, in 1870). Not only did the Exarchate exonerate the Bulgarians from Greek ecclesiastical control, but also it served as the institutional foundation of Bulgarian separatism, by creating the potential for Bulgarian loyalty to develop and flourish within the Ottoman context (Neuburger 2004, 32).

Since the times of conquest most ethnic Bulgarians lived in small villages: in the 17th century only one in fifty lived in towns (Crampton 2007). The largest urban centers
in the area were either divided equally between Christians and Muslims, or were slightly in favor of the latter (Hupchick 1993). The Greeks, Jews and Armenians dominated trade and culture, were the most urbanized and had the highest rates of literacy and wealth. The Muslims/Turks constituted the ruling classes, i.e. members of the military elites and the administration. Under the shadow of the slowly decaying Ottoman Empire, which had began already in the late 17th century, the socio-political structure of the prospective Bulgarian state would gradually change.

In the 19th century the number of Bulgarian town dwellers increased as manufacturing and trade expanded (Crampton 2007). Large part of the wealth that the growing class of Bulgarian merchants and manufacturers accumulated was invested in education. Until then, Bulgarian schools were small, pious establishments organized in monasteries. In fact, the first generation of the Bulgarian 19th-century intelligentsia was educated predominantly in Greek schools (Daskalova 2017: 3). The first lay school teaching in Bulgarian was established in 1834. The expansion of Bulgarian education in the coming decades was spectacular: by 1850 most Bulgarian communities had a school teaching in the vernacular. In 1878 there were an estimated 2000 Bulgarian schools, including around 70 secondary schools as well as institutions providing specialized training. Along with the clergy, teachers (about 5 thousand people) formed the majority of the Bulgarian secular and patriotic intelligentsia at the time (Daskalova 2017: 9 ff.).

Even though this is typically described by Bulgarian sources as a profound socio-economic transformation (e.g. Naxidou 2012), the infiltration of modernizing forces in the Bulgarian society immediately prior to independence was actually limited: the structure of society stayed predominantly agrarian, and the small Bulgarian elite loyal to the Ottomans. The majority of them believed that Bulgarian national interests would be best served within the confines of the empire, rather than outside (Neuburger 2004). Nationalist visions of power appear to have been of secondary importance for the “national liberation”, which was, ultimately, brought about by Russian military invasion rather than by the Bulgarian nationalist
movement (Ibid.). Analyses that look for the ethnic origins of the Bulgarian nation offer similar conclusions. According to Tzaneva (2015), while a modern Bulgarian sense of identity crystallized as early as the mid-eighteenth century around religious, linguistic and historical identifications, the Bulgarian nation was forged during the movements for an autonomous church and the expansion of education leading up to the 1870s, ante-dating the creation of an independent state.

**Bulgaria as a newly nationalizing state (1878-1944)**

Bulgaria gained the status of an independent principality in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877-1878 and became a fully independent kingdom in 1908. In the spirit of the times, the post-imperial Bulgarian state was established as a state by and for the ethno-religiously defined Bulgarian nation. The newly formed political space was, nevertheless, demographically heterogeneous, where alongside the Bulgarian majority and the Turks (the largest minority), there were also also Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Muslims), Gagauz (Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians), Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Vlachs and Roma (Neuberger 2004: 27). The most important factor contributing to the nationalization of the newly emergent political space was not officially sanctioned Bulgarianization, but rather large-scale protracted migration, in combination with starvation, disease, armed conflict and physical devastation. The mass departure of thousands of Ottomans that occurred between 1876-8 profoundly altered the demography of the region, in terms of the numerical proportion and the social composition of the Turkish category. Although precise statistics are not available, it appears that until the mid-nineteenth century one-third to half of the total population inhabiting Bulgarian territory were Muslim (the majority increasingly understood as being ethnically Turkish). By the late 19th century Muslims/Turks amounted for only around 12% of the population.

Further, and more importantly, emigration was the highest among the most educated and most affluent Turkish social groups. Popovic - exaggeratedly - notes
that as a consequence of mass migrations, “all but the total Muslim intelligentsia from Bulgaria left for Turkey” (1986: 3). Similarly, Koksal (2010) also reports that “[i]n the first wave of migration, wealthy and educated Muslims migrated to the Ottoman Empire” – since they were the ones who could afford to relocate – with the result being that “in the early years of Bulgarian state formation, the Muslim community lost its wealthy and educated members and, thus, its potential political leaders.” (198). Moreover, the emigration of those among the Turks with above average levels of education would be lasting. According to Methodieva and Somel (2004), the most promising young students educated in Bulgaria would continue their training in Anatolia, with an expectation that they would return and put their skills and talents back to the service of their community. Contrary to these expectations, however, the overwhelming majority of these graduates would never return.

The pace of emigration slowed down after the Treaty of Neuilly that concluded the First World War in 1919. Bulgaria, now incorporated in the League of Nations minority protection regime, recognized the linguistic, religious and educational rights of the minorities. But the legacy of the millet-system also contributed to the favorable treatment of the Turkish minority. Though Bulgarians and Turks/Muslims switched places as rulers and ruled, the latter were granted a special administrative place in the new state. Namely, as a direct continuation of the millet system of the late Ottoman period, Bulgarian Muslims were granted fairly far-reaching autonomy under the umbrella of local Muslim Confessional Organizations, controlled by the Head Muftiship in Sofia (Neuburger 2004: 36). Bulgarian nationalizing efforts concentrated primarily on the expansion and modernization of Bulgarian schools, and no effort was made to systematically undermine or eliminate Turkish education. Turkish communities in Bulgaria were allowed to run minority educational institutions – financed by their own resources up to 90 per cent – though the establishments of numerically smaller minorities (Greek, Jewish) were shut down. The first education law, passed in 1885, introduced compulsory Bulgarian language classes and required the secularization of curricula. But the national government’s
efforts to impose control over Turkish schools were carried out only hesitantly. On its part, the Ottoman Ministry of Education assumed an activist role. In fact, the Ottoman Empire, and later Turkey, continued to subsidize the Muslim/Turkish school-network, and exercised a degree of involvement that would be unthinkable today.

A few years after the sovereignty transfer educational institutions were about equally divided between Bulgarians and Turks. In the early 1880s the approximately 850 Bulgarian schools - about 50,000 students – corresponded to approximately 750 Turkish schools – about 30,000 students (Eminov 1983: Table II). Despite the numerical balance, Turkish schools seem to have been struggling. Moreover, the relatively high number of educational institutions corresponded to strikingly low levels of literacy as compared to the Bulgarians as well as the other minorities. Table 11 shows that among all the minorities in the new Bulgarian state, only the literacy rate of the Turkish minority did not grow between 1900-5, but that it even slightly decreased, remaining the second lowest in the country. Rural living explains part of this. However, the difference in literacy does not map neatly within the urban-rural distinction. Namely, the same censuses demonstrate that in 1900 18.5 per cent and in 1905 22.5 per cent of the whole population in rural areas was literate (as opposed to around 50 per cent in the cities), which is four times more than the Turkish rate. Moreover, in exactly the same districts where Turkish literacy was very low Bulgarian literacy was above average (Mishkova 1994: 75).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>% literate - 1900</th>
<th>% literate - 1905</th>
<th>% increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israelite</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mishkova 1994, Table 2.2.
In fact, this difference reflects a trend of protracted divergence. Figure 6 breaks down the data according to literacy levels by cohort, showing that the literacy rates of the successive cohorts increased progressively in the case of all ethnicities, but most in the case of the Bulgarians, with the only notable exception being the Turks; literacy rates among this population stagnated and even decreased slightly. This shows that the Turkish minority therefore was not part of the spectacular educational expansion in the young Bulgarian state and that, moreover, the divergence between majorities and minorities in terms of the social position occupied in the social stratification had either been underway from before the creation of the Bulgarian state or that indeed, the entire Muslim/Turkish educated classes emigrated from the country. Finally, note that there is also a gender dimension to this. Namely, less than 1 per cent of women were literate among the 40-50 year-olds within the Muslim/Turkish category, and literacy among the youngest (10-15 year-olds) was still only about 5 per cent among the. Contrast this to 6.5 and 40, respectively, among the ethnically Bulgarian population.

![Figure 6](chart.png)

**Figure 6.** Literacy rates by cohorts of the largest ethnicities in Bulgaria (1905 census)

*Source: Mishkova 1994, Table 4.*
**Nascent Turkish nationalism**

When the minority-friendly Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) governments replaced the Bulgarian monarchical governments (1878-1919) the initial policy of indifference and neglect came to a temporary halt. The minorities’ right to establish religious and social institutions and to learn their mother tongue in their schools was reaffirmed (Koksal 2010). According to the new education law, the Bulgarian government was responsible for providing financial aid for minority education. The study of the Bulgarian language was made optional, while the Turkish community retained control over its own institutions (Simsir 1988: 36ff).

It was during this time that minority nationalism started to develop gradually among the Turks in Bulgaria, in tandem with the advance of Kemalism in Turkey. To understand this process it is necessary to distinguish between progressive and reactionary segments of the Turkish category in Bulgaria and their power-struggles. A conservative front consisting of the head mufti and his circles as well as some high-profile exiles from Turkey opposing secularization and the abolition of the Caliphate, opposed minority nationalist agitation in Bulgaria. Conversely, a progressive segment of Bulgarian Turks fully supported Kemalism in Turkey, and aspired to transplant its reforms also in Bulgaria (Koksal 2010). During this time Turkish education became more national and nationalist in character aiming to instill a sense of national identity (Simsir 1988: 183). Teachers were at the center of this transformation. The foundation of the Muslim Teachers’ Union in 1906 (re-labeled Turkish Teachers’ Union in 1928) and the circulation of its periodical were part of a general increase in minority associational activity during this period, with the idiom of “the nation” becoming more and more influential. For instance, the pro-Kemalist Turkish youth and sports association founded in 1926 by teachers, journalists and religious leaders, “Turan”, was named after the mythical homeland of the Turks, a designation that has often been used in Turkish nationalism since the 1900s. In parallel Bulgaria and Turkey signed the 1925 “Friendship and Good Neighborhood Agreement”, which confirmed the existence of the Turkish minority
as a legal entity in Bulgaria, while also officially tying it to its external kin-state, Turkey.

As Europe was sliding into war during the 1930s, exaggerated forms of nationalism appeared in Europe’s Eastern periphery, including Bulgaria. Eventually, the government’s ban on political opposition led to the closure of most Turkish organizations, involving also the Teachers’ Union and Turan and closing Turkish schools. Indicatively, while during the BANU governments there were more than 1700 Turkish schools in Bulgaria, by 1944 only about 400 remained (Simsir 1988: 120).\footnote{Though the source of this statistic is of questionable reliability.} Before the real effect of this retrenchment, however, could make itself felt, the newly emergent communist party-state intervened.

**The minority question under state-socialism**

**The phase of tolerance (1944-56)**

Indeed, the People’s Republic of Bulgaria enthusiastically followed the Soviet ideological line on minority policy, which was based on the toleration and even the active promotion of minority cultures. It was believed that the combination of national form with socialist content would ensure amicable relations between the different ethnicities and nationalities in the short run, and diminish the importance of particularistic self-understandings to the benefit of an overarching common identity on the basis of socialist ideology and class-consciousness in the long run (for an analysis of the Soviet nationality policy, see: Connor 1984: Chapter 8).

Accordingly, the discriminative laws introduced during the previous period were suspended and all ethnicities were proclaimed equal before the law. For more than a decade the Turks would have considerable cultural autonomy, would run their own schools, have their cultural organizations, press, and political representatives. Bulgaria’s 1947 constitution was the first (and last) to officially recognize the Turks
as a “national minority” (Eminov 1983). Article 79 stipulated that “[M]inorities have the right to receive education in their mother tongues. Minorities also have the right to develop their national cultures” (quoted in Simsir 1988: 155). In the state-socialist context, however, there was no room for religious toleration. Public expressions of Islam were oppressed, confined to the private realm, or placed under surveillance (Elbasani and Roy 2015). All forms of religious education were abolished, the property of the churches confiscated, the clergy attacked (Merdjanova 2006). At the same time, the Bulgarian regime set off to create a secular socialist Turkish elite. It encouraged the development of Turkish education and participation in cultural and associational life, always within the frame of a secular, modernizing program.

During the 1950s public education was expanded and modernized. All minority schools became public and the schooling of children was made compulsory until the 7th grade. However, Turkish community leaders resisted what they perceived as the state’s intrusion in their traditional way of life, primarily secularization and the schooling of girls (Eminov 1983). By and large, however, the regime not only allowed, but also actively encouraged instruction in the Turkish language, though the content of the teaching material was heavily influenced by communist ideology (Simsir 1988: 189 ff.). At the secondary level, instruction in Turkish was confined to Turkish teacher training institutes, although some higher education units also taught Turkish grammar and Turkish literature. Table 12 shows the significant expansion of the Turkish education system in the first few years of state-socialism.

However, the minority education system that numerically appears extensive was actually weak, as literacy rates among the Turks remained extremely low as compared to the Bulgarian majority. Indicatively, only one in every fourteen Turkish individuals graduated high school, but the same rate among the majority was one in four, while the difference in higher education is astronomic (1956 census data cited in Simsir 1988: 195). Nonetheless, it was during this time that a Turkish educated class developed – small in numbers and tightly controlled by the communist leadership. It appears that the Communist Party “dictated much of the professional
orientation of the community members” (Mahon 1999: 155) making sure that only Turks with a “politically sound” background would be admitted to the Department of Turkish Philology in the University of Sofia, deploying also the security services to observe and control them, while these persons themselves often collaborated with the security services, or at least they were expected to do so (Ibid). Turkish associational life during this period also increased. The Turkish language press expanded and several theatres and folk associations were established (Eminov 1983: 9). However, this apparent cultural autonomy was put under the tight control of the party state, and, as we shall see, did not last long.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1943/4</th>
<th>1949/50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>84 917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13 692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening primary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>3 038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In terms of social and economic activity, industrialization and urbanization in the sixties further widened the social gap between majorities and minorities, for modernizing forces penetrated the Turkish ethnic segment only very slowly. During this time Bulgarians migrated towards the cities and adopted modern modes of consumption and lifestyle (Elchinova 2001). Indicatively, the overall share of the agricultural labor force decreased from 80% of the total labor force in 1948 to 24% in 1980 (for this and the rest of the paragraph, see Karpat 1995). Turks, however, continued to be employed in traditional occupations, predominantly in agriculture and stockbreeding, and the rate of movement to industry was slow. Consequently, the drop in agricultural investment (from 30% of the total in 1960 to 12% in 1980)
disproportionally harmed the Turkish minority, whose members would continue to rely on low paid manual labor. As late as the 1990s, about 80% of the Turks lived in rural areas.

_The assimilationist turn (1956-1991)_

The political leadership’s relative tolerance of ethnic diversity came to a halt around the mid-1950s. The 1956 Plenum of the Bulgarian Communist Party marked the initiation of communist nationalism (Höpken 1997: 67-69). Bulgarianization became an official policy in the in the late 1960s and 1970s, starting at the margins of the “nation” (the Pomaks and the Muslim Roma). The drastic de-institutionalization of Turkishness followed, with the adoption of a series of measures aimed at the complete administrative eradication of this ethnic category, including closing down ethnic organizations, banning traditional clothing, and prohibiting the use of the Turkish language. All Turkish schools were closed or merged with Bulgarian schools. The new constitution adopted in 1971 mirrors this radical change: instead of “national minorities” it refers to the Turks as “citizens who are not of Bulgarian origin” (Eminov 1983: 7).

The assimilation efforts culminated in the so-called “Revival process”. Based on the claim that the ancestors of the Bulgarian Turks had been forcefully Turkified during the Ottoman times, the Zhivkov leadership asserted that it would launch a campaign to give back to these individuals their “true identity”. The operation to change the Arabic-Islamic names of Turks on identity documents began in the winter of 1984 and was accompanied by resistance, including demonstrations and protests, which were heavily repressed. By early 1985, the names of the entire Turkish population (approximately 1 million persons) had been changed (Myuhtar 2003: 73).

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Turkey’s diplomatic protest and sanctions against Bulgaria did not yield any results. In yet another massive migratory wave, more than 300,000 Bulgarian Turks set out to reach Turkey, in 1989, which by that time had opened its borders, only to close them again a few weeks later, overwhelmed by the large influx. Half of the Bulgarian Turks returned to Bulgaria only a few months later after the collapse of the regime. This vast uprooting not only had a disruptive effect on the Bulgarian economy, but it also further aggravated the already precarious economic situation of the Turks, who had hastily sold their properties before migrating. What is more, among those who did not return were, once again, the most educated (Elchinova 2001: 62).

**Transition to liberal democracy**

Apart from the reversal of the assimilation campaigns, the democratically elected governments of Bulgaria have made limited progress in the area of minority protection (Rechel 2007A). When the new leadership of the Communist party reversed the previous assimilation policy, this lead to a nationalist backlash. A short-lived low intensity ethnicized conflict broke out immediately after the regime change around the issue of education. As Ali Eminov explains “Turks and other Muslims were taking initiatives on their own: reopening Islamic schools closed during the Zhivkov regime and founding new Islamic schools, planning to publish Turkish newspapers, and preparing for the reintroduction of Turkish language classes in municipal schools in ethnically-mixed areas.” (1997: 24). These developments, along with the government’s plans to reintroduce Turkish-language classes sparked a wave of demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, including strikes and boycotts by children.49 By the mid-1990s, however, contentious mass politics had deflated and activities were channeled in the parliamentary arena. Here,

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49 In the early days of the regime change, 140,000 students registered to attend Turkish classes (today this number is less than 10,000).
a powerful party claimed to represent Turkish and minority interests. The founding of the Movement of Rights and Freedoms (originally Movement of Rights and Freedoms of Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria, emphasis mine) – heretofore MRF – produced yet another controversy. The new 1991 constitution was fixated on the state's territorial integrity, in addressing the rights and the status of Bulgarian minorities it refrained from using the term “national minority” referring instead to “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian” (Article 36 (2), while also prohibiting political self-organization by banning the founding of parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines. The MRF, which was originally fashioned as a genuine ethnic party, soon rebranded itself as a liberal formation of general appeal in order to comply with the constitution and to survive politically. In doing so it also shifted to a “moderate” individualist agenda advocating for non-discrimination and minorities’ integration to the majority society. Commentators have argued that in return for acceptance by mainstream political actors the MRF has moved away from positions that may be considered radical in the Bulgarian context, including minority language education and/or institutional separateness. This has resulted in an informal equilibrium of controlling the Turkish minority through the co-optation of the political class that gathers the ethnic vote (Rechel 2007A), initiated under state-socialism, when a university-educated Turkish intelligentsia was eventually created (Mahon 1999).

Despite the continuous presence of the MRF in the Bulgarian parliament and the supposedly positive effect of Euro-Atlantic integration, the deep ethnic inequalities that developed in the past century, and the almost complete de-institutionalization of Turkishness from the Bulgarian state structure, have endured. The economic reforms adopted in the early 1990s kept the Turks in poverty, further contributing to social class degradation and enduring sharp ethnically structured inequality (for this and the rest of the paragraph: Petkov 2006). The permanent loss of livelihood in industry and agricultural reform affected disproportionately, and negatively, the Turks. A few years after the regime change, the ethnic wage gap between the Turkish as opposed to the Bulgarian category was around 40 per cent. Individuals of
Turkish background tended to be more dependent on family allowances than on pensions or salaries, and more likely to be unemployed than the average population. Today, the Bulgarian majority is significantly more urbanized in comparison to the Turkish minority (78 per cent as opposed to 38) and significantly less illiterate (0.5 per cent as opposed to 5). Twice as many Turkish than Bulgarian school-age children are out of education (12 per cent as opposed to 6), while the areas of compact Turkish settlement are also the ones with the lowest economic activity in the country (Bulgaria 2011). Migration continues to provide the chief normative route to upward social mobility for the Turks, even though the migration flows have more recently been redirected towards EU member states (Zhelyazkova et al. 2012).

![Figure 7. Emigration from Bulgaria to Turkey 1878-1984](source: Vasileva 1992, Table 2 and Bulgarian national censuses)

Figure 7 summarizes Turkish migration from Bulgaria to Turkey as a share of the total Turkish population in the country throughout the period studied in this paper. The figure contrasts the number of emigrants with the overall number of Turkish inhabitants in Bulgaria, which demonstrates the relative volume of each migratory wave. It is evident that the first massive wave of emigration that occurred at the time of the ethnic unmixing of people in the aftermath of imperial dissolution has
been the largest one.\textsuperscript{50} However, emigration has constituted a lasting trend, and cumulatively has amounted for the exodus of more than 700,000 people. Moreover, its effects have been not only numerical, but also structural.

Three key points emerge from this overview. First, Bulgarian nationalism developed within the sphere of influence of a slowly declining Ottoman empire, which was not matched by similar national ideologies by the ruling class until the emergence of Kemalism and only decades after the independent Bulgarian state was formed. Second and related, the social positions between minorities and majorities, measured in levels of education, urban living, occupation and so on, diverged rapidly and early, even before the establishment of the Bulgarian state. Third, in the context of gradual imperial dissolution Bulgaria’s Muslim/Turkish population decreased dramatically through mass migration, initiating a migratory pattern that lasts to this day. Migration became the predominant path for upward mobility among the best-educated individuals of Turkish background, but the lower social classes also chose to emigrate at times of particularly harsh nationalization by the Bulgarian state. As a consequence a social base for a nationalist identity-project did not develop and neither did a nationally minded minority intelligentsia.

\textbf{Hungarianness in Romania}

Transylvania’s history is contested reflecting nationalist disputes over legitimate primacy in the region. What can surely be established is that Transylvania was an integral part of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, which was established in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, and was the first permanent state in the region. However, whether Hungarians occupied or conquered this territory – i.e. whether it was uninhabited, which is the position of the Hungarian historiography, or, instead, populated by the ancestors of modern-day Romanians, which is the position of the Romanian historiography, remains subject to heated debate (for a useful summary, see: Brubaker et al. 2006: 56-57, especially footnote 1; see also: Case 2009). Following

\textsuperscript{50} The terminology is from Brubaker 1995.
the penetration of the Ottoman empire in the Balkans this medieval kingdom disintegrated into three parts: a Western part attached to Austria, a middle part subjected to direct Ottoman rule, and the Transylvanian Principality in the East, which was under a loose feudal dependence from the Sublime Porte. After the defeat of the Ottomans by the Habsburgs, Transylvania became an Austrian crown colony at first, and subsequently was reattached to Hungary in 1867. The two functioned as a single unit of jurisdiction, nested within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

From the historiography, early modern Transylvania emerges as a country of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of the diverse peoples who have inhabited it, the largest of them being the Saxons, the Jews, the Hungarians, and the Romanians. By the mid-19th century the latter had become numerical majority in the region through migration and natural increase. Of the central aims of the Romanian nationalist project that had been gathering steam during the 18th and 19th centuries was the union of Transylvania with the other two Romanian principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia. These joined in 1862, declared independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, and in 1881 formed the Kingdom of Romania (heretofore Old Kingdom). It was to this core Romanian nation-state that Transylvania was attached after the First World War.

At this point a brief socio-historical survey of the formation of Romanian national movement in relation to state formation may be useful. The first such impulses date back to the beginning of the 18th century and came into being under the restrictive conditions of domination by Ottoman and Greek overlords. A socio-political vocabulary that was national(ist) in character had formed gradually until the mid-19th century, and gained steam from the 1830s onwards when the Old Kingdom emerged out of the ruins of the Ottoman empire (Drace-Francis 2006). However, the political and economic institutions of this state were weak, accompanied by minor nationalist activism and a faint Romanian cultural identity (Barkey 2000). Economic restructuring (transition from agriculture to manufacture), a growing state apparatus and an expanding education system produced the bourgeoisie, intellectual and bureaucratic ranks that were central in the elaboration and
promotion of nationalism by the turn of the century but decisively only after the First World War (Verdery 1991: 41).

Hungary, Romania’s Westward neighbor, was an ethnically heterogeneous yet politically unitary state, led by a ferociously nationalistic and almost completely Hungarian administration (Brubaker 1995: 195). Hungarian nationalism developed within the Habsburg Empire relatively early on, culminating in an unsuccessful nationalist revolution already in 1848. Even though – or, more precisely, exactly because – Hungary was nested within the Austrian imperial state, Hungarian elites pursued particularly insistent Magyarization, excluding the nationalities from the exercise of political power (for a contemporary account, see: Seton-Watson 1908; see also: Anderson 1983: Chapter 6), until, having come out on the losing side of the First World War, Hungary was forced to concede Transylvania to Romania.

Concurrent with the Hungarians’ dominant status was the wholesale preponderance of this social category in virtually all spheres of life, including politics, the economy, and culture (Table 13 provides some comparative historical statistics). Hungarianness was entrenched thoroughly in the state-structure, including an extensive network of schools (Livezeanu 2000: 147). A culturally Romanian elite expanded at the edges of the Hungarian circles, but the chronic lack of a viable middle class lasted well into the interwar period. Additionally, Romanians were the least literate social category in Hungary, the overwhelming majority being agricultural laborers (Kiss 2014: 193).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13. Selected socio-economic indicators of Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania (1910 census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kiss 2014: 192-193. ( Rounded to the nearest whole number.)
**Romania as a newly nationalizing state**

At the end of the First World War, the Romanian National Assembly proclaimed the attachment of Transylvania to victorious Romania in the Declaration of Alba Iulia. The Allied and Associated Great Powers confirmed this in the peace treaty of Trianon (1920). Hungary’s loss of two thirds of territory and millions of co-ethnics would remain one of the defining national traumas, bitterly resented by many to this day. Note that this sudden redrawing of borders contrasts that of the slow decay of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans: not only was it unanticipated, but also for a long time it appeared reversible.

More than 1,500,000 Transylvanian Hungarians found themselves on the wrong side of a now international border. Just as in the case of the Bulgarian Turks, many opted for emigration to Hungary, predominantly members of the state apparatus, intellectuals, and various segments of the middle classes. About one fifth of ethnic Hungarians left Transylvania (Livezeanu 2000: 137), i.e. approximately 200,000 people (Illyés 1982: 23). But contrary to the post-imperial migration of the Ottomans, the movement of the Hungarian population has not been protracted: the bulk of it occurred between 1918 and 1920, after which time it declined (Brubaker 1995: 196). This was in part because the masses of Hungarians occupying lower social positions strata were not affected as adversely by the border shift as were high-level officials and bureaucrats and in part due to Hungarian governments’ reluctance to admit these co-ethnic migrants and refugees, for fear of socio-economic disruption, but also for tactical reasons, i.e. not wanting to eliminate the basis of claims upon the lost territories (Brubaker 1995: 197).

But it was not only Hungarian revisionism and the large number of Hungarians that hampered the Romanianization of the political space and institutional structure in Transylvania; it was also the region’s history of intermittent autonomy. Bucharest’s centralization tactics clashed with Transylvanian localism, the central government’s concern of ethnic separatism with the long tradition of self-rule, which made the ethnic and the regional cleavages overlap to a great extent. Perhaps due to this
center-periphery cleavage, or, alternatively, due to the changing international situation, the official Romanian nationalizing policy was somewhat incoherent. Namely, while the Alba Iulia Resolutions that decreed the union of Romania and Transylvania also declared “full national freedom for the coexisting peoples”, including the right to public education, administration and arbitration in their own languages, this contrasted with the 1923 constitution that proclaimed Romania as a “unified, indivisible national state.” In any case, the first decree passed by the Directing Council in early 1919 established Romanian as the official language and redirected the 1868 Hungarian Law on Nationalities to the new minorities. During the 1920s, a series of laws and decrees were introduced that aimed at the de-institutionalization of Hungarianness in the country (Illyés 1982: 29). Among other measures, the languages of the national minorities in the commercial sector were banned, which resulted in mass dismissal of public employees. The effect of the 1920 land reform was especially detrimental for the Hungarian community in that it struck the owners of medium- to large-sized estates as well as the churches, schools and foundations, whose property was confiscated.

In numerical terms the Hungarian population in the country remained practically stable during the past hundred years (around 8 per cent of the total population, upwards of 1,500,000 people). But important structural transformations have occurred since. Almost immediately after the border movement, urbanization trends reversed to the benefit of Romanians. However, as Figure 9 demonstrates, the Hungarian domination of the Transylvanian city declined only at a very late period.

The gap in literacy between Hungarians and Romanians was even more yawning. Indicatively, at the turn of the twentieth century in the towns of the Old Kingdom approximately half of the population was illiterate as compared to one quarter in Transylvanian towns, which were, as mentioned, dominated by the minorities. In 1919-20 a staggering amount of 2772 Hungarian primary schools (public and ecclesiastical) operated, along with 219 secondary schools, 31 teacher-training colleges, and 16 commercial colleges (Illyés 1982: 161).
Figure 8. Proportion of the urban population by nationality in Transylvania, 1900-2011

Source: Kiss 2015, Figure 2

Historical evidence demonstrates the frustration of the Romanian elites with the persistent cultural and economic weakness of the Romanians, who, perversely, in their view, continued to be overpowered in their own state (Livezeanu 2000). The Romanian administration made education and language policy the pillar of the “Romanian cultural offensive” with the aim of reaching parity with the “foreign” elites – to fill with Romanianness the new contours of the state. New Romanian schools were established, existing schools Romanianized, and teacher training reorganized. Yet, the existing Hungarian institutions were not abruptly closed down, but brought only gradually and with great difficulty under state control. Livezeanu (2000: Chapter 4) describes this process as a difficult uphill battle for the Romanian administration. She shows that, despite the numerical increase of Romanian educational units, Magyarization went on for decades after the border movement, especially in urban centers.

At the time of the border movement, the level of economic development of the Hungarians in Transylvania was comparatively much higher than in the Old
Kingdom. Within Transylvania, the national minorities comprised a comparatively more numerous and economically strong middle class, with well established commercial networks. Hungarians were overrepresented among the intelligentsia, craftsmen and landowners (Veres 2003: 87). This powerful economic position enabled the remarkable degree of Hungarian political organization in the aftermath of the border movement. In 1921 the Hungarian Federation was formed with the aim of representing the Hungarians in Romania politically and economically and with a special emphasis on education (Illyés 1982: 72). In the same year the first Transylvanian Hungarian political party was established, and more were to follow. These organizations were behind the almost fifty complaints addressed to the League of Nations contesting Romanian measures perceived to harm the minorities’ interests.

Similar to Bulgaria, Romania’s turn towards nationalist excesses in the late 1930s increasingly took an extreme anti-Hungarian (and anti-Semitic) form. As Romania was slipping into dictatorship, all political parties were banned, minority rights curtailed, and relations with Hungary became exceedingly tense. During the Second World War Hungary regained some of the territories previously attached to Romania through German arbitration between the two Axis allies. The Second Vienna Award (1940) divided Transylvania into a Northern part that was returned to Hungary and a Southern part that remained under Romanian control. This partition did make the territories more ethnically homogenous, but far from uniformly Hungarian or Romanian. During the war there were instances of high-intensity ethnicized violence on both sides. The partition was short-lived. In the Paris Peace Treaties that concluded the Second World War in Europe Northern Transylvania was restored to Romania. Once more, Romania emerged victorious from the Second World War and Hungary on the losing side. The era of the Romanian party-state was dawning.
The state-socialist period

As in the Bulgarian case, the co-optation of the Hungarians and the other minorities represented a key strategy of the consolidation of power of the state-socialist regime. It should be pointed out that non-Romanians were overrepresented in the ranks of the Communist Party before it took over power, with over a quarter of the total membership in the 1930s being Hungarians (Verdery 1991: 334). Initially institutionalized Hungarianness was fortified. The 1948 constitution guaranteed the “free use of the mother-tongue for all the 'co-inhabiting nationalities', as well as the organization of education in the mother-tongue.” (Illyés 1982: 167). In 1947-48 there were more than 2000 Hungarian elementary schools and kindergartens in Romania, 184 secondary schools, a Hungarian language university with faculties of philosophy, law, economics and the natural sciences as well as several other Hungarian-language higher educational institutions (Illyés 1982: 166). The Hungarian language could be freely used in the administration, the economy, and politics. For a brief period the Hungarians were granted the right to “self-rule” (in brackets, given the circumstance of dictatorial governance), with the establishment of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (RAM) in 1948.

Despite respect and toleration on the level of official policy, the profound changes in social re-stratification, industrialization, and urbanization decreased the Hungarians’ socio-economic preponderance. Urbanization was substantial. Between 1930 and 1966 the number of towns and cities increased by 70 per cent and their population by 80 per cent in the entire country and twice as much in Transylvania (Illyés 1982: 62). The source of this increase in Transylvania was Romanian resettlement, either from the Old Kingdom, or from rural areas within the province. As much as 83 per cent of the towns’ population increase here was due to the arrival of new settlers as opposed to only 60 per cent in the Old Kingdom. These movements greatly disrupted the old social structures, i.e. the pre-existing patterned relations between social categories (see: Merton 1968; Granovetter 1985), quickly altering the towns’ social outlook.
Most former Hungarian landowners became part of the industrial proletariat. During the 1950s and 1960s the overall occupational distribution between Romanians and Hungarians in the country was fairly similar, and the Hungarians had a slight socio-economic advantage. Indicatively, while more Hungarians were employed as workers and fewer as agricultural laborers as compared to Romanians throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the gap was closing quickly. Still, Hungarian historiography remarks that Hungarians, if not totally excluded, were nevertheless impeded from fully participating in the process of industrialization, and to benefit from it economically (Illyés 1982: 67).

**Nationalism under socialism**

Despite the regime’s initial tolerance, mirrored in the adoption of extensive minority rights, the socio-economic trends set in motion after the border movement continued. The increasing endorsement of communist nationalism from the mid-1950s onwards came closest to fully de-institutionalizing Hungarianness from the state structure. The independent Hungarian university was merged with a Romanian one (1959), and the RAM was eliminated (1960). In the early 1970s new restrictive educational laws were adopted (Illyés 1982: 188). The teaching of Hungarian classes was made conditional to a certain number of applications, Hungarian schools merged with Romanian ones, the use of Hungarian language was drastically restrained in the public sphere, and Hungarian associational activity scaled back.

As the long-term effects of these nationalizing pressures made themselves felt, along with the search for better living conditions, Hungarians began to emigrate. While before 1990 it was extremely difficult to leave the country, in the years that immediately preceded the regime-change and especially after 1990 the doors opened and emigration increased sharply. Indicatively, while in 1987 there were only 6500 citizens who left Romania for Hungary, that number more than doubled within a year and reached 300,000 weekly departures in 1989 (Culic 2006: 195).
However, as Figure 10 shows, the proportion of the emigrants as compared to the entire minority population\textsuperscript{51} has been relatively small, and comparatively much smaller in the Romanian than in the Bulgarian context.

![Figure 10](image-url)

**Figure 9.** Hungarian emigration from Transylvania 1910 (approx.)-2000

*Source: Horváth 2002 and census data*

**Transition to liberal democracy**

During the last decades of state socialism Hungarians moved gradually down the social hierarchy, while markers of Hungarianness were gradually removed from the state structure. Nonetheless the relationship between the Hungarian and the Romanian social category has remained unranked over the years, i.e. Hungarian ethnicity is not a marker of status in Romania (as is, for example the Roma ethnicity), while there exist institutional channels of social mobility controlled by Hungarian elites (Kiss and Székely 2016: 6, drawing on Horowitz 1985). Indicatively, in the 1990s, the critical period of the reorganization of minority-majority relations and struggles for minority rights, Hungarians were at least on a

\textsuperscript{51} The total number of the Hungarian population is the average of the closest censuses conducted in any given period.
par with the country’s Romanian population in terms of occupation. The effect was contained predominantly at the level of leadership, with fewer Hungarians holding senior positions in the state administration and in business (Veres 2003). **Figure 11** shows that currently Hungarians tend to be underrepresented in high status occupations and overrepresented in low status manual occupations (though the difference is relatively small). Poverty rates among Transylvanian Hungarians are also slightly above the level of Transylvanian Romanians (16 and 17 percent, respectively, see: Kiss 2014: 215).

![Figure 11](image)

**Figure 11.** Occupational structure in Romania by ethnicity, 2011

*Source: Kiss 2014: 233.*

In the immediate aftermath of the dismantling of state socialism, institutionalized Hungarianness “bounced back” to its pre-Ceausescu levels quite spontaneously. The Hungarian schools that had been previously integrated to form mixed institutions began to be separated again through local, bottom-up initiatives supported also by coordinated elite activity (Stroschein 2012: 166). More specifically, by consequence of the legal vacuum created by the collapse of state socialism, and before any official
policy measure could be introduced, in the middle of the 1989-90 school year, Hungarian students began transferring en bloc into the newly formed Hungarian departments and the number of fully Hungarian schools also increased (Papp 1998). In some localities Romanian students were forced to leave these schools, following a very short notice (Stroschein 2012: 166). By the 1990-1 school year, more than 236,000 children and young adults were enrolled in Hungarian education, 4.4 per cent, that is, of all students in Romania. That this was an already very high fraction is evidenced by the fact that in the following two decades the proportion would increase to 5.1 per cent – a noteworthy, but certainly not groundbreaking change.

Moreover, as shown in Figure 12, despite the Romanianizing measures introduced in the field of education during the previous decades, the 1992 census showed that Hungarians were still relatively overrepresented among high school graduates. They were, however, underrepresented among university graduates, but this mismatch was due to emigration (Horváth 1995). This shows that notwithstanding the restrictive central measures, Hungarianness continued to be ingrained in the state structure even under national communism, from momentum, so to speak.

![Figure 11. Highest educational level according to nationality, 2011 (older than 15)](source: Kiss 2014, Table 2.)
Similar to Bulgaria, ethnicized conflict in Romania too broke out primarily around the issue of education. The enlargement of the Hungarian language educational system, the establishment of separate Hungarian language high schools, as well as a state-financed university in the Hungarian language were the most important goals behind the mass mobilization of Hungarians in the early 1990s. But unlike in Bulgaria, long-term ethnic bargaining and negotiations in the parliamentary political arena regarding the devolution of power continued over a comparatively longer period of time until 2011 when a new minority-friendly education law was adopted.

Instrumental in this was the powerful ethnic party that was established during the endgame of the state socialist regime, the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR). From the 1990s onwards, the DAHR has had representation in the Romanian Senate and Chamber of Deputies, while from 1996 onwards it has participated in several governing coalitions. The DAHR has sought to achieve its main programmatic goal of intense ethnic institution building, with the ultimate aim being Hungarian political autonomy.

In its initial configuration, the DAHR employed practices of voter mobilization though movement-type political action and played a key role in coordinating the mass demonstrations and public protests expressing the need for policy changes. The party leadership worked closely with (and, to some extent, drew its officials from) sub-elite activists and community leaders, who were directly linked to the extensive Hungarian institutional network (educators, civil activists, members of the local councils and so on), who were vocal in putting forth rights claims, and who acted as organizers and participants of mass mobilizations (Kiss 2015: 61; Kiss and Székely 2016: 599). Sustained mobilization, which was crucial at the start (Stroschein 2012: 29), eventually receded, as the DAHR assumed a leading role in

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52 Note that as many as 10,000 teachers are employed in Hungarian education. They make up 5 percent of the total number of Romanian educators and a significant proportion of Hungarian non-manual workers in the country (Kiss 2015: 54).
hammering out minority policies in the state parliament, and especially after it became part of coalition governments (Csergo 2007).  

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Most noteworthy in the case of the Hungarian minority in Romania is the sustained social, economic and cultural preponderance of this category, accompanied also with considerable political influence (under the limitations of minority status and/or authoritarian regimes). Further, in comparative historical terms, the emergence of Hungarian nationalism predates Romanian nationalism, which was fully developed only after the First World War. Factors that delayed wholesale Romanianization also include the Romanian state’s weak capacity to enforce such policies especially in the early years of nationalization, the disruption caused by the temporary re-seizure of Transylvania during the Second World War, and the initial phase of state-socialism, which was ideologically committed to fostering minority cultures. In combination with relatively low migration this delayed the creation of a Hungarian minority in a sociological sense.

**Discussion**

The individual analyses of the case of Hungarianness in Bulgaria and Turkishness in Romania bring out the dynamic between the institutional entrenchment of the dominant ethnicity and de-institutionalization of the subordinate ethnicity after political border changes and status reversals. This, I want to suggest, is the result of a divergence initiated at the moment of the reconfiguration of the political space amidst imperial dissolution, which determined the pace of the nationalization of the previously multinational modes of socio-political organization.

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53 Kiss and Székely 2016 suggest a more critical version of this process arguing that as the DAHR became increasingly professionalized, it also abandoned these practices, severed its links with the Hungarian sub-elite activists, which made clientelistic exchanges predominant and lead to the curbing the initially ambitious minority rights agenda.
A number of comparative points emerge from the overview of the two cases. Perhaps most strikingly, a pattern of strong continuity emerges, punctuated by relatively rare events of disruption. With the notable exception of the Revival process in Bulgaria, generally, the Bulgarian or Romanian governments did not opt for the abrupt eradication of institutionalized minority ethnicity, as was the case with the “erased” in post-Yugoslav Slovenia (mentioned in Chapter 2), or, even more drastically, in the case of post-genocide Rwanda. That said, homogenizing pressures – intentional as well as spontaneous – did accompany the reconfiguration of the political space in the aftermath of imperial disintegration.

One factor stands out as the single most important explanation for subsequent developments: the stage of majorities’ and minorities’ nation-building projects relative to each other at the time they traded places. More specifically, the independence of Bulgaria in 1878 found the Turkish nationalist movement relatively underdeveloped and therefore the institutionalization of Turkishness in an incomplete state. Moreover, as Romanians and Bulgarians were embarking on their respective nation-building projects, the former had to close a much larger socio-economic gap than the latter. Therefore, while the developments in both countries have been parallel in world time, the relative timing of the border movements was different in terms of ethnically structured social relations. An indication of the relative state of nationalist projects in Hungary and Turkey is the timing of the introduction of the official national language: 1836 for Hungarian and 1876 for Turkish. It is also worth pointing out that a popular Hungarian nationalism was well articulated already in the mid-19th century and had gained a relatively broad mass-base after that reaching its apex with the unsuccessful 1848 revolution (Anderson 1983: 103). Conversely, key Turkish republican thinkers began to employ the idiom of nationalism only in the early 1900s (Deringil 1993: 168). Moreover, it appears that Kemalism was restricted for a long time to the upper layers of Turkish society (Gellner 1994: 87). Another way to say this is to claim that the process of modernization and the development of a capitalist economy took place within the Hungarian nation-state structure in the case of the Transylvanian
Hungarians (Kiss 2014: 191), but not in the case of the Turks in Bulgaria. It is also important to point out that, while “the nation” served as a central socio-symbolic construct in a *counter-discourse* to the exercise of rule for the Hungarians, the Romanians, and the Bulgarians, it did not have the same function and appeal in the case of the Turks (see Verdery 1991: 41).

In the case of the Turks, large-scale emigration went hand in hand with the deterioration of class and status of those left behind in Bulgaria. Not only did emigration reduce the number of people identifying as ethnically Turkish, but it also altered the social composition of this category, for among those who left were the most affluent and the most educated. At the same time, the emergent vertical structure of ethnic differentiation made emigration all the more attractive, further arresting the development of a Turkish middle class and intelligentsia, which would have been able to take up the nationalist project, and make the case for the (re-)institutionalization of Turkishness.

This is in sharp contrast to Romania. There, not only did the annexation of Transylvania occur later in time (in 1920 and definitively only in 1945) but also at the time of incorporation Hungarians constituted the most affluent, educated, and urbanized strata of the country. Despite Hungarians’ loss in legal standing and massive though restrained emigration, it would take long decades for the dominant ethnicity to close the social gap, and to nationalize the political space. Moreover, the ardent nationalism that had developed among the educated Hungarian middle class and intelligentsia, well before their incorporation into the Romanian state, precipitated a rival minority nation-building project, simultaneously drawing on and further reinforcing the institutionalization of Hungarianness. More recently, the existence of a stratum of sub-elite activists and nationally-committed intellectuals seems to have played a crucial role. Their direct linkages with the DAHR contributed to preventing the co-optation of the Hungarian political elites at the crucial time of democratization and EU accession, as evidently happened in the case of the MRF.

Education has been central in this process. To begin with, though the Turkish minority educational system continued to operate and even to expand in certain
periods, it remained in effect very weak, while literacy rates among the Turkish population also stayed low. Researchers have – hyperbolically – noted that Turkish schools in the countryside emerged as “bastions of conservatism” (Methodieva and Somel 2004: 150), as fields of contestation and resistance against the sweeping socio-economic transformation dictated by the Bulgarian governments. As a result, the Turks of Bulgaria, who lived predominantly in rural areas and under traditional patriarchal control, were largely excluded from both the Bulgarian and the Kemalist version of nationalist modernization. The role of education in this case was confined to either the reproduction of a culturally, socially, and economically traditional social order or, alternatively, to the preparation of the most affluent and literate to migrate to Turkey. It had, however, a negligible effect as far as social mobility within the confines of Bulgaria was concerned.

The complete nationalization of the post-imperial political space was protracted for other reasons too. One was the delicate balance of power: domestically between a politically mighty but sociologically relatively weak core nationality and a minority that was exactly the opposite; internationally between two newly sovereign states facing a declining but still major power (the Ottoman Empire and later Turkey) and a fiercely revisionist newly nationalizing state (Hungary) – both committed to the protection of their kin abroad. Second was the early state socialist interlude. Even though the period of toleration lasted only for a few decades, it nonetheless played a major role because it delayed the demise of the institutional bases of minority ethnicity.

It was only the exceptionally harsh measures of the state socialist regimes that greatly reduced institutionalized Hungarianness and Turkishness in both countries. This demonstrates the “essential connection between identity politics and authoritarian governance”, i.e. the way in which society’s most vulnerable populations are used for the legitimation and strengthening of authoritarian power (Franke 2016). Yet, only in Bulgaria did the Zhivkov administration introduce an exceptionally harsh assimilationist policy. Repression in this case was so excessive that both experts and ordinary citizens at the time could not fully grasp its
underlying motives (Creed 1990). It is tempting to view it as an indication of the irrationality of an increasingly delegitimized and self-referential totalitarianism. However, without wanting to downplay the major injustice that was the Revival Process, I nonetheless want to note that, by that point, the Turkish minority was in a particularly disadvantaged socio-economic position, with extremely low levels of literacy as compared to the majority, a significantly inferior standard of living, and a small, co-opted political and intellectual leadership. The Revival Process, then, can be seen as a rational and calculated effort to solve the “Turkish problem” once and for all by wholly eradicating the identity of an already marginalized population, and doing so without the fear of retaliation or reprimand.

The sudden democratic opening of the political space in both Romania and Bulgaria led to an almost immediate bouncing back to previous levels of the institutionalization of minority ethnicity. The moment, however, passed quickly and institutions once again locked in, making change difficult. Crucially, this window of opportunity occurred before the involvement, in any meaningful sense, of the international community in domestic politics and policy. Moreover, while the transition to liberal democracy reversed the downward trajectory into which Ceausescu’s policies had put the Hungarians in terms of socio-economic social position, it did little to improve the predicament of the Turks in Bulgaria, and, if anything, pushed them further down the social ladder. The partial restoration of their legal standing was not matched with the improvement of their socio-economic position, and therefore it was unable to deliver alone substantive empowerment.

**Theoretical implications**

I started this paper by observing that the protection of comparable minorities in two similar contexts currently presents a very different picture. I have argued that the reason for this lies in the different conditions prevailing in Romania and Bulgaria at the moment majorities became minorities: whereas the sudden border movement in the aftermath of the First World War found Transylvanian Hungarians with already
well-developed national self-understanding as well as a correspondingly strong social position and institutional infrastructure relative to the majority, in 1878 religious identification still dominated among the Muslim/Turkish population in Bulgaria, Turkishness was incompletely institutionalized, and the social chasm between minorities and majorities relatively small. While pre-existing social and institutional patterns went on for a while, the momentum underlying them was very different in the two cases.

Even though nominally the rights of the Turkish community continued to be protected for a long time after the transfer of sovereignty, and were even extended during a brief state socialist interlude, this barely increased its members’ ability to reap the benefits of industrialization, modernization, and urbanization, and to arrest emigration. However, while an array of nationalizing policies did definitely make themselves felt by the Hungarian minority in Romania, their effect was manifested more as an opportunity cost rather than a persistent downward movement. The Hungarians, collectively, held a much stronger social position in relation to the Romanians for several decades after the border movement. This disjunction between the minorities’ legal status and social position is one of the most important points that I have attempted to demonstrate in this paper.

The theoretical implications of this comparative argument are manifold. On the one hand, the case of the Turks demonstrates that the conditions of a high degree of social closure, a long history of separate organization along ethno-cultural lines, as well as having been the target of intense and enduring repression, has been associated with minimal minority rights, and relatively low levels of political contestation and collective mobilization. On the other hand, the Hungarian minority has perpetually mobilized on both the mass and the elite level and has come into confrontation and even violent conflict with the Romanian majority over higher order rights claims – such as a separate state-funded Hungarian university – that would be unimaginable in the Bulgarian context (see Chapter 6). This demonstrates that today’s minority protection arrangements are not only contextually determined, but also that they have specific socio-historical preconditions.
Further, while grievances may be sufficient to spark mass ethno-political mobilization (especially under conditions of high uncertainty), they are not sufficient to sustain the kind of prolonged and coordinated elite-level action necessary for negotiated devolution and power sharing, i.e. the imprinting of minority ethnicity in the state structure. Conversely, the objective reality of ethnically-structured inequality and the permanent exclusion from political power work toward the opposite direction: they bring about the absence of the material and ideological preconditions essential for such mobilization in the first place. Finally, and perhaps counter-intuitively, this paper has also shown that sub-elite social segments (nationally minded community activists and the producers of culture) are more important for the persistence of instituted ethnic identity than minority political elites.
Chapter 5

The interrelationship between collective ownership and collective identification and how they contribute to ethnicized conflict

Minority education: a particularly contentious field

Minority education and language policy tend to be contentious issues in ethnically plural societies. In Europe’s Eastern periphery, however, the historical evolution of minority-majority relations has further complicated this matter (Kymlicka 2007: Chapter 6). Here, imperial dissolution has resulted in a pattern of state formation that has involved a status reversal between minorities and majorities. This historic circumstance has enmeshed ethnic politics in the region into a web of challenging dilemmas. It has led, among other things, to the framing of ethnic diversity predominantly as a threat to security, and has rendered public opinion generally unsympathetic to minority rights issues, including the accommodation of the educational needs of the “grandchildren of the oppressors”.

Part of this contestation is that it emerged in a context where extensive minority institutional infrastructures were left behind, as borders moved over people. Schools, along with other ethnic organizations, typically continued to operate also after minorities and majorities traded places. Rather unusually therefore, both minorities’ bottom-up collective struggles and top-down political projects for recognition and accommodation in this part of the world, have been concentrated not on the introduction of novel minority protection arrangements, but, conversely, on the preservation or restoration of what had already been put in place. In particular, much of the ethno-political confrontation regarding minority rights in
more recent times has revolved around the question of educational institutions that had existed for several decades or even centuries.

What I find particularly puzzling in all this is that, notwithstanding generally unfavorable majority attitudes and the adoption of at times very strict nationalizing policies, minority education has typically endured across the region (e.g. Hungarian education across the countries in the Carpathian basin; Russian-language education in the Baltics; but also of smaller minorities, like the Italians in Slovenia and the Ukrainians in Romania). Furthermore, schooling has featured as one of the most important issues in ethnically-driven collective mobilization, protest, and even violence. Against this backdrop I ask: What is it that explains the persistence of minority educational institutions and their centrality in ethno-political conflict? In order to find the answer to this question, I closely examine two cases where minority educational institutions have endured for a relatively long time, and where fairly intense contestation arose around the issue of education at several points in time, following the reversal of status between minorities and majorities: the case of Hungarian education in Romania and the education of Russian-speakers in Estonia.

The idea for this research was conceived during my fieldwork in Estonia and Romania where it came to my attention that minorities’ education-related rights-claims – as presented by strategically positioned individuals – were often articulated in the idiom of ownership and unjust dispossession. Would it be possible, I reasoned, that collective attachments to schools thought to rightfully belong to the minorities explain why they have persisted, even in the face of unfavorable conditions? Could it be that minority individuals and collectives come to relate to their institutions in particular ways – in ways that majorities typically do not?

In this paper I wish to suggest that they do: that it is possible for collective possessions to become entangled with collective identifications and that, moreover, this interrelationship may contribute to conflict along ethnic lines.
The way I approach this puzzle is through participants’ accounts about the history of minority education, conceptualized as a type of special collective possession. These provide a valuable point of entry in the way inter-subjective value is attached to minority institutions that thus become part of collective identities. Further, through the lens of these accounts it also becomes possible to speculate about the ways the interrelatedness of ownership and identification may contribute to the occurrence of ethnicized conflict as the objects of contestation rather than as social mechanisms (for a recent treatment of the latter case, see: Lange 2012).

**Schools as makers and markers of identity**

The comparative sociology of boundary-making that has taken shape around Max Weber's (2013[1922]) formulation of the concept of social closure and Fredrik Barth’s (1969) definition of ethnicity as marked social differentiation has directed attention away from the cultural content of ethnicity towards the dynamics of group formation and “othering” (Loveman 1999; Lamont and Molnár 2002; Wimmer 2009). Perhaps the most important critique articulated by this analytical tradition is that ethnic identities are not immutable givens that can be used to explain certain outcomes, without acknowledging that the causal arrow might be running both ways, and that, therefore, identities are not independent from the circumstances that surround them (Chandra 2001). Within this paradigm, the role of formal and informal institutions, seen as not exogenous to but constitutive of ethnic identities, has received special attention (e.g. Brubaker 1994, Laitin 1998).

Arguably, of the most noteworthy institutions that have been shown to contribute to the construction of ethnic and national identities is mass education (most famously Gellner [1983]2006 and E. Weber 1976). One way this happens is by instilling common knowledge, linguistic repertoires and cultural references to students, i.e. uniform curricular content. Another way is the form of schooling, as a site of socialization crucial in the evolution of people’s social relationships. In the case of ethnically plural societies, minority schools constitute the most important social
structural foundations of a minority world nested within the majority society, where minority ethnicity is not only endurably reproduced, but also unmarked and taken for granted (Breton 1964; Brubaker et al. 2007: Chapter 9). This taken-for-grantedness also implies that the social reproduction function of education in such contexts does not necessarily depend on the endorsement of any official political project or commitment, but can also be the unintended consequence of the accumulation of people’s socially and culturally patterned choices (Brubaker et al. 2006: 300).

In this chapter I aim to expand on the role of schools in social reproduction, by surveying a hitherto unexplored aspect. I specifically argue that minority schools can be conceptualized not only as social mechanisms that entrench distinctions between individuals and groups, but also, potentially, as the very markers of that difference. That, in other words, what people and collectives possess gets to define who they are (Weiner 1992). For this reason, the dichotomy between form and content needs to be supplemented by a third way in which education is linked to the formation of ethnic self-understandings: the value that schools take on as minorities’ collective possessions. This value derives partly from the understanding of education precisely as a mechanism of social reproduction of strategic importance, but it also goes beyond that, bestowing to schools the status of special objects that can only be separated from their owners in costly, for them, ways.

By consequence, the attempted or actual destruction or appropriation of these precious belongings by such “others” may, in turn, lead to ethnicized conflict, given that it targets (or is perceived to target) the collective self. The traumatic experience of dispossession may become part of narratives of interethnic injury, which have been shown to feed into conflict (T. Smith 2007).54 These seem to be of particular relevance in Eastern European societies given the experience of minority-majority status reversal, and the sentiment of resentment that has accompanied it (see

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54 Even researchers who adhere to an instrumental conception of ethnicity acknowledge the role of narratives of indignities purportedly inflicted by ethnic “others” as potential causes of conflict (Fearon and Laitin 1996: 715).
Petersen 2002). One finds many examples of ethnicized conflict that appears to be motivated by the appropriation of possessions, thought to represent the identity of their owners, also in the anthropological literature (Harrison 1999).

In line with these arguments, I propose the treatment of minority schools as markers of ethnic difference, which have identity-constituting properties (Weiner 1992; Harrison 1999). Minority schools, similar to or as part of collective heritage or memory, may be objectified and turned into a shared patrimony that epitomizes the identity of the collectivity (Handler 1985, see also: Lowenthal 1998 and Olick 1999). As groups of people come to be defined by what they own together, what happens to this shared possession is interpreted as directly consequential to the group’s identity and as such, cannot be alienated, without leading to a diminished sense of self (Weiner 1992).

That said I do not assume that minority institutions are always and to the same extent identity-constituting, but I see this as an empirical possibility with important theoretical implications. My aim in this paper is to ascertain what role minority schools as collective possessions may play in the formation of ethnic self-understandings, if they are relevant at all. An important part of this research is, therefore, to find alternative mechanisms that may contribute to the formation of attachments to minority institutions, but that reflect particularistic self-understandings other than ethnicity and/or have little to do with identity altogether. A final objective of this research is to examine how attachments may link to conflict dynamics between different ethnicities. Note that as the underlying reasons for ethnicized conflict constitute a complex terrain, my exploration here has no pretentions of offering a complete causal story, but is limited to the assessment of plausible correlations and potential pathways to conflict.

But note that Petersen’s argument is about ethnic violence rather than conflict.

Given the extraordinary complexity of the underlying causes of ethnicized conflict and the potential disjunction between micro-motives and macro narratives, however, the discourse of the participants should not uncritically be adopted also in social analysis.
Research design

Definitions

Given that in Chapter 1 I have already discussed in detail the analytical concepts employed in the thesis, I here limit myself to a quick summary. I begin with the term “minority”, which I use to denote a social category occupying a non-dominant social position in relation to “majorities” (Henrard 2001), who are commonly held to constitute the purportedly legitimate owners of the state, and whose language and culture are thoroughly entrenched in the institutions of this state. The categorical distinction between majorities and minorities is by rule based on context-specific combinations of cultural, linguistic, territorial and other markers that are commonly thought of as the material that builds up ethnic identities (Nagel 1994). This is not to say that ethnicity should be viewed as an unalterable collection of cultural traits, but rather as a mode of social interaction on the basis of differentiating between “us” and "them", i.e. a social boundary (Barth 1969).

Accordingly, most scholars today view ethnicity as a socially constructed and context-dependent phenomenon that manifests in specific moments, when people come to understand themselves, perceive the world, and behave in ethnic ways (Brubaker et al. 2004; Hale 2004B). The term "identity" is frequently used along with the qualifier “ethnic” to signal that ethnicity is one of the many ways people may classify themselves and be classified by others (Jenkins 1994; Chandra 2006; more critically: Brubaker and Cooper 2000). While, however, there is nothing inevitable about ethnic difference per se, once it appears crystallized, it tends to become important. Varshney (2012) for example maintains that in ethnically plural societies it is likely that struggles over various issues be formed or framed around identity-based cleavages. This is the basic definition of ethnicized conflict I adopt here. To what extent is conflict and/or violence caused directly by ethnic identity, however, is an enormously complex issue that has still not been settled in the related literature (see Chandra 2006).
The logic of comparison

As discussed in Chapter 3, some important controls have driven the selection of these two cases. These include a history of state formation that has involved a status reversal between minorities and majorities. This has, in turn, rendered majority public opinion relatively unsympathetic to minority rights, which tend to be framed predominantly as a threat to security (Kymlicka 2002). Further, both Romania and Estonia share a border with the minorities’ kin-states (Hungary and the Russian Federation), whose elites tend to closely monitor the situation of their co-ethnics abroad, protesting any violations of their rights and interests (see: Brubaker 1993). Finally, the two countries are European Union member states, which obliges them to follow a range of minority protection rules of an imposing amount but disputed efficacy (e.g. Hughes and Sasse 2003).

On a relatively high level of abstraction, the studied minorities also share some important characteristics. They constitute the largest ethnically defined social categories in the two countries,\(^{57}\) distinguished from the majority populations on grounds of several boundary-markers, including origin, language, confession, and cultural practices. They are also territorially concentrated, and in some administrative districts they form numerical majorities.\(^{58}\) They both have been constituted by abrupt and unforeseen border-movements, though Hungarians have a much older massive presence in Transylvania than Russian-speakers in Estonia. In terms of political representation, a Hungarian minority party exists in Romania (Democratic Alliance for the Hungarians in Romania or DAHR) but not in Estonia.

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\(^{57}\) According to the most recent national censuses there are approximately 1.2 million Hungarians or 6.5 per cent of the total population in Romania and 300,000 Russian-speakers or 25 per cent in Estonia.

\(^{58}\) Hungarians are concentrated in Transylvania, and Russian-speakers in North-Eastern Estonia, around Narva, and in Tallinn.
Nevertheless, there too it is one party that gathers the ethnic vote (namely, the Centre Party).\textsuperscript{59}

In the context of these general similarities, the two cases differ in two important respects. First, while Hungarians in Transylvania constitute a relatively well-bounded and coherent group, with a clearly expressed self-awareness, Russian-speakers in Estonia compose a relatively more fragmented social category, with comparatively lower levels of internal solidarity and cohesion (even though the formation of a uniform Russian-speaker identity seemed to be underway already in the 1990s, see: Laitin 1998). Second, while an extensive minority educational infrastructure exists in both countries, the Hungarian parallel educational system in Romania dates back to Austro-Hungarian rule – with some of the first schools having been established even earlier than that – but the Russian parallel education system in Estonia developed much more recently, namely during the state socialist period. The comparative merits of the case of the Russian-speakers derive exactly from this combination of relative recency and internal heterogeneity.

Conflict dynamics over education have also been different. Minority education has been the single most important issue taken up by the Hungarian minority in Romania during the past twenty-five years of democratization.\textsuperscript{60} It has also featured as the central locus of inter-ethnic struggles in Romania. While national control over the delivery of education increased dramatically during the Ceausescu years, in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of state socialism, Hungarian educational autonomy was almost instantly restored on the local level, including the bottom-up split of previously mixed schools in many places. However, in terms of official policy, the central government sought to maintain firm control over minority education and emphasized the need for a unitary national canon and a uniform system of

\textsuperscript{59} The only noteworthy ethnic party, the Russian Party of Estonia was established in 1994, but never managed to gain more than 2 per cent of the popular vote, merging in 2012 with the Social Democratic Party.

\textsuperscript{60} Csergő (2007: Chapter 5) and Stroschein (2012: Chapter 6) provide detailed overviews of the struggles over education from a comparative perspective.
socialization more generally (Csergő 2007). As we shall see, Hungarian mobilization against this has been intense and occurred on both the elite and the grassroots level.

Unusual to the general pattern of contestation, on March 1990 in the Transylvanian city of Târgu Mureș (Hungarian: Marosvásárhely), ethnic violence broke out between Romanians and Hungarians, the catalyst for this confrontation being, tellingly, the issue of education (Roe 2002, 69). As levels of uncertainty decreased, interethnic struggle took a peaceful outlook, but remained, nonetheless, intense and protracted, waged in both the parliamentary and the protest arena. It would take two decades for majority and minority preferences to converge, and to arrive at the minority-friendly 2011 education law, and for ethno-political conflict on the issue to subside.

How can we explain the pervasive politicization of minority education and the large-scale mobilization around it? Paul Roe, writing about the violent clashes between Romanians and Hungarians in 1990 in Târgu Mureș (Hungarian: Marosvásárhely), points out that, for Hungarians, the loss of Magyar educational institutions had a pragmatic as well as a symbolic significance for the issue was “fundamental to Hungarian identity” (2002: 69). Martin Rady, who Roe cites, puts emphasis on the significance that the Hungarians were being deprived of “many historic institutions which had served their national community over several generations.” (1992: 146). While it is indeed intuitively appealing that such invocations of historical worth and identity-threat would constitute powerful reasons underlying mobilization and, ultimately, contribute to ethnicized conflict, to my knowledge, there is no systematic empirical evidence to support this claim. Further, there has been no attempt to relate the two ostensible components of conflict mentioned by Roe: identity and pragmatic considerations, i.e. the fact that the historic institutions under attack were, at the same time, institutions of cultural reproduction. Moreover, the question arises whether there is something inherently case-specific in this amalgamation of identity and education, or whether a more general tendency is at play here.
For this reason a comparative perspective is especially important. The case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia constitutes a particularly hard test for this idea. When Estonia regained independence, Russian-speakers overnight lost the power and prestige they held during the Soviet times. As already discussed in Chapter 2, Estonian nationalizing elites introduced a “regime of discrimination”, based on the interlocking policies of the denial of citizenship, the restriction of Russian-speakers’ participation in political and economic life, and cultural subordination, including the curbing of the use of Russian in education (Hughes 2005: 744). While the Soviet system of separate Russian-language education continued to exist, numerous fully Russian schools were actually closed down, and a range of measures were introduced to ensure the minorities’ increased Estonian competency. The details of this reform have been hotly debated. But, overall, conflict over education in Estonia has been much less salient, and, as we shall see, it has rarely been addressed extra-institutionally. Political elites and government officials who are sympathetic to the case of the Russian-speakers did not seriously challenge either the necessity or the direction of change61. At first sight, this configuration fits into the overall pattern of and the absence of sustained societal mobilization of the Russian-speakers (Sasse 2008), despite high levels of polarization in opinions between majorities and minorities in relation to minority protection (Evans and Need 2002).

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to examine the education-related narratives of the participants, and in particular, whether the issue of education is linked to issues of shared ownership and identity, or something else.

**Method of analysis**

I have already sketched the main axes and characteristics of conflict over minority education as it arose in the two cases. The first analytical section of the chapter

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61 Author's interview with Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of Cultural Affairs (ES/19) and Head of the General Education Department, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (ES/21).
further elaborates on this factual background, tracing the conflict over education, presenting the opposing parties, their strategies and interactions. The second section comprises the analysis of interview material that I have collected (detailed in Chapter 3 and discussed also below). A third, more conceptual section connects the patterns emerging from this evaluation to the possible configurations of conflict between majorities and minorities, speculating about the different pathways to that outcome on the basis of identity and beyond.

The first and the third section are based on the empirical and theoretical literature that exists on the subject. The evidence for the second section comes from thirty-eight in-depth interviews that I conducted in Romania (Cluj and Bucharest, 2015 March) and Estonia (Tallinn and Narva, September 2015 and January 2017) with informants of minority background, comprising minority political elites and sub-elite activists, local administrators and educational professionals, including academics, all of whom were actively involved in issues of minority rights and/or educational affairs at the time. Even though, as I have outlined in Chapter 3, their views are not representative of the opinions held by ordinary people, it is, nevertheless, worthwhile to pay close attention to them. Not only do they often define and articulate what the minority interest is, acting, at times, as its expert brokers, but also many of them hold authoritative positions and may even assume a leadership role.62

The interviews were semi-structured, touching upon some broad predetermined themes: the history of minority education, the relevant actors (organizations, parties, European Union, etc.), and minorities’ education-related aims and problems. Beyond these themes, I let my interviewees to organize freely their thoughts, and to focus on what their area of expertise or priority was. In order to operationalize *attachments*, the variable ways that is, that people may come to relate to “their”

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62 I complement this material with information gathered in six interviews that I conducted with Estonian respondents, including government and ministry officials, who have been involved in education policy-making in the country, and academics/education specialists with a related research profile and/or activity. For more details, see Chapter 3.
ethnic institutions as collective possessions, I turned to the work of Weiner 1992, Harrison 1999 and Handler 1988. There are three common aspects that these authors invariably stress in their work on “inalienable possessions” and “patrimony”. First, collective ownership can become an integral part of identity by defining in-group similarity and out-group difference. Second, the special character of such possessions does not derive solely from the fact that they are collectively owned, but in them having been inherited from the past. This invokes an intimate connection between ancestors and ancestral homelands, as well as bestowing current owners with the responsibility to pass them on to the next generations. Third, the authors also stress that the appropriation of such collective possessions is likely to be resisted and, if successful, may lead to a diminished sense of self. Moreover, appropriation is also a matter of perspective, since it often exists only in the eye of the beholder.

On the basis of these observations I set out to investigate the proposition that minority schools can gain the status of such special possessions by looking for the presence and frequency in the interview material of three recurring themes: (1) the passage of time linked to the production of value, (2) self-other definitions related to the ownership of the schools, and, finally, (3) attribution of intent, i.e. how did minority participants evaluate the majorities’ education-related actions. Needless to say, these elements are entwined and overlapping, but they are useful in ensuring analytical rigor and because they provide a structure to the comparison. In my examination of the empirical material I employ thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Guest et al. 2012), while also making selective use of fundamental discourse analytical tools (Wodak and Meyer 2009). Finally, given the focus on temporality I also rely on the insights of narrative analysis, which are particularly helpful for my purposes (Hart 1992; Somers 1994).
Empirical analysis

Hungarian schools in Romania

Struggles over education

As I already mentioned, the Hungarian education system in Romania is currently extensive. Indicatively, in the 2014/2015 school year there were 956 separate Hungarian institutions and/or Hungarian departments within mixed institutions and the total number of Hungarian students enrolled in minority education was approximately 130,000 (Barna 2016: 14; Márton and Kapitány 2016: 36). Hungarian tertiary education is also available either in a fully Hungarian but private university or in a number of departments within the branches of a Romanian majority university (Ibid.)

As I also explained in Chapter 4, the extensive Hungarian education system in Romania dates back to Austro-Hungarian rule with some of the first schools having been established even earlier than that. Following the 1920 Treaty of Trianon through which minorities and majorities traded places in Transylvania the Romanian state launched a nationalizing project that also had important educational implications. However, as I have also already discussed, nationalizing measures exerted their effect slowly and Hungarian schools continued to operate. Moreover, during the Second World War Hungary temporarily re-seized Northern Transylvania, reversing the Romanianizing tendencies in education and elsewhere. When this territory was later returned to Romania after the war Romanianization was halted by the newly established communist party-state. The nationalities policy of this regime initially supported minority education, which meant that the Hungarian schools in Northern Transylvania were left open and new ones were established also in other parts of the region. However, as nationalist ideology became all the more pronounced during Ceausescu’s rule, Hungarian education was severely curtailed. Numerous hitherto completely Hungarian schools were merged
with Romanian ones; others were closed down. Hungarians’ educational attainment also dropped. At the time of the regime change, Hungarian education had come close to elimination (Vincze 1998).

Soon after the 1989 revolution, ordinary Hungarians and the DAHR leadership insisted on the re-establishment of historically Hungarian schools. This initiated a process that lasted from the early 1990s, when rather restrictive legislation was put in place until 2011, when an education law that provides extensive rights for minorities in Romania was finally passed. This process has been complex and protracted, which is indicated by the fact that almost twenty different ministers oversaw more than sixty amendments to the law from 1989 until today. Since the details of the road to passing this law would take us too far, I will focus here on key events that took place chiefly during the first post-communist decade.

As early as 1991 Hungarians took to the streets demonstrating for minority education. As aforementioned, the ethnic clashes of Târgu Mures were also ignited by a dispute over education. Protests continued also in 1992 in relation to the draft education law. The DAHR’s demands, which were invariably opposed not only by the far-right minister of education, Liviu Maior but also by more moderate majority politicians, included the right to instruction in the mother tongue in all subjects at all levels (including vocational training and some faculties at the tertiary level). The education law finally passed in 1995, without the suggested modifications of the DAHR and in spite of a petition signed by nearly half a million Hungarians. The DAHR attempted to convince President Iliescu to veto the law (in vain), appealing also to international institutions, including the European Parliament. Student/parent protests continued to take place also in 1995 across Transylvania. Policy-making took a new direction with the coming into power of a new government in 1996, that included the DAHR as a junior coalition partner. In 1997, the government passed a minority-friendly Emergency Ordinance that satisfied many of the DAHR’s demands, including minority language education at all levels and the teaching of history and geography in the minority language. The
parliamentary approval of the Ordinance, however, was slow and contentious. A new education law was passed in 1999.

In 1997, the president issued yet another Emergency Ordinance further liberalizing the education law, igniting at the same time a renewed public debate over the education of minorities. The DAHR continued to advocate for the teaching of history and geography in Hungarian beyond the primary school level, as well as for the establishment of an separate Hungarian university. This flew in the face of the positions of its coalition partners that opposed both arriving at a stalemate. Discord arose also within the DAHR with some members criticizing the party’s participation in government. The law passed in 1997, without satisfying the DAHR’s requests, to which the DAHR responded by suspending its participation in the coalition, albeit for a short period of time. Regardless, the version of the law approved by the Senate did not contain the DAHR requests either. The DAHR insisted on its position on and threatened again to leave the coalition, still without success: in 1998 the version of the education law passed by the Chamber of Deputies still lacked the UDMR proposals. It would take months of extensive negotiation that a compromise law that allowed for the establishment of separate Hungarian-language faculties. Nonetheless, the law still required the teaching of history and geography in Romanian above the primary school level.

Participants’ perspectives

Before turning to the analysis of the interview material, I would like to briefly discuss a text that usefully contextualizes the relation between education and identity. It is an excerpt from the book of Transylvanian Hungarian historian Illyés Elemér entitled National Minorities in Romania. Change in Transylvania (1982). In Chapter 4 I cite his book as a secondary source for my historical analysis. I now want to look at the same work as a primary source. In his book Illyés narrates a struggle of dispossession as follows:
“The 1920s saw a whole series of laws and decrees restricting the freedom of religious observance by the national minorities and endeavoring to destroy the network of schools providing instruction in the minority languages. This was the first occasion in the history of the Western oriented Transylvanian nationality educational system, which dated back several hundred years, that a school-system that had developed within the state system of the Balkans and was totally alien to the traditional Transylvanian spirit was established here. These attacks against the national minority churches and schools and other measures of this nature were part of an overall policy of Romanianization.” (Illyés 1982: 91).

Elsewhere he continues:

“The extent of the destruction of the cultural institutions of the national minorities can be best measured by examining the gradual elimination of the minority school networks. It is a well known fact that during the interwar period the Romanian kingdom officially regarded the state education as a means for assimilation of the national minorities. Between the two world wars, the national minorities in Romania waged a hard struggle to save their century’s old educational institutions. (Illyés 1982: 159)

A number of points can be made here. First is the unequivocal conviction that the Romanian leadership set out to deliberately destroy the minority school networks. Second is the reading of the minority’s fate out of the fate of education. Third, Illyés stresses not only the long tradition of the century-old schools, but also their Western orientation, which, juxtaposed to the Balkans, alludes to the cultural achievements of the “Transylvanian nationality”. Note that the author does not refer only to the Hungarian minority, but evokes a regional identity in the spirit of Transylvanism (already mentioned in Chapter 4), defined in opposition to the Romanian core nation.

Even though the book was written before even Hungarian education reached its low point in the Ceausescu era, elements of this framing have persisted, and can be detected in the accounts of my interviewees. Let us take a closer look now to these accounts.
Time and the production of value

The majority of the Hungarian interviewees mentioned the long history of the Hungarian school-system in Transylvania, stressing that some among these schools are “schools with a long history and high prestige” (RO/15). The long history of these individual institutions and of the Hungarian school-system more generally was taken to signify both a sense of belonging as well as a sense of cultural worth and even preeminence, as the following quote demonstrates: “The existing system could be interpreted as a cultural heritage, as an expression of cultural superiority.” (RO/3) Thusly, the issue of Hungarian education in Romania bound together elements of shared ownership, past inheritance, and cultural worth.

The thematic of value, however, came up also in another variant, i.e. quite literally as the objective worth of the school-buildings as properties, and which seven out of the twenty-two interviewees brought up. This issue can be understood in the context of the confiscation, under Communist rule, of the buildings that hosted Hungarian schools, many of which belonged to the Church. Following the regime change, claims for the restitution of this property emerged entwined with claims to re-establishing the Hungarian education system. On the one hand, this meant “retrieving church-property and the enforcement of financial interests.” (RO/18), on the other hand it meant the restoration of historic Hungarian education, which was coercively shut down. Correspondingly, the revival of the Hungarian school-system after socialism was framed apart from a cultural issue also as a matter of ownership, both literally and metaphorically: “The separation of schools after communism was a completely logical process. These schools had been autonomous before. We have a right over that which belonged to us in the past.” (RO/14)

Self-other definitions related to the schools

Some informants conveyed a particularly strong victimization with regard to this question as the following excerpt demonstrates: “Following the regime change [...]
they rectified what had been abolished [...]. They gave back the buildings [...] and the Romanians left the schools because, yes, they had taken them by force.” (RO/10)

Note how this participant, by describing the struggles over Hungarian schooling, also manages to strike a distinction between “us”, i.e. the rightful owners, and “them”. The theme of historical continuity, which schools attest to, entwines also with a collective sense of self, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

“The existing autonomous schools are historical institutions. They already served a psychological significance when Transylvania still belonged to Hungary, and they became the border fortresses of survival after that.” (RO/12)

In this description the Hungarian schools gain a symbolic dimension, both temporal and spatial. By connecting the minority to the mother country they unite the Hungarian nation, while attesting, at the same time, to the historical continuity of the Transylvanian Hungarians in their traditional place of residence. A notable element in the text is also the reference to the historical trope of “antemurale Christianitatis” which invokes a fight in defense of the community against the existential threat posed by the “other”. The school emerges from this description as an emblem of Hungarianness, which draws the mental lines that on the one hand, connect ancestors with their descendants, while at the same time distinguish “us” from "them”.

**Attribution of intent**

Another noteworthy element in the discourse of this interviewee is the element of warfare, and which alludes to a long-standing struggle between two opposing camps, the Hungarians defending their patrimony and the Romanians attempting to take it away. Ten out of the twenty-two interviewees used in the context of minority education the words “threat” or “fight” and the use of the language of risk, including the highly expressive metaphor of warfare, which invokes a particularly threatening attitude on behalf of the majorities also came up. More specifically, according to one interviewee, when Hungarian students enroll in the majority educational system,
this “poses the biggest risk for language switch and ethnic switch” (RO/9). Another interviewee warned of the “menace of language loss” (RO/5), while a third asserted that “the dispersed communities⁶³ are on the frontline, on the first line of the trenches.” (RO/14) In these descriptions, the Hungarian minority appeared to be in a constant fight with a variety of opponents: spontaneous intergenerational assimilation, Romanian authorities, the majority population, and, interestingly, segments of its own. In such a fight, there appears to be little room for internal disagreement and dissent. As one interviewee put it: “Any criticism [of the official minority position] equates with national treason.” (RO/5)

A final important element that occurred was the unequivocal connection between the survival of Hungarian education and the survival of the Hungarians themselves. Namely, interviewees articulated the idea that the lack of minority education and/or retrenchment in this field jeopardized the Hungarians’ very existence: “For us separate schools are a matter of vital interest.” (RO/10) And perhaps more clearly than anyone else: “The loss of the community is at stake. It [i.e. education] is an identity-constituting component.” (RO/5)

**Russian education in Estonia**

Due to geographical proximity, the Russian element has been a lasting presence in Estonia, but the minority education infrastructure that exists today was put in place during the state socialist period when Russians and Russian-speakers were in a dominant position. Unlike the other case, these schools are therefore more recent. Individuals of diverse nationalities from various parts of the Soviet Union arrived in large numbers in the Estonian Soviet Republic from the mid 20th century on and settled compactly. They tended to integrate, by rule, into the Russian-language societal culture that had developed in the aftermath of the Second World War, making use of Russian cultural, educational and other institutions that operated

⁶³ It is common practice in Transylvania to differentiate between the areas of compact and scattered settlement – the term “dispersed communities” denotes the latter.
parallel to the Estonian ones. There was also an ethno-linguistic division of labor, with Estonians being predominantly employed in the agricultural countryside and Russians and Russian-speakers in the urban industrial sector. In the context of the Russian nationality policy all the different ethnicities in the Soviet Union that were officially recognized possessed extensive educational and linguistic rights (Connor 1984). Unofficially, an additional “premium” was attached to belonging to the Russian nationality (Blitstein 2006).

Following the regime change in the early 1990s Estonian elites re-asserted the core nation's ethno-cultural and linguistic dominance. I have already described in Chapter 2 the restrictive citizenship policy that this leadership introduced, which rendered thousands of Russian-speakers, including minors, stateless. Starting in the early 1990s Estonian governments began to introduce education reforms focused on the language of teaching. As aforementioned, traditionally Estonia offered state-funded primary and secondary education in both the state language and Russian, which the country's national elites now viewed as a reminder of a painful Soviet past. Accordingly, the newly introduced Estonian legislation did not guarantee education in Russian. These measures drastically increased the role of Estonian language – both as a subject and a language of instruction – in formerly purely Russian-language schools. The stated aim of the changes was to improve societal integration and interaction and improved study and career opportunities for Russian-speaking students (Hogan-Brun et al. 2008; my interview with Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of Cultural Affairs).

The first reform, introduced in 1993, focused on secondary education and initially foresaw Estonian-only teaching in grades 10–12, an aim to be achieved by 2000. This requirement was later reduced this requirement from 100 per cent to 60 per cent mandatory teaching in Estonian. Moreover, the implementation of the reform was postponed time and again. It was finally launched in 2007, with yet lower requirements: schools were to increase the number of Estonian-language subjects one per year, putting the date of full transition to the required 60 per cent to 2011. However, the schools that decided to proceed at a higher speed were promised
addition (Kirtsi et al. 2008, Skerrett 2013). Moreover, while the 60/40 division concerns only upper-secondary schools, Russian-language elementary schools (grade 1-9) are not formally obliged to teach subjects in Estonian (apart from Estonian language). It is left to the schools’ discretion to introduce language immersion programs or to increase the number of subjects taught in Estonian.

In terms of how the policy-making process unfolded, this was very different from the case of Hungarian education in Romania. Namely, the preparation and the implementation of the reform was monopolized by the national political elites – government and ministry officials –, with only minimal and symbolic minority involvement (Cianetti 2014). Even though the issue of minority education has been contentious, so far the Russian-speaking minority has not mobilized against the reform in significant numbers and no mass protests of the size seen in Romania occurred in Estonia. The anti-reform platform forming around the issue comprises primarily grassroots organizations and local governments (Ibid.). The reform also offers a wide margin of discretion to schools, by theoretically allowing schools to teach more than 40 per cent of subjects in a language other than Estonian, subject to government approval, which increases the role of school-principals (often also holding posts as local government officials). Nonetheless, as there are no clear criteria on what grounds such approval can be given and, in fact, applications were more often than not rejected. One case that attracted wide attention was the Pushkin Secondary School in Tartu, whose board of trustees asked twice for permission to postpone the switch to instruction in Estonian. In 2006 the city council decided to close down the school, which, according to a report written by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (an organization involved in minority rights advocacy based in the country) “was one of the oldest Russian schools in Estonia, founded in the early 20th century by the Russian community” (LICHR 2009: 9). Some parents challenged the council’s decision in court, which nonetheless upheld the decision.
Partly as a result of the reform but also for demographic reasons, the Russian-language school-system in Estonia has been significantly reduced and continues to decline. The number of students in Russian schools has been steadily decreasing since the regime change, because of the overall decrease in the number of Russian-speaking children in the country caused by migration and low birth rates among them, and the increasing enrollment of non-Estonian children in Estonian schools. The access to higher education in Russian is limited. The curriculum in all state and municipal general education publicly funded schools is the same, regardless of the language of instruction. That said, there is still substantial Russian-language education in Estonia, available from pre-school to secondary education, as well as in some vocational schools and a small number of tertiary level institutions. Sixty percent of all Russian-speaking children in Estonia attend Russian-language schools at all grades (Kemppainen et al. 2015: 338).

How do minority respondents make sense of the struggles related to education? It is to the examination of this question that I now turn.

Participants’ perspectives

As in the previous case, I would like to begin this discussion too with a quote. The following excerpt is from a report prepared for the 2015 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting by Maksim Nikolajev, the leader of the NGO “Russian School of Estonia” which has been one of the most vocal actors opposing the reform (Cianetti 2014). In his defense of Russian-language education in Estonia, Nikolajev asserts that:

“[...] Russian schools have already appeared in Estonian in the 18th century, as the mass education in principle was about to emerge in Europe. The Russian schools have existed in Estonia at the times of Russian empire, during the times of the first Estonian Republic and in the Soviet times. This is a well established institutions [sic!] formed over the centuries, which is now being forcibly destroyed despite the fact that 30% of the population in Estonia has Russian language as our mother tongue.”
In this text Nikolajev directs attention to the antiquity and historical continuity of the Russian education in the country, stressing the high cultural achievement of these schools that even preceded the emergence of mass education in the rest of Europe. He laments the purposeful destruction of these “well established” institutions as well as implying an interconnection between the fate of these institutions and that of the large Russian-speaking population in the country.

The framing of conflict over education in such a way shares some important similarities with the narrative of Illyés I cited above. It is actually more similar to the discourse of the Hungarian respondents than to the narratives of most of the respondents I interviewed in the Estonian case. In fact, the differences of opinion among the Russian-speakers were much more significant as this set of individuals is divided into roughly three camps: some critical of the reform (4 respondents), some who are in favor of the reform (3) and the rest somewhere in between, typically supporting the overall project, but disapproving some of its elements (9). Let us take a look now to the three themes of interest as they emerged from participants’ narratives.

**Time and the production of value**

Estonian respondents were less prone to discuss minority education by reflecting on its past as compared to the Hungarian minority. While this is not inevitable, it is nonetheless understandable for not only is the presence of a large Russian-speaking minority in Estonia a relatively recent development, but also it carries with it the thorny memories of a not so distant past of domination. In the words of one respondent, because of this “painful history [...] the Russian language is not a very good language to use in the parliament.” (ES/1).

In what was essentially the only mention of a historic school, one respondent make an interesting remark:
“This was the first male gymnasium in Narva, established by the tsar in 1875 and back then it used to be trilingual. It taught Russian, Estonian and Latin. And you could also hear German in the streets. [...] One hundred and fifty years ago they talked four languages here, and now we are just going back to this.” (ES/13)

The excerpt is remarkable because, contrary to the Hungarian case, the aim of the respondent was to justify the gradual Estonianization of Russian education by making an identity-claim that invoked the long tradition of multiculturalism and multilingualism in this almost entirely Russian-populated borderland.

Other respondents who were generally sympathetic to the reform did not find it difficult to reconcile their stance with the appraisal of the richness of the Russian culture and heritage as the following excerpt shows: “We still value the culture, we visit Russia and all the legendary places. We do not abandon our cultural past.” (ES/10) [despite supporting the scale-back in Russian education]

**Self-other definitions related to the schools**

Contrary to the case of the Hungarians in Romania, there was no clear-cut “we” and “they” in the narratives of the Russian-speakers. Instead, overlapping boundaries were drawn to divide not only the majority from the minority but also those who were sympathetic to the Estonian integrationist/assimilationist project and those who were not.

Beginning with the critics, the struggles over education provided these respondents with the opportunity to differentiate between “us” and “them”, and to use the scaling back of Russian education in the country as evidence of an unfriendly majority attitude. The following excerpt is characteristic: “Following the regime change they made a political decision to ‘Estonianize’. They wanted to destroy Russian education, to assimilate the Russian minority.” (ES5) Note also the interpretation of the attack against minority education as an attack against Russian-speakers, presented as a deliberate political decision. Conversely, respondents generally
sympathetic to the idea of reform focused on the irrevocable fact that Estonia has become a sovereign national state seeing it as reasonable and fair to expect all residents to be integrated into a uniform national culture. In the words of one respondent: “It is only normal that if you live in a country you have to learn the state language (ES/15)” And: “Education is a means to integration.” (ES/10)

What the previous group of interviewees took as forced assimilation, they saw as an invitation to be part of the Estonian nation, as an opportunity to go ahead and succeed in life. When asked why a segment of the Russian-speakers in the country opposed the reform, those generally sympathetic to the change explained this as an attachment of a segment of Russian-speakers to the “old ways”, fear from anything new and simple inertia. “Every change is contested. As a parent you cannot help your child. [This is a] normal human fear and concern. Fear for our children. Every change is painful.” (ES/8) Moreover, for a segment of the population, education had become an identity-constituting component that they wished to preserve out of “fear of loss, confused self-identification, language loss.” (ES/7) Or, as another respondent put it even more sharply: “There are some people who feel the need to protect Russian identity. Why? Because their grandparents, or parents were in a bad situation. But now this is not a problem anymore, yet, they learn to complain.” (ES/1)

**Attribution of intent**

The group of interviewees generally critical of the reform argued that the reasons underlying the education reform were the majorities’ calculated aim to forcefully assimilate and/or permanently exclude the Russian-speakers. They interpreted the Estonian nationalizing measures as unfair, pointing out that what has been underway in the last 25 years constitutes “a clear case of post-colonial revenge” (ES6). These respondents also tended to frame resistance to the reform as a struggle
against assimilation. Similar to Hungarians, they linked the survival of the educational system to the survival of the minority. The excerpt below is indicative:

“We see that the final aim is to eliminate the Russian system. The government does not speak about this, but this is what they want. The aim is assimilation. We talk a lot about multiculturalism but [...] Estonia imagines itself as a nation-state and education is the best way to assimilation. It’s not only about language, it is mentality, ideology... Education is the fundament of culture, mentality, ideology.” (ES/9)

Nonetheless, in terms of future prospects, only one respondent argued that a return to the old system would be desirable. The majority of the interviewees advocated for more flexibility and the increase of quality overall. The most common position in terms of future goals and prospects was to accept the changes that have been already introduced in the education system, but to preserve them in their current form. This was a particularly strong desire among educators, who stressed the difficulties associated with frequent changes related to the organization and delivery of education. “The constant reform puts stress on the teaching process. [...] It distracts from the real teaching process.” (ES/16) Or, as one respondent aptly summarized it: “The biggest claim is not to change anything. [...] The minority is in a fight for something not to be taken away.” (ES/2)

**Exploring identity, ownership and conflict**

A number of comparative points emerge from participants’ narratives. The majority of the informants referred to the existence of some form of enduring attachment towards educational institutions. These attachments, however, operate on three analytically distinct levels only one of which implies a direct connection between ethnic identification and perceptions of collective possession. The other two are either partially related to ethnic identification or not at all related to it. Each of these different forms of attachments can, in turn, be linked to a different underlying reasons motivating conflict. **Table 14** below summarizes the main findings.
The first type of attachment that arises from the analysis is tradition, i.e. the “inertia which any practice acquires with time and emotional resistance to any innovation by people who have become attached to it” (Hobsbawm 1983: 3). When minority actors propagate a preference for “not changing anything”, this reflects a strong bias towards the status quo, i.e. towards the accepted rules of the game that drive social interaction. In this reading schools become part of peoples’ familiar landscapes, and change is contested on grounds of a general aversion from the unknown, adapting their preferences to their circumstances (Elster 1982). Processes of institutional reproduction also play a role in this. It has been noted that, over time, it is more and more difficult to transform institutions even if in the meantime there may appear a more efficient alternative option (Mahoney 2000). It is therefore evident that an instrumental, even if not strictly rational, logic underlies such aversion from change that has little to do with ethnic identification.

Second, an owner-possession relationship also underscores attachments to educational institutions. On the one hand, this means conceiving of schools as objects that belonged to minorities just as ancestors’ heritage belongs to their descendants by birthright. On the other hand, deprivation from their rightful possessions was therefore seen as a wrongdoing committed against the collective. Such conceptions of rightful ownership and unjust dispossession form the basis of

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<th>Underlying definition of schools</th>
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<th>Identitarian</th>
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<td>Educational units</td>
<td>Collective assets</td>
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<th>Source of attachment</th>
<th>Convention</th>
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<th>Ethnic identity: ‘Hungarian’ ‘Russian-speaker’</th>
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<th>Source of conflict</th>
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<th>Majority objective (hypothetical)</th>
<th>Reform</th>
<th>Different valuation</th>
<th>Assimilation</th>
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Table 14: Attachments to schools based on participants’ perspectives
historic rights claims that are often advanced by minorities everywhere (Aukerman 2000). Yet, it is questionable to what extent these are driven by ethnic identities per se or, rather, self-interest. Any individual or group of individuals would contest losing something valued, but that the underlying motivation for this stems from ethnic identification is assumed only when this occurs between two ethnic "others". Of course, if participants perceive being deprived of their institutions as ethnically defined collectives, identifications may sharpen. But, a useful analytical distinction can still be made between a version of groupness that is based on collective possession, rather than ethnicity sensu stricto (see: Brubaker 2002).

A third form of attachment is one based on the interrelationship between collective possession and ethnic identification. The concept of "inalienable possessions" is particularly helpful to explain why this is so. This has been used in the anthropological literature to denote material objects as well as any other type of possessions by means of which a social identity is constructed and expressed (Weiner 1992; Harrison 1999). The loss of such precious possessions is deemed irreparable, leading to a diminished sense of self. Accordingly, this wealth is to be protected from being surrendered, but it must be kept within the boundaries of a group. From the data analysed here it appears that there are good reasons to view minority schools as a special type of inalienable possession.

These three kinds of attachment are analytically distinguishable ideal types. They are certainly not mutually exclusive; rather, they can best be conceived as hierarchically organized layers of meaning that jointly make up the value of schools as collective possessions. Further, the relative salience of each component may vary across situations as well as within the different segments of a given social category. What distinguishes the non-identitarian (weaker) from the identitarian (stronger) type of attachments is the extent to which they are driven by instrumentalism.64

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64 This is in line with the argument advanced by Stephen Cornell, who has observed that “[g]roup attachments based largely on shared interests [...] tend to be more subject to the impact of circumstantial change, other things equal, than group attachments based on shared culture.” (1996: 265).
Holding on to what is already there and embracing traditional ways of doing things, reduces uncertainty and relieves the psychological cost of risk. Defending one's property and desiring to bestow it to the next generations is the *sine qua non* of self-seeking rational economic behavior. But it is not readily apparent, what kind of self-interest the wish to uphold social distinctions serves, apart from sustaining this very difference and making sure that it stretches into the indefinite future.

Each type of attachment may give rise to different conflict dynamics. A point of entry into this question is participants' attribution of intent. In all cases there are examples of interviewees describing the involvement of majorities in minority education as harmful interference, unjust dispossession, or even a deliberate attempt to eliminate ethnic difference altogether. Informants tended to see their group's agency as limited, themselves as playing defence against an antagonistic power. The element of revenge also came out strongly, indicating what other analysts have also pointed out: that irreconcilable claims to victimhood and suffering in the hands of the other define the relationship between the different ethnicities in this part of the world (see Verdery 1993). In its typical formulation this argument asserts that majorities perceive the institutionalization of minority culture in education and other domains as something that threatens the territorial integrity and cultural unity, the very identity, that is, of the nation (see Triandafyllidou 1998). The elimination of ethnic institutions, therefore, may indeed signify a conscious attempt to assimilate, exclude, or marginalize a category of people deemed as threatening to the unity of the nation and/or unworthy of "special treatment".

That said, it appears to me that it is not necessarily purposeful action, but also the differential value and the contrasting meaning attached to ethnic institutions that may lead to confrontation. Namely, while it is generally true that what seems like a right to minorities, may be perceived as a privilege by majorities, I want to make the additional point that non-dominant social categories may come to relate to their institutions in ways that the dominant categories typically do not, and that this mismatch is crucial for understanding conflict dynamics. This argument has been
made in relation to appropriation or “piracy”, which may exist entirely in the eye of the beholder (Harrison 1999: 242). Similarly, what for majorities is “just a school” may well be imbued with additional layers of meaning for the minorities. This is in line with the observation of Brubaker and collaborators that ethnicity is more salient for minorities than for majorities (2006: 265). In fact, that the valuation of minority institutions differs on the opposite sides of the ethnic boundary is another manifestation of the taken-for-grantedness of the majority culture, which stems from the unequal distribution of power in the context of the nation-state (see Wimmer 2002: Chapter IV).

A final point to consider is what happens when institutions have not endured the passage of time? Looking at the case of the Bulgarian Turks, whose traditional educational system inherited from Ottoman times was eliminated over time can be particularly helpful in this respect. There are, in fact, good reasons to believe that the abolition of the Turkish school system in Bulgaria was experienced and contested on very similar grounds. Though Bulgarian authorities maintained that school closures followed the Turks' own demands, Simsir Bilal, in his extensive history entitled The Turks of Bulgaria and written explicitly from a minority-friendly perspective, categorically denies this. His account of the school closures goes like this:

“The claim that the unification of Turkish schools with Bulgarian schools had been requested by the people was a blatant lie. The present author is one of those who know closely that no Turk in their right mind in the Shumen area was willing to have their schools transformed into Bulgarian schools. Shumen was one of the fortresses of the education of the Turkish minority. Some of the Turkish schools in Shumen were historic schools left from the period of the Ottoman Empire. No thinking Turk could give up such a national deep-rooted institution. None did.” (1988: 204, emphasis added).

The discourse employed in this passage clearly mirrors the argument I have constructed. Note, that at the time of the book's publication the memory of the Turkish school system was much more alive than it is now. Tellingly, even though my interviewees all knew and mentioned that a Turkish education had existed in
Bulgaria in the past, none of them gave a similarly passionate account in relation to the process of its elimination. This indicates, I believe, that in lieu of cultural institutions and the agents attached to them, the passage of time does not necessarily reinforce a sense of collective belonging, but it actually weakens it. Institutions mediate the effect of history: they make remembrance possible, when they exist.

**Closing remarks**

In this paper I have argued that collective identification entwines with collective ownership and that, moreover, this connection may lead to ethnicized conflict. I have shown that, in general, minority participants tend to think about minority schools as collective wealth that cannot be alienated without threatening to diminish a collective sense of self. Attempts to eliminate a pivotal marker of social distinction by an ethnic other may be perceived as threatening the eradication of the entire group, thereby giving ground to social conflict along ethnic lines. However, I have also shown that ethnic identification is not the sole factor that underlies the formation of attachments to minority institutions, but that these can also be based on (1) change aversion, grounded both in human perception and psychology and impersonal mechanisms of institutional reproduction, and (2) conceptions of just possession that inform ownership rights claims. Conflict in these cases is ethnic due to the social categories it engages, but is ultimately motivated by instrumentalism and not by a sense of ethnic belonging.

I have also demonstrated that there is much to be gained from conceptualizing minority schools as a distinct category of boundary-markers. This is because, while it is certainly true that education constitutes an important mechanism of social reproduction both in content and in form, it is also imbued with an inter-subjective value that goes beyond these. This makes it possible to link the political utilization of the issue of minority schooling with the powerful popular response we often
observe. To link, that is, nationalist politics with personal emotions. People's receptivity to the narratives of dispossession in relation to an institution with which everyone comes into contact with at some point in one's life, and that therefore synthesizes personal life-stories and collective history, illuminate why mobilization around the issue of education is both frequent and powerful. Finally, such focus on collective possessions serves the broader ambition of understanding the theoretical problem of how ethnic sentiment can be distinguished from other forms of subjectivity, enabling analysts to appreciate how incompatible conceptions of ownership, and different interpretations of meaning between hierarchized social categories foreground conflict between them.
Chapter 6
The education of minorities in Bulgaria and Romania:
Analyzing the formation and articulation of preferences

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Introduction

Over the past five decades or so, culture and identity have emerged as arenas of intense political contestation (Benhabib 2002). During this time in the field of ethnocultural diversity, which this paper focuses on, state-minority relations have changed profoundly primarily, but not only, in Western democracies (Kymlicka 2007). This has entailed the progressive de-legitimation and eventual abandonment of earlier repressive practices, on the one hand, as well as the growing acceptance of group differentiated rights as instruments of diversity management, on the other hand (Kymlicka 2007). The movements that formed around such struggles for recognition commonly aspired to maintain the distinctness of their communities into the indefinite future—a claim to cultural survival—and to achieve the appreciation of their cultures as valuable—a claim to cultural worth (Taylor 1994). Beyond these baseline objectives, however, the rights-claims advanced by such actors have varied greatly. Indeed, at first sight it seems as though any minority might adopt any number of political positions (Benhabib 2002: 18).
To make sense of this complexity, Will Kymlicka (2007), for example, distinguishes the demands that minorities be reasonably expected to advance on the basis of how that particular category of people was formed, i.e. via immigration or involuntary incorporation. Writings on minority rights in general and educational and linguistic rights for minorities in particular have also offered useful classifications both with regard to the various policy approaches governments may take and with regard to the variable goals and preferences minorities may hold. Examples include Kloss’ (1971) distinction between tolerance-oriented and promotion-oriented rights and the differentiation between rights attached to individuals as opposed to territories. (May 2014). Churchill (1986) also offers a comprehensive typology and evaluation of majority policy-responses and minority objectives in relation to education. While the latter, as May observes, are “extremely varied” (May 2012: 195), he suggests, echoing Kymlicka, that these are somehow linked to the characteristics of the minority in question (Ibid.).

Although this approach provides valuable benchmarks, significant caveats remain, including how to treat those cases that do not fit neatly into the proposed classifications (e.g., Kymlicka 2001). A further problem is that minorities who fall into different rubrics in these typologies can in fact advance similar right-claims, supported by similar arguments and justifications, as Aukerman’s (2000) comparison of indigenous people and national minorities demonstrates.65 The opposite, of course, may also be true – i.e. broadly comparable minorities can express – through their representatives or behavior – divergent preferences and aspirations. Adding a further layer of complexity is the increasing concern in the field of constructivist theorizing on ethnicity with the inconsistencies and limitations of identity-based thinking, prompting researchers to situate their analyses more firmly in political, social, and institutional contexts (Brubaker 2009: 216), and to avoid deriving purportedly common interests from identities. Finally, it has been pointed out that it is likewise unreasonable to assume that ethnic

65 Chapter 1 discusses the problems of such distinctions, including their endogeneity to the outcomes they are supposed to explain.
identities are exogenous to these political, social, and institutional contexts in the first place (Chandra 2012).

In this paper, I want to find improved ways to think about the acquisition of minority rights and the conduct of ethnic politics, more generally, but without supposing that minorities’ aims and desires originate solely or primarily from a fixed ethnic identification. For this I map out (what in commonsense understandings can be seen as) minorities’ preferences and I try to explain the ways these are formed. I confine my analysis both topically, to the field of education, and regionally, by focusing on two largely comparable cases in two neighboring East-Central European (ECE) countries. On the one hand, in the domain of education collective aspirations regarding long-term survival and cultural recognition converge. On the other hand, ethnic relations and nationalist politics in ECE have received great attention both inside and outside the academy due to their bearing on a variety of issues, including, for example, security and European integration (Kymlicka and Opalski 2001). Therefore, the examination of the education of minorities in two ECE states is particularly profitable for the study of ethnic politics and minority rights.

Specifically, I analyze 32 interviews that I have conducted with political, institutional, and civil society actors in Romania and Bulgaria, involved in minority education or minority rights issues more generally. I start by describing what, according to these individuals, minorities “want”, i.e. what they expect from the educational system as well as the rationales underlying these wants and expectations. Subsequently, I evaluate the resulting patterns along three dimensions to which interviewees themselves attributed preference formation and that also correspond to the explanatory factors usually considered in the related literature: participants’ perceptions about constraining majority opinion; some aspects of minority political representation; and their evaluations of the life options open to individuals with minority background.

The empirical puzzle underlying this analysis is that while the Hungarian minority in Romania possesses comparatively more rights than the Turks in Bulgaria, the first
tend to request more, while the latter demand comparatively little. But why is it that those who have more ask for more and those who have less ask for less? This paper argues that an incremental mechanism underlies this pattern: that preferences build on each other and that before higher order preferences can be met or even conceived all the lower steps along the way must be accounted for.

**Conceptualization**

I define the term minority based on the position of power an ethno-culturally defined category occupies in a certain society. In this reading a majority constitutes the titular nationality of a polity, i.e. the legitimate “owner” of the state, whose culture—language, history, traditions, symbols, etc.—is thoroughly institutionalized. Minorities are those who occupy a non-dominant position in relation to majorities and whose capacity to hold on to their ethno-cultural identifications is therefore potentially at risk (Henrard 2001: 43).

With regard to the dependent variable, I use the term preference in order to describe the desire for and greater appreciation of one alternative over another. This approach is different from the one usually taken in the literature, which tends to focus on demands and rights-claims, i.e. things that ostensibly constitute minorities’ aims or goals. In my view, however, publicly articulated rights-claims constitute only a subset of more general preferences. Rights-claims, that is, are only that part of aspirations that is deemed possible of being meaningfully advanced in the public sphere. At times, the two coincide almost entirely. But at other instances the mismatch is considerable, with self-censorship playing an important role in limiting publicly made claims. The informal conversing format of the interview makes it easier to identify exactly where the ruptures between the conceivable as opposed to the publicly utterable are located.

Moreover, the concept of preference better captures the trade-offs that inform people’s decisions, as they are weighing their options between individual upward
mobility and an empowering sense of collective belonging, for instance. The question, then, is how such alternatives are ordered hierarchically, i.e. not what people want but what do they want more. This is especially important for, as we shall see, the emergent issues and preoccupations in the two cases are rather similar—even though the two are located on a different baseline level of rights. The variance can be found, instead, on the emphasis that is put on each issue and on the priorities that are set.

The way I am able to examine this reasoning is through the lens of political, institutional, and civil society actors involved in minority rights and educational affairs (for a more detailed analysis see Chapter 3). This is a diverse category of individuals—minority politicians and community leaders, founders and managers of ethnic organizations, minority rights advocates, educators, intellectuals and academics—who are commonly interested in the protection and the social reproduction of the ethno-cultural community. I do not assume that their views are representative of the opinions of the minorities, but they are nonetheless important to be studied, as these are the actors that typically claim to speak on behalf of them. What will they emphasize, and what will they leave out? How do they think about the different options for meaningful choice? What does this tell us about the acquisition of minority rights and ethnic politics, more generally? These will be the guiding questions of my research.

**Minority education in ECE**

Often, when talking about diversity and minority rights, we find ourselves talking about education. Selecting the official state-language and controlling the delivery of education constitute fundamental national prerogatives. Therefore, minority schooling tends to constitute a point of social and political contention in ethnically segmented societies. Minority interest organizations tend to challenge titular majorities’ exclusive ownership of public educational institutions by advancing a broad variety of demands, ranging from the reform of educational systems in order to make them more welcoming to difference to achieving complete institutional
separation along ethno-cultural lines. Moreover, minority education is seen as a strategic ally in the efforts to influence other institutions (Dietz 2007: 17). For schools are constitutive elements of a web of mutually reinforcing ethnic organizations that together lower the overall chance of assimilation to the majority (Breton 1964; Brubaker et al. 2006).

Majorities’ responses are, again, variable. As a rule governments tend to consider the granting of minority rights as a generosity, rather than as a requirement of justice (May 2012: 190). However, given that nation state formation in ECE has involved a reversal of minority-majority relations, this has led to a regional specificity whereby in addition to minorities majorities also perceive themselves as weak and as having suffered past injustice (Kymlicka 2007). The existence of neighboring kin-states committed to the protection of co-nationals abroad further complicates interethnic relations (Brubaker 1993). These factors, as we shall see, impact in important ways the pursuit of minority-rights agendas by limiting the level of majorities’ tolerance for the “former rulers” or by compelling minorities to anticipate negative opinions, for example.

**Context**

This paper presents the comparative analysis of minorities’ education-related preferences as expressed by political, institutional, and civil society actors. The chosen cases combine a number of similarities with some important differences. Bulgaria and Romania share largely similar experiences regarding the historical development of majority-minority relations and paths of state formation. According to national censuses, Hungarians in Romania and Turks in Bulgaria today constitute the largest ethno-cultural minorities, respectively with important boundary-markers distinguishing them from the majorities, including place of residence, confession, ethnic origin, mother tongue, and cultural practices. The numbers are: 1.4 million Hungarians (or 6.5% of the total population) in Romania and 590,000
Turks (or 8.8%) in Bulgaria. Both countries have also large Roma minorities. I do not discuss Roma education here, but in developing my argument, I draw some analogies (see section: Perceived constraints).

A critical difference that sets the two categories apart, however, is their official status. That is to say, while Hungarians in Romania are recognized as a national minority, this is not the case for the Turks in Bulgaria who are only granted the status of ethnic minority. This is an especially relevant detail given that being categorized as an ethnic as opposed to a national minority confers very different legal entitlements. While in my view, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria would qualify as a national minority under most definitions of the term, what is important for the purposes of this paper is whether this impacts participants’ accounts and preferences and if yes, how.\footnote{In \textbf{Chapter 1}, I discuss in detail the problems of other categorization and official status as they link to power.} Powerful parties gather the ethnic vote both in Romania—Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR)—and in Bulgaria—Movement of Rights and Freedoms (MRF)—with a number of more recently formed challengers playing a minor role in the representation of minority interests. Ahmed Dogan founded MRF’s predecessor, the “Movement for the Rights of Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria,” in 1990. Given that the Bulgarian constitution prohibits the establishment of parties on religious and/or ethnic grounds, the MRF, registered as a cultural, educational, and charitable organization, was challenged as illegal from the start. This has pushed the party away from pursuing an extensive minority-rights agenda and toward broadening its appeal beyond the ethnic Turkish electorate, on which, nevertheless, the party continues to rely (Rechel 2007A).

Minority education has a long history in both countries. In Romania, dating back to Austro-Hungarian rule but drastically decreased at the end of the Ceausescu era, a fully-fledged state-funded Hungarian school system exists today. In the 2014/2015 school year there were 956 separate Hungarian institutions and/or Hungarian departments within mixed institutions and the total number of Hungarian students...
enrolled in minority education was approximately 130,000 (Barna 2016: 14; Márton and Kapitány 2016: 36). Hungarian tertiary education is also available either in a fully Hungarian but private university or in a number of departments within the branches of a Romanian majority university (Ibid.). It is worth noting that the Hungarian school-system in Romania has been declining in terms of both student and school numbers. Indicatively, in the 2005/2006 school year the aggregate number of separate Hungarian institutions and Hungarian departments within mixed institutions were approximately 1400 and the total number of students enrolled in Hungarian education was close to 180,000 (Márton 2007). That said, however, the overall proportion of Hungarian students enrolled in Hungarian minority education as a proportion of all students in the country has remained stable over time (around 5 per cent) and even increased slightly during the past decade (Barna 2016: 14).

Conversely, the minority school system of the Turks in Bulgaria, which had its origins in the Ottoman millet system and was for a while maintained and even encouraged under state socialism, did not survive the particularly aggressive assimilation campaign launched by the Zhivkov administration in the 1980s. Up to the 1960s hundreds of Turkish primary and several secondary schools operated. There were three institutes for teacher training and a substantial Turkish-language press (Petkova 2002: 43). Subsequently, change in the regime’s attitudes toward the Turkish minority precipitated radical assimilationist measures of the so-called revival process (Dimitrov 2000). By the 1980s, Turkish-language education had been phased out and all Turkish students were integrated into the mainstream Bulgarian educational system (Eminov 1997). Today minimal special educational provisions are in place for Turkish minority students: there are no public minority schools or departments and Turkish as a mother tongue has the low standing of an “obligatory elective” subject. There are three private religious educational institutions in the country that accommodate the educational needs of the Turkish minority on the primary-secondary level and that are accredited by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education. In addition, there exists the “Higher Institute for Islamic
Studies,” a tertiary-level institution founded on religious law, but not recognized by the Bulgarian state. Note that although the correlation of Turkish ethnicity and the observance of Islamic religion is high, it is not perfect. In the secular mainstream educational institutions minority children may opt-in to attend Turkish-language classes, which nevertheless compete with other “obligatory elective” subjects, e.g. computer science or foreign language. Instruction in Turkish of other subjects is not an option.

**Data and method**

As already discussed in Chapter 3, in this chapter I analyze original data generated from 32 interviews conducted in the spring of 2015 in Romania (Cluj and Bucharest) and Bulgaria (Sofia) with actors from the institutional, political, civil society, and academic sphere involved in minority affairs. Twenty-nine interviewees have a minority background (i.e., they understand themselves as belonging to the Hungarian or Turkish minority). In addition to that in the Bulgarian case I have included three human and minority-rights advocates who do not have minority status, but who could be reasonably hypothesized to speak on behalf of the minority. The interviews were held in a language in which informants could express themselves comfortably: Hungarian and English, as well as Turkish (in the latter case with the help of an interpreter, as I do not speak the language).

Twenty-two interviews were conducted in Romania and ten in Bulgaria. The number of interviews was based on the principle of saturation. Data-collection continued until the marginal contribution of any new interview—i.e. the additional information conveyed by it—had decreased considerably (Saumure and Given, 2008). As Hungarians in Romania and their educational system are numerically much larger relative to the Turks and the minority educational system in Bulgaria, there are, as a matter of course, more individuals who are involved in minority educational and cultural affairs. I provide a full list of the interviewees with
information on their institutional affiliation in the Appendix. For reasons of confidentiality, I refer to each interviewee by a codename composed of the initials of the country of residence (BU/RO) and a serial number.

As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, I performed thematic analysis on this material in three steps. I began by looking into argumentative patterns. Drawing on comparisons between the two cases, as well as using the classificatory schemes of Aukerman 2000 and May 2012, I set up a typology against which to evaluate my findings, comprising three stages of education-related preferences and four main argumentative themes. Finally, in order to map up how participants’ preferences are formed I also searched for how they attribute causality in their narratives.

**Education-related preferences and their underlying rationales**

**Preferences**

I have classified the education-related preferences articulated during the interviews on the basis of a three-stage model (for this classification and for the entire section, see: May 2012: 180–181). According to this classification, minorities may aspire to progressively more and more wide-ranging rights and entitlements. However, normally, fundamental desires have to be obtained first before more extensive, higher order desires can be advanced. The first stage of preferences therefore concerns a tokenistic but important legal affirmation of multiculturalism or multie-ethnicity by the state. This means that the existence of the minority as a distinct category is acknowledged and its special educational needs are officially taken note of. To the second stage typically belong demands for expansion, i.e. quantitative extension and qualitative improvement, which entails the progressive incorporation of the minority language and culture into the state education system. The final stage involves a preference for control, i.e. for the minorities to be able to govern, organize, and administer their own educational institutions in (relative) independence from the majority (see Table 15).
**Affirmation**

Although both the Romanian and the Bulgarian constitutions employ an exclusive definition of the “people” (Székely and Horváth, 2014), Hungarians in Romania are recognized as a “national minority” and the Hungarian language can be used as an official language in those administrative districts where the native Hungarian-speaking population comprises at least 20 per cent of the total population. Conversely, the main concerns expressed by interviewees describing the situation of the Turks in Bulgaria revolved around the desire to be recognized as a “national minority” as opposed to an ethnic group. “In Bulgaria the Turkish minority is an ethnic and not a national minority. Its recognition would be perceived as threat.” (BU/1)—stated one informant; “The status of the minority is bound with the minority rights” (BU/4)—added another, making a clear connection between the refusal of the state to provide adequate recognition and the lack of rights arising from this fact.

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<th>Table 15: The three stages of minorities’ education-related preferences</th>
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<td>Affirmation</td>
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A different but related preference under the broad heading of recognition is that of reciprocity. One way, that is, to acknowledge the ethno-cultural heterogeneity of the society is to adapt the majority educational system to the special needs of minority students in order to make the provision of education more equitable. Such special needs may include, for instance, making available teaching material for students whose mother tongue is other than the state language, hiring specially trained teachers and tutors, adapting the teaching methodology to reflect minorities’
traditional modes of social interaction. A good example is the desire expressed by some informants to eliminate the existing practices of Bulgarian education that, in their view, reinforce and perpetuate negative perceptions about the Turkish minority, on the one hand, and to incorporate into the curricula the viewpoints of minorities, on the other. The following quote is characteristic: “Bulgarian nationalism is based on hatred against the Turks. Schoolbooks reinforce stereotypes and prejudice, especially history.” (BU/1). And:

Muslim children in Bulgaria do not get information about their religion, their culture and ethnicity; they don’t have any knowledge about their own history. Only 1% is about minorities in the history books. (BU/4)

Hungarian informants referred less frequently to the reform of the majority educational system, but the theme was present in this case too:

Hungarians are portrayed as “the enemy” in Romanian history books. Minority students are taught that they have been defeated. Our aim is to be perceived as an added value. The minorities’ historical contributions should be part of the instruction of history in Romania. (RO/22)

Expansion

The next stage in the categorization of minorities’ aspirations is that of quantitative enlargement (broadening) and qualitative improvement (deepening and diversification). Increasing the quantity of minority-language education can mean different things: more native-language classes and/or more minority educational institutions and/or more students participating in minority education. The preservation of the existing institutions in the face of assimilation can also be considered as a case of expansion.

Given that there is currently extensive Hungarian-language primary and secondary education in Romania, Hungarian interviewees tended to focus on the expansion of higher education. They described at length the controversies surrounding the establishment of a publicly-funded separate Hungarian university both in terms of a
long-standing majority opposition and internal minority disagreement. In addition, they strongly emphasized the need to maintain as many institutions as possible even under the circumstances of demographic decline. The primary aspiration in the case of the Turks, conversely, was somewhat more education: the upgrade of the Turkish language to a compulsory subject from its current status as "obligatory elective" and enrolling more minority children in mother tongue classes. The expansion of Turkish language education beyond this, however, was not discussed. The typical interviewee would express a hesitant desire for increased Turkish-language education but would go no further than bilingualism, ruling out the need for the mother tongue to take precedence over the official national language in the education of minority students.

With regard to the question of deepening, informants in both cases asserted the need for a qualitative improvement in the education that students with minority background would receive. Interviewees showed a constant preoccupation with quality, describing at length the need to remedy any current and/or potential inferiority of minority education and the additional obstacles that minority students faced irrespective of whether they enrolled in majority or minority schools. The most obvious such obstacle is the mismatch between a minority student’s mother language and the official language of the state. On the one hand, if a minority child enrolls in a majority school, they will inevitably face a disadvantage given their low linguistic competence in the official language with a risk of falling behind. Moreover, such an arrangement may jeopardize adequate communication between parents and educators. It also runs the risk of marking as “different” or even stigmatizing the minority student. On the other hand, if the decision is made to enroll in a minority school, there is still an opportunity-cost associated with learning the mother tongue in addition to the official language. Moreover, minority schools may be considered less prestigious in a given setting, while it may also be more difficult to sustain a good standard of teaching there, which puts students’ prospects for advancement to tertiary education and later to the labor markets at risk. Further, Hungarian interviewees stressed the need for diversification, i.e. to set up a professional
background organization responsible for curricular development; the provision of bussing and dormitories so that students outside the areas of compact Hungarian settlement can be included in minority education; special education for the talented, and so on. Finally, interviewees in both cases asserted that the special needs of minority students, related to methodology, teaching material, the availability of specially trained educators and so forth, make the provision of quality education inherently more difficult for minority educational systems, while also rendering these systems more dependent on state-support, both material and administrative.

Control

Interviewees in both cases tended to portray a situation in which the majorities had an interest in undermining minority education. They described what they perceived as an unhelpful and unwelcoming attitude ranging from mere indifference to obstruction, to open hostility toward special educational arrangements for the accommodation of minorities. Interviewees recalled examples of this: authorities closed down minority educational institutions with no justification, imposed too many conditions (translations, quotas), directly or indirectly hindering the organization of minority classes, organized the final examinations or secondary and tertiary education entrance tests in such a way as to provide counterincentives to participating in minority education.

*Article 26 of the Constitution stipulates that Bulgarian citizens of non-Bulgarian language have the right to learn their mother tongue. The word ‘school’ was dropped from this article. (BU/4)*

This ironic formulation implies that the Turkish minority has been somehow misled by the central authorities and signals the inefficiency of superficial changes in the legal framework to substitute for substantive attitudinal and institutional change among the Bulgarian majority. In Romania, too, interviewees associated the “systematic dismantling” (RO/5) of the Hungarian educational system with concerted state efforts toward the elimination of the minority. Such complaints about harmful state interference lead to the third and most advanced stage of
education-related minority rights: autonomous control. This constitutes the highest-order demand for it seeks to replicate for the minority what is the prerogative of the majority (Bauböck 2001). Only the Hungarian interviewees expressed a strong preference for autonomy as, in the words of one informant,

*Everyone feels better in their own environment. [...] For us the separate school is a matter of life and death. Mixed institutions always entail disadvantage.* (RO/10)

Interviewees expressing the views of the Turks in Bulgaria, conversely, did not articulate such a desire.

**Arguments and justifications**

Having mapped out education-related preferences in the two cases, I now turn to the underlying justifications the interviewees used in order to support their arguments. Interviewees in both cases tended to think that minority students faced potential educational disadvantage no matter whether they enrolled in minority or majority schools. On the one hand, academic success in majority institutions was deemed more difficult for the individual, as well as potentially damaging for the minority community. On the other, academic success in minority institutions, even if easier for the individual and more preferable for the continued existence of the ethno-cultural community, might well have ruinous consequences in terms of socioeconomic advancement. Informants tended to think differently, however, with regard to the degree to which they believed that the potentially negative consequences of this trade-off should be borne, and in what ways they thought it could be mitigated or resolved. In this section, I discuss the arguments and underlying rationales provided by the interviewees along four grounds that are familiar from both the normative and empirical literature (e.g., Aukerman 2000; Brubaker 2015; Kymlicka 2007; May 2012). A summary can be found in Table 16.

**Vulnerability**

Interviewees tended to justify the need for minority educational rights and special provisions on the grounds of the logic of compensation, i.e. as counterweights to the
vulnerable social position of these social categories in relation to majority populations. It was argued that a lack of skills, especially but not only linguistic, disproportionately limits the career opportunities of persons with minority background. Although the need for a good knowledge of the official language was uniformly accepted, other proposals as to how to compensate for this disadvantage other than that varied between the two cases. Namely, in relation to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, respondents often viewed minority language fundamentally as a problem (I apply a modified typology here, elaborated in May 2001, 182–184), i.e. an orientation that casts the minority language as something to be mitigated, eliminated or, generally, “resolved”. This approach generated arguments in favor of improving the conditions and opportunities of minorities to learn the official language, in the form of remedial classes, for example, and led to views that were related to improving education in the mother tongue because this was deemed necessary in order to enhance overall educational outcomes in the official language. Hungarian informants, conversely, tended to view the use of the minority language as a right. They believed, that is, that mother-tongue education constituted an elementary entitlement of the Hungarian minority in Romania. They strongly agreed that there were possible dangers inherent in minority schooling in that it would reproduce vulnerabilities, but their view regarding this possibility was to support the provision of even more and better mother-tongue education anyway. In the words of a Hungarian informant: “Separate Hungarian education is no guarantee for quality. [...] But it is easier to experience identity in a purely Hungarian milieu.” (RO/8) While this kind of arrangement would not necessarily reduce individuals’ social vulnerability in relation to the majority, informants argued that it would impact positively the position of Hungarians as a group; it would enhance their chances of long-term survival as well as increase their strength as a collective.

This brings me to the second set of arguments and justifications under the general heading of vulnerability, focused on unequal opportunities for the intergenerational transmission of ethno-cultural and linguistic identities. The Hungarian informants stressed, first and foremost, how immensely important education was in this
respect. In the words of a Hungarian interviewee: “Culture and education build into your soul a priority that you are Hungarian.” (RO/7) Identity was an important concern in the case of the Turks, too:

*Ethnic minorities must preserve their identity, culture. Minority students don’t get any information about their religion, their culture, and their ethnicity. They don’t have any knowledge about their own history [...] this impedes the formation of their ethnic identity. (BU/3)*

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<th>Table 16: Arguments and justifications</th>
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However, opinions conflicted with regard to how much the state should interfere in processes of the intergenerational transmission of such identifications. The Hungarian informants tended to point out the importance of the minority school apparatus as an intervention into the dynamics of spontaneous social reproduction, i.e. as a tool to reverse the otherwise inevitable process of assimilation. They identified a need for a concerted effort to persuade both the state to grant and strengthen special educational rights and families to make use of such opportunities. Conversely, informants in the Bulgarian case tended to believe that the intergenerational transmission of language and culture was primarily the task of the family and that it could be achieved in private without any explicit aid from the state.
Utility

Informants in both cases viewed minority education not only as a tool to counteract vulnerability but also as a resource on which students could capitalize. It was frequently mentioned that against the backdrop of growing geographical mobility, language skills and multicultural life experiences are becoming increasingly important assets. Therefore, an excellent knowledge of both the majority and the minority language would equip minority students with a competitive advantage. Further, a number of informants stressed the psychosocial and psycholinguistic benefits of minority education in enabling learning by adjusting to the needs of students. This seemed completely self-evident for Hungarian interviewees, but it was also an important argument in the other case, too:

*If children studied in their mother tongue, this would improve their educational achievement; it would help them to become self-conscious; it would encourage them to study; [...] it would help to clarify their identity and enable them to be more successful in their lives.* (BU/2)

Informants asserted that minority education created the social and cultural capital that could potentially compensate for disadvantaged social position. Education in the mother tongue, they argued, has an array of beneficial effects for personality development: it prevents the estrangement of students from their families and their broader social milieu and it helps them develop healthy self-esteem by removing the stigma of difference. This dimension was particularly relevant for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. A number of interviewees expressed their preference for minority education as a counterweight to what they described as the regular humiliation of Turkish students in Bulgarian schools. This perspective was largely absent in the Romanian context.

**Historical entitlement arguments and compensation for past injustice**
The need for linguistic, educational, and cultural rights makes sense only insofar as minorities can enjoy these rights not someplace but where they traditionally reside (Aukerman 2000: 1039). The argument of historical presence was more pronounced in the Romanian case where Transylvania stood out in the narratives of interviewees as the particular homeland to which the Hungarian community was attached by multiple ties. These attachments justified, in the eyes of the interviewees, minorities’ entitlements in education as well as in other spheres of life. By contrast, rootedness in Bulgarian territory was relatively less pronounced in the case of the Turks and the long history of emigration to Turkey—initiated with the formation of the Bulgarian state—became an argument against “excessive” minority education. Interviewees argued that minority education would prepare Turkish students for “repatriation” to Turkey: “The students’ future would be uncertain if they studied in Turkish. The most important thing is to get ahead in Bulgaria; for them not to go away” (BU/3). The problem of emigration to Hungary, a comparatively richer economy, was also present in the other case, especially in relation to higher education, but quite less salient.

Related to arguments regarding long historical presence on a territory are arguments seeking compensation for injustices incurred in the past (Aukerman 2000). The act of involuntary incorporation into the states of residence is often used to justify the use of minority protection as a way to compensate for this circumstance. Given, however, the historical reversal of majority–minority relations in the two countries, it is difficult to deploy arguments on these grounds. This is because such a strategy potentially carries with it a sense of unwarranted entitlement and even revisionism. Majorities perceive themselves as having been subjected to injustice and therefore do not tend to view minorities’ claims for rectification as justified. Remedying past injustice, however, does come up specifically in relation to the repressive measures of the state socialist regimes. In the case of the Hungarians in Romania, some interviewees framed the restoration of
minority education as a rectification of past maltreatment. And in the context of the extremely repressive assimilatory campaign commanded by the Bulgarian Communist regime, the Turkish minority has argued for the granting of rights in terms of a compensation for the “perpetration of a terrible crime” (BU/7).

A variation on this theme was the argument for the preservation of minority schools, defined not merely as functional educational institutions, but as crucial components of minorities’ cultural heritage and collective selves, which was especially pronounced in the Hungarian case. Informants speaking for the Turks also referred back to the formerly existing minority schools in Bulgaria citing their abolition as evidence of the majority’s hostile attitude toward minorities. Although the restoration of this separate school system was not believed to be possible in Bulgaria today, it was nevertheless disliked. Moreover, the fact that Turkish minority institutions had existed at one point in the past enabled informants to tentatively imagine that such arrangements could also be possible and maybe even desirable in the future.

The intrinsic value of diversity and ecological arguments

An argument that is often deployed to defend minority rights entitlements emphasizes the value that ostensibly inheres in the mere fact of cultural difference (Aukerman 2000: 1037-8). The justifications of these arguments typically stress the cultural wealth, distinctive traditions and heritage that are worth defending on their own right - hence, for example, the aim of the ECRML to protect regional languages instead of the users of these languages. It is therefore striking that in the two cases I examined this set of plausible justifications had only a minor weight. Namely, informants in both cases referred only marginally to the idea that diversity

67 Numerous Hungarian gymnasium schools that used to be housed in church-owned buildings were seized during communism and progressively Romanianized. Following the regime change, legal restitution of these properties quasi-automatically contributed to reinvigorating Hungarian-language education, which by that time had been considerably reduced.
constitutes a source of enrichment and therefore should be protected and promoted as a value in and of itself. While interviewees appreciated Hungarian and Turkish cultural and literary achievements, they tended to view education more instrumentally: as a way of finding a good job leading to a comfortable life. Moreover, interviewees were strongly against the so-called celebratory multiculturalism, rejecting it as a distraction that hampers minorities’ substantive empowerment. Generally, although interviewees in both cases conveyed a sense of threat they did not tend to view themselves as an endangered “species” that should be rescued in order to maintain diversity. Although the type of essentialism that usually accompanies such understandings was largely absent, the assertion of a feeling of deep-rooted cultural incompatibility also emerged, albeit marginally, in the case of Hungarians in Romania. Some of the interviewees referred to different “cultural and beauty ideals” (RO/13) or “differences in perception between the different ethnicities” (RO/7), and they believed that these justified an education separated along ethnocultural lines.

Similarly, arguments relating to linguistic vulnerability, and ecological arguments justifying remedial action were avoided in both the Bulgarian and the Romanian contexts. One reason for this might be that ecological arguments make sense only if the minority languages are seen as endangered, which is clearly not the case with regard to the Hungarian and Turkish languages, which have millions of users in the region. The status of these languages is the highest possible: they constitute state-identified, demographically and economically robust languages. Moreover, they used to be dominant languages in the past, and as such it is difficult to argue that there is a need to actively promote them as vulnerable today. A strategy with which interviewees attempted to circumvent this limitation was to strike a distinction between the standard Turkish and Hungarian language and the language the Turkish and Hungarian minorities actually use.
Discussion

Having described the education-related preferences and arguments advanced by the interviewees, I now ask how they attempt to make sense of their own preferences, and to which inhibiting or enabling factors they attribute them. I approach this question through three themes that emerged during the interviews that I also link to the existing literature, including May (2012) on public attitudes; Kymlicka (2001; 2007) on securitization; Lustick (1979) on cooptation; Alba (2005) on boundary-drawing.

Perceived constraints

When writing about minority-language education, May (2012: 191) argues that “the issue of majority opinion remains a crucial one” and that “such initiatives may only be achieved (or be achievable) if at least some degree of favorable majority opinion is secured.” Comparative survey data, however, shows that majorities’ opinions about diversity in both countries of interest are similar and therefore have a limited explanatory potential. Indicatively, both Romanians and Bulgarians tend to be “very proud” of their nationality (37% and 39%, respectively); 27% of Romanians and an equal proportion of Bulgarians tend to agree that “ethnic diversity erodes a country’s unity”; and people in both countries are, on average, unsympathetic to the idea of having neighbours of a different “race” (18% in Romania, 20% in Bulgaria) or religion (15% in both cases). It appears that it is not some quantitative measure of preferential or inhibiting majority attitudes that matters but the qualitative differences prevailing in each context.

More specifically, in the Bulgarian case, when asked about the possibilities of demanding some degree of autonomy over educational matters, informants termed

68 World Values Survey (2005–2008). Numbers have been rounded.
69 Aggregation of the percentage of respondents who chose options 1–4 on a scale of 10 (where 10 represents the most favorable view on diversity).
They said that expressing such views publicly “would be dangerous,” and that they “couldn’t imagine someone standing up and saying this.” (BU/9) Such a perception of an extremely restrictive context was absent from the narratives of Hungarians in Romania. A significant differentiating factor seems to be, therefore, whether interethnic relations have been securitized. This is evidenced by the fact that in the case of the Turks, interviewees mentioned without exception security considerations as impacting minority politics in some way or another. The following quote shows that even the most ordinary issues are interpreted within this security-threat frame:

*There is a need for genuine public debate. What is mother tongue and what is the right to mother tongue? [...] This is not discussed at all. There are no people to promote this, to persuade society that this is important and not dangerous.* (BU/10)

Conversely only three Hungarian interviewees made related—and quite superficial—remarks on this topic. True, Hungarian interviewees tended to perceive the Romanian majority as generally unsympathetic to minority protection. A number of Hungarian interviewees mentioned the only grave violent confrontation between minorities and majorities in March 1990 in Târgu Mureș (Hungarian: Marosvásárhely), but they considered it an exceptional event, stressing that minority politics in the country have generally been conducted by respecting democratic principles. Conversely, in the Bulgarian case, informants often referred to the widely held stereotypical conception of the Turkish minority as posing an existential threat to the Bulgarian nation, aggravated by rising prejudice against Islam and Muslims Europe-wide. Hence, while ethnic relations are predominantly framed in terms of a security hazard in Bulgaria, this is much less so in Romania.

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70 This is in line with Will Kymlicka’s long-standing argument considering the securitization of minority politics in ECE, who rightly identified historical experiences and path-dependencies as having shaped this pattern (Kymlicka 2001; 2007).
Further and relatedly, in the Bulgarian context, the majority tends to perceive the Turkish minority as the very opposite of vulnerable and underprivileged. The Turks are barely represented in the public sphere as a minority at all, and this word tends to signify the Roma. Indicatively, I noticed during the fieldwork that whenever I said that I work on “minority education,” people would refer me to specialists in Roma issues, showing surprise that I wanted instead to talk about the Turks. The invisibility of the Turks as a minority on the one hand and the almost exclusive focus on the problems of the Roma minority on the other hand profoundly impacts, in my view, the formation of preferences. Namely, it is widely held that the interests of the Roma tend to be those of desegregation and the abolition of differential treatment in education as well as in other spheres of life. In this case, exclusion is obviously being unjustly imposed on a vulnerable population group. This may have a spillover effect on the preferred policies regarding the Turks by delegitimizing the idea of separation along ethno-cultural lines and therefore silencing any demands for it. Note that this is not the case in Romania, even though a comparably large—and similarly socially disadvantaged—Roma minority resides there too.

The role of the political elites

Prevailing conceptions about what categories of people are and what they deserve are crucially important in signaling to minorities’ representatives how much space they have to advance a rights-claims discourse. However, essential to this is also the stance adopted by minority political elites, who have both to adapt to such constraints and opportunities as well as to transform them. It is they who determine whether the issue of minority education will become politicized and consigned to the public sphere or if, instead, it will be seen as the private concern of the individual and the family and therefore unsuitable for public intervention. Such views are in turn linked to more general perceptions about what the primary aim of education is: is it the formation and intergenerational transmission of ethnic identifications or is it social advancement and individual prosperity? Emphasis on
the first is associated with the interest of the community and methodical social engineering; emphasis on the second with individualism and a preference for state neutrality and non-interference. In both cases, it was recognized that parents have to be allies in the cause of minority education as it is their countless individual choices that sustain precarious institutional equilibria. Hungarian interviewees went into considerable detail describing those interventions that have the potential to alter families’ utility calculi and which lead to the decision to enroll children in minority education. The majority of the informants agreed that “the Hungarian claim is for a parallel world, for putting the community before the person. Hungarian education is the pillar of this.” (RO/4) In Bulgaria, conversely, interviewees tended to refute the interconnectedness of individual incentives with public policy and held parents responsible for not supporting minority education: “Directors limit, discourage Turkish-language education. On the other side, parents also give in too easily.” (BU/7).

Political strategies are also part of this. Whereas in Romania Hungarian political elites have embraced the issue of minority education and have made it the pillar of their political program, the ones in Bulgaria have not done the same. The MRF politicians I interviewed highlighted the party’s achievements, stating that families had simply to make use of the opportunities offered to. This stance puts emphasis on individual agency instead of the structural constraints that limit the range of genuine choices available to minority individuals and families. Suggestively, other interviewees tended to be rather skeptical about the way the minority political elites have handled the education rights issue. Especially critical about the actions of the MRF, one interviewee described the dynamics of what can be identified as a mechanism of ethnic control (Lustick 1979): how key leaders co-opted with majority political elites to discipline the minority population for personal gains.

They wanted to control everything; they wanted the community to serve their purposes. [...] It is not true that Bulgarian elites constrained them. They [the MRF politicians] were part of governments, they have been in power for many years, and they would have had the opportunity to set the agenda. [...] Of course, there are some achievements, but when we put this in an honest analysis we have to say that we
missed a lot. Now they are very strong. People do not care anymore, because they have been put under control, social, economic. (BU/5)

Conversely, the DAHR took up the issue of education as its flagship from the very start. The education-related claims advanced by the minority political elites concurred to a large extent with the desires of the mass ethnic population in this area (for a nuanced analysis of the linkages between the DAHR and its voters, see: Kiss and Székely, 2016).

Nevertheless, the opinions of the interviewees differed with regard to whether this was the result of an elite-driven project or, on the contrary, it was a response to a strong bottom-up mobilization; and whether the DAHR achieved the best possible arrangement, or could have done more. Interviewees from the DAHR emphasized the party’s achievements, but among the other informants, it was a common perception that the party’s actions have been lacking. This reflects a general rupture detected also in the case of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, regarding the stances and achievements of the political elites. Namely, while the political representatives I interviewed stressed without exception the difficulties of achieving positive results in the field of minority education, depicting an overwhelmingly negative climate and constraints arising from the power constellations in the political sphere, public opinion and so forth. At the same time, these respondents also tended to express a satisfaction with the state of minority rights and education in their respective countries, arguing that what could be possibly achieved has been achieved. Conversely, the rest of the respondents in both cases tended to be generally critical of the political class, to be skeptical with regard to the severity of the constraints, and some even argued that ethnic politicians have been co-opted by their majority counter-parts.

**Meaningful reference-worlds**

Education constitutes a promise for a good life. However, intentions regarding where this life is to be spent are crucially important in determining the resulting institutional arrangements. More specifically, minorities can typically orient
themselves toward one of three directions: an inward-looking minority world, a transnational world, and a majority world. Various factors may determine which sense of space may come to prevail in each case, including the strength of collective bonds, cultural affinities, transnational connections and the availability of paths to upward social mobility. The notions attached to the location and permeability of the boundaries of the community (Alba 2005; Barth 1969), are, in turn, crucially important in shaping policy positions and preferences.

Linking back to the typology discussed in Chapter 1 (Table 1), these orientations correspond to either accommodation (institutional separation) or integration as follows. If minorities are embedded in an institutionally complete minority world, this goes hand in hand with a preference for a strong educational system as the cornerstone of the reproduction of this arrangement. If, conversely, the point of reference is the kin-state as the location of potential cultural and/or economic flourishing, this is likewise associated with a preference for an ethnically segmented educational system charged with transmitting the cultural capital that can be used in the kin-state. Orientation towards a majority world, conversely, is linked with a preference for integrated school-systems as these ensure the intergenerational integration and/or assimilation of the minority in the state of residence. However, it is also worth noting that institutional separation can have unintended consequences in that the flight of the educated undermines, in the long run, the educational systems causing them to unravel.

How do respondents think about these processes? Preferences for an extensive minority educational system are associated with an institutionally complete and strongly bounded minority world and when internal solidarity and cohesion are high: Hungarians in Romania are a typical case in point. The knowledge and skills, values, and behavioral patterns, as well as the established social relationships transmitted by minority education make sense in such a self-contained minority world that stretches indefinitely into the future. Hungarian interviewees without exception stated that a strong autonomous minority education system was needed
in order to develop and preserve a sense of distinctive ethno-cultural belonging. They asserted that minority education was a prerequisite for the long-term survival of the Hungarian community. The existence of an external homeland, Hungary, did not alter these perceptions significantly. Although its role as a migratory pull-factor was acknowledged, the primary aim of Hungarians in Romania was to lead a good life in their traditional place of residence rather than anywhere else.

The case of the Bulgarian Turks is different. Although the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, much like the Hungarians in Romania, is an internally relatively coherent social category with a “very clear and well-expressed self-awareness” (Zhelyazkova et al. 2010: 7), in this case the transnational and the minority world have become conflated. The history of massive migration to Turkey since the creation of the modern Bulgarian state (Brubaker 1995) seems to have solidified a belief that Turks are somehow inherently migration-prone. In this context, mother-tongue education becomes a hazard; a preparation for a life spent in the ethnic homeland, i.e. Turkey, and hence a threat to the continued existence of the minority in Bulgaria. “I cannot grasp the use of Turkish language in Bulgaria. Only if students later wanted to emigrate.” (BU/9)—stated an interviewee characteristically. The possibility of studying in Turkish but desiring to remain in Bulgaria was beyond imagination.

**Concluding remarks**

In this paper, I tried to explain variation in minorities’ education-related preferences as articulated by political, institutional, and civil society actors claiming to speak on their behalf. I began by outlining a classification scheme, which enables the comparative assessment of (what in common sense understandings constitutes) minorities’ preferences. I found that the preoccupations and perspectives voiced in the two cases are broadly similar, but that this happens on a very different baseline level of rights.
A number of comparative points emerged that may explain this pattern. First, real or perceived constraints shape the inception and articulation of preferences by signalling to actors which claims are socially and politically acceptable. Given the region-specific development of interethnic relations, anticipating a negative majority reaction constitutes the norm. However, it is the predominance of a security threat frame of interethnic relations that ultimately explains differences in preference-formation.

Second, when the transmission of minorities’ ethno-cultural identities is made a public concern and placed high on the political agenda as a legitimate site for state-intervention, this is associated with more extensive minority aspirations. Conversely, when the costs of adaptation are privatized and politicization is limited, expectations are lower. Finally, when group solidarity and cohesion are high and the minorities’ orientation is toward an all-encompassing minority world, this favors the inception and articulation of desires toward more wide-ranging accommodation arrangements. When, instead, minorities orient themselves toward their external homelands (or, ostensibly, toward the majority) then their interest in a strong system of minority education is limited—even if they are relatively cohesive as a group.

I argue that in the case of the Turks in Bulgaria, the conditions described above have not allowed minority rights to move forward. For it appears that actors gradually expand the horizons of obtainable options either through deliberate cautious strategizing or through the unconscious adaptation of preferences to the prevailing context, i.e. the limitation of “aspirations to, or even below, the level of possibilities” (Elster 1982: 235). Preferences, that is, build on each other and become progressively more and more extensive (what Offe (1998) has called escalation and proliferation), in a way that all the lower steps have to be accounted for before advancing to the next level. Such piecemeal logic explains why it is that those who have comparatively little also demand little and those who have more demand more. Importantly, this mechanism draws attention to the centrality of already
existing institutions that serve as reference points and set the pace and direction of change.  

Overall, one of the most interesting findings of the paper is, I believe, that cultural-identitarian and material motivational aspects intertwine in the interviewees’ complex calculations as they weigh the costs and benefits of minority education. The relatively low value attached to the preservation of cultural distinctness as an aim in and by itself is especially striking. It shows that thinking about the unequal distribution of opportunities along ethnic lines is not solely or primarily based on the objective of cultural flourishing or the preservation of ethnic identities, but also on their material implications (cf. Brubaker 2009B).

A last remark relates to underlying causation. The scope of the explanation I have outlined concerns medium- to short-run developments. A fuller account should go further back in time to the initial conditions that have set subsequent events on their course. It can be plausibly argued that as the nation-building project of the Hungarians in Transylvania was comparatively further advanced at the moment of imperial disintegration than that of the Turks in Bulgaria, this has had a lasting impact on their ability to sustain and expand minority rights later on. The closer examination of these historical path dependencies is a worthwhile topic for future research.

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71 That people prefer to defend what exists rather than asking for new things is in line with research in the field of behavioural economics and psychology (Kahneman 2011).
Chapter 7
Conclusion

In this thesis I ask what explains the different modalities of the institutionalization of ethnicity in the field of education across the different contexts, i.e. what has been conventionally termed the “institutional design”? In addition to seeking to understand what leads to more or less generosity and/or tolerance on majorities’ behalf, in terms of the actions and ideologies of political elites the as well as the opinions of the general public, I have posited that there is also a need to closely examine what can be understood as minorities’ education-related preferences and aspirations, and, in so doing, to pay particular attention to the ways these arise from within – rather than independent of – the prevailing institutional settings.

I limited my inquiry both substantively, to the policy field of public schooling, and geographically, to Europe’s Eastern periphery. Mass education is one of the most influential mechanisms of social reproduction in modern societies. Contestation regarding its form and content is ubiquitous, but especially pronounced in ethnically divided societies, given the potential of state schooling to reproduce or reshape the social relations between the different social categories in a given context. What is, in addition, particularly interesting in the case of ECE, is that in this part of the world majorities and minorities have traded places in the past, via generally unanticipated and often contested border movements. The occurrence of this historical event, it appears, is absolutely crucial in explaining the development of interethnic relations later on. These border movements left large, territorialized, and alienated populations within the confines of newly-formed nation-states, but without their imagined communities.
While the reconfiguration of the political space relegated formerly dominant populations to the status of political outsiders in polities increasingly understood as belonging exclusively to another ethno-culturally defined nation, these outsiders, paradoxically, still possessed extensive institutional infrastructures, which were inherited from the not-so-distant past. Much of the ethno-political contestation around minority policy in the ECE context, therefore, has revolved around the question of what the fate of these institutions should be. Moreover, these populations were economically, politically, and morally tied (or perceived as such) to adjacent, potentially revisionist homelands.

In this thesis I attempt to make sense of the variable ethno-social and ethno-political patterns engendered by this historical course of events. Having presented the overall theoretical and conceptual discussion (Chapter 1), paths to state formation and minority protection in the current geopolitical context of ECE (Chapter 2) and my methodological approach (Chapter 3) I turn to the empirical examination of the institutional design from three distinct angles. I juxtapose two cases – one where pre-existing institutions have survived (Hungarian education in Romania) and one where they have not (Turkish education in Bulgaria) – taking first a historical (Chapter 4), and subsequently a contemporary perspective (Chapter 6). Located between the two, Chapter 5 (comparing Hungarian education in Romania and Russian-language education in Estonia) bridges the past and present by expanding on the dimension of time and how this relates not only to institutional persistence and change, but also to collective identification and ethnicized conflict. (Table 18 summarizes the main findings of each empirical chapter.)

**Overview of findings**

Chapter 4 argues that the relative timing that the border movements occurred – more specifically, the *degree of institutionalization* of minority and majority ethnicity at the time of the profound reconfiguration of the political space – is a key dynamic that initiated all subsequent developments. This finding goes against explanations of externally-driven change that describe historical continuity
predominantly as a negative factor, i.e. as having inhibited, rather than aided the advancement of minority protection in the area. I have argued that, while this argument is intuitively appealing, there is a need for a more nuanced analysis of what the effect of historical dynamics is, that goes beyond simply restating that ethnic identities have been “antagonistically constructed” and that, instead, examines the socio-historical foundations of ethno-social and ethno-political patterns, identifying the effects of legacies, on-going or broken. Chapter 4 also shows that, once in place, existing institutions begin to exert pressures towards preserving the status quo. This, of course, is hardly a surprise. However, the chapter goes a long way in providing a more precise understanding of the specific mechanisms that underlie this persistence, especially in terms of how it links to collective identity.

By developing this latter point Chapter 5 contributes to a better understanding of the different modalities of institutional persistence. Specifically, it shows that institutions are not only means to ends, but also under certain circumstances they may become ends in themselves. It further argues that the persistence of ethnic institutions, including minority, schools can be explained in terms of the multiplicity and strength of minority attachments to them as valuable collective institutions.

I build this argument by systematically mapping the variable links that bind minorities to “their” common schools. I find that these are variably rooted in: (1) social convention, (2) notions of collective ownership, and (3) modes of collective belonging. Subsequently, I show that attachments to these collective institutions can take three forms: (1) an attitude of risk-aversion that reflects a general human tendency to seek certitude and stability, and that translates into a preference “not to change anything”; (2) a rational interest to hold on to collective property; and, finally, (3) an ethnic identitarian component, via which schooling transcends its social function and is transformed into cultural heritage, i.e. an integral part of collective self-definitions. When the dominant ethnic “other” attacks or is perceived to attack these special institutions, this increases the likelihood of the emergence or
intensification of ethnicized conflict along the third dimension. However, conflict can occur without any explicitly ethnic motivation, on the basis of incompatible notions of ownership or in the context of administrative reform, for example.

The first argument advanced in Chapter 6 is one of adaptive preference-formation. The findings of that chapter indicate that broadly similar categories of people may hold divergent aims and aspirations (as expressed by strategically positioned individuals). Chapter 6 also argues that an overemphasis on cultural as opposed to economic arguments is misplaced, and that interests cannot be directly derived from identities. On the basis of this analysis becomes possible to distinguish between two clusters of claims, beliefs, and arguments in terms of what minority actors may view as desirable and/or feasible in regard to the institutional design (summarized in Table 17). In explaining this pattern, Chapter 6 demonstrates that – what can be understood as – minorities’ preferences adjust to the surrounding circumstances. In particular, perceived or real constraints in terms of majority public opinion, minority political organization, and the relative attractiveness of emigration as a normative path to upward social mobility arise as the three key contextual factors that drive the formation of preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17. Typical minority claims by institutional arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration/Assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The full intergenerational transmission of minority culture and language is possible and desirable in the circle of the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and family strategies have to adapt to the prevailing legal and institutional contexts to ensure upward social mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on majority schools and curricula and the ways they should be reformed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on choice: how to ensure that every family and child can find a school of their liking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The full intergenerational transmission of minority culture and language is not possible and desirable solely in the circle of the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The prevailing legal and institutional contexts have to be adapted to the needs of the minority communities, to ensure upward social mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on minority institutions and the ways they should be governed and administered by the minorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on collective action and incentive architecture: how to ensure that children will participate in minority education.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
In terms of variation across the different cases as well as across time the thesis has uncovered some interesting regularities. Going back to the typology of institutional solutions I discussed in the introduction (assimilation, segregation, accommodation and integration) we see that in all three cases at the moment of the border movements whereby minorities and majorities switched places (1878 in Bulgaria, 1920 in Romania, and 1989 in Estonia) educational systems were segmented along ethnic lines (accommodation). From a longitudinal perspective Bulgaria and Estonia have moved away from this arrangement towards assimilation and integration, respectively, i.e. towards de-institutionalizing minority identity-markers from the state-structure. Contrary to these cases, in Romania, Hungarian education today is thoroughly institutionalized, despite attrition occurring at the margins through assimilation and migration.

In terms of longitudinal patterns we observe that the movement from accommodation to integration/assimilation in Bulgaria and Estonia and the persistence of accommodation in Romania has been uneven, punctuated by border movements and other critical junctures. It can also be said that the differences in institutional arrangements also map up into the degrees of ethno-social and ethno-political division between the three cases. That is, in Romania ethnic difference or diversity translates into a deep division in the society along Hungarianness and Romanianness, with the former ingrained in the institutional order along with Romanianness (although not on a par with it). On the other end is Bulgaria, where the Turkish ethnicity has a minimal imprint in that order. Students of Turkish background are fully assimilated in the Bulgarian educational system, which hardly recognizes them being “different”, apart from a minimal possibility to go to a Turkish-language class once a week. Unified curricula, standardized examinations, and the absence of Turkish education on the secondary and tertiary level signal that the ultimate aim is to produce uniform outcomes among these students, viewed first and foremost as Bulgarian citizens. The case of Russian-language education occupies a mid-position between the two, which however, on the long run, is bound to lead to intergenerational assimilation.
| Research question                                                                 | Cases                                               | Method & data                      | Main arguments and findings                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|***************************************************|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Histories: What are the historical origins of the institutional design?           | Turks in Bulgaria; Hungarians in Romania             | Comparative social history        | Timing emerges as the single most important underlying cause that shapes ethnic politics to this day; Resources trump grievances; Domestic processes and historic path dependence are key to explaining the prevailing institutional settings (as opposed to external intervention) |
| Attachments: How do collective identities and/or senses of “groupness” shape (conflict over) the institutional design? | Hungarians in Romania; Russian-speakers in Estonia  | Interviews Themes and discursive elements | Collective identification entwines with collective ownership and this may lead to ethnicized conflict; Participants tend to think about minority schools as collective wealth that cannot be alienated without threatening to diminish a collective sense of self; Ethnic identification is not the sole factor around which a sense of groupness may be constructed. |
| Preferences: What are minorities’ policy preferences, as articulated by strategically positioned actors, and how do they relate to the institutional arrangements? | Turks in Bulgaria; Hungarians in Romania             | Interviews Argumentative patterns & justifications | Preferences adjust to the prevailing contexts; Gradualist mechanism: before higher order demands can be conceived, all the lower steps have to be accounted for; Material and cultural considerations and desires equally shape preferences. |
Argument based on cumulative findings

This thesis has demonstrated the centrality of institutions in the cluster ethnicity, nationalism, culture and politics. The cumulative findings of the three empirical chapters line up into a five-part line of reasoning that can be summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Existing institutions are not only the results, but also the determinants of institutional design, because (1.1.) they empower/constrain/constitute actors; (1.2.) because they drive conceptions of what is feasible and/or desirable; (1.3.) moreover, actors may come to develop deep-rooted attachments to existing institutions, including the construction of ethnic identities around them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) While, in general, majority-minority relations are an important factor in the institutional design, and the presence of more tolerant majorities and/or more resourceful minorities is associated with accommodation rather than integration,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Nevertheless, the antithesis between majority homogenizing projects and minority resistance does not exhaustively describe the conditions and the process of institutional design, for (3.1.) majorities do not always pursue actively nationalization and (3.2.) minorities do not always prefer separation to accommodation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Moreover, spontaneous social dynamics and/or unintended consequences play an important part in explaining the institutional status quo, since (4.1.) institutions often move through their own logic and (4.2.) they tend to be “sticky”, persistent, and historically embedded;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Which is an important reason why explanations for changes in minority policy are situated predominantly in the domestic contexts (as opposed to external intervention).</td>
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Aspects of temporality

These findings also specify a cluster of dynamic relationships, schematically represented in Figure 12. First, the figure shows that there is a path-dependent deterministic association linking the relative institutionalization of minority
ethnicity at $t_0$ with the institutional arrangement that prevails at present ($t_1$). Second, this historical dynamic also links to subsequent demographic patterns, driving migration intentions, minority elites’ political strategies, and the constraints of majority public opinion, which I singled out in Chapter 6 as the three factors related to preference-formation and, by extension, to the institutional design. Therefore, while this set of influences impacts short to medium-term developments it is itself shaped by the long-term dynamics initiated at $t_0$. Moreover, given the mechanism of adaptive preference-formation, contemporary dynamics are not entirely independent from the prevailing institutional arrangements either, but rather, the two phenomena are co-constitutive, as signaled by the two-point arrow. In sum, the key factor in the cluster is the degree of institutionalization of minority ethnicity at the time of the border movements, analyzed in depth in Chapter 4.

**Figure 12.** Relationships between the identified explanatory factors.

**Broader theoretical implications**

Analyses of institutional choice and change in ethnically divided societies tend to focus on the majorities as the actors with whom political power lies, trying to
understand what makes them more or less tolerant and sympathetic to diversity. This directs focus primarily to the degree and nature of the power exercised by majority elites (which is, in principle, at least loosely congruent with public preferences) in their homogenizing projects and, secondarily, to the degree of minority resistance they may encounter (for the general point, see Verder 1994: 46; for case studies in the ECE region, see e.g.: Lauristin and Heidmets 2002; Rechel 2007B; Bojkov 2004). While in this thesis I do, of course, find evidence for the importance of these factors and their interactions, I also argue that there is a need to go beyond it. Namely, I wish to submit that purposeful design and antagonistic minority-majority projects are not the sole or even the primary driver of the institutional make-up, but that spontaneous social dynamics and processes of institutional reproduction have also to be taken into account. In the following sections I will first discuss the “majority-minority antagonism” relation and then turn to the “social and institutional dynamics” relation.

Majority homogenization versus minority resistance

As mentioned, a general way to think about ethnic politics and the advancement of minority rights agendas is a stylized juxtaposition between majority homogenizing projects, on the one hand, and minority resistance, on the other hand. In this thesis I have examined thoroughly the latter. Nevertheless, a number of points also emerged in relation to the former.

First, Chapter 4 demonstrates that the type of government matters. Pre-modern imperial governance, due to its indirect paternalistic control over populations tended to be relatively tolerant of ethnic diversity, even though this came at the price of deep social inequality and entrenched hierarchical structures. Democracies, too, tend to be generally respectful of minorities and their rights, at minimum on the level of non-discrimination and a tolerant discourse. However, during their nationalizing phases states may become particularly intolerant towards minorities, even in democratic settings (Mann 2005; Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin 2014). But in the cases examined here, it is only autocratic governance that is linked with clearly
repressive identity politics, and programs of forced assimilation and/or expulsion, albeit the degree of coercion varies widely across time and space.

The thesis also shows that nationalism, as an ideology as well as a political project, has had a central importance after the collapse of imperial polities and, again, after the dismantling of state socialism in the ECE region. In all three cases examined, post-Communist governments overwhelmingly opted for building the institutions of a national state, especially in the immediate aftermath of the regime change. That said, it is also important to note that the main axis of political conflict was not defined in terms of a majority-minority dichotomy, but, rather, in terms of a threefold distinction between majority nationalist, majority moderate, and minority blocks (Csergő 2002).72 Indeed, in both Romania and Bulgaria, minority parties have been generally seen as legitimate allies in the political process, which is evidenced also by their inclusion in governing coalitions. It is, however, unclear how these elite-level bargains have influenced the institutional design. While it is intuitively appealing to believe that the existence of minority political elites and parties is a key force pushing towards accommodation, Chapter 4 has shown that, conversely, this is driven by the educated middle classes that make up the mass base of nationalist politics, as well as nationally-minded intelligentsias and/or a group of sub-elites, who, on the one hand, function as the ideologues of minority rights, and on the other hand, are capable of monitoring and steering the positions of the minority political elites.

As evidenced by the contrast between the MRF and the DAHR, when sub-elites do not exist or are marginalized, ethnic political elites are likely to be co-opted by majorities in order to maximize their utility, while keeping the minority population under control (see: Lustick 1979). That the DAHR could become a devoted champion of minority rights in Romania seems to have been the result of it being closely linked to sub-elites as well as the mass base of ordinary

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72 Csergő makes this point specifically for Romania and Slovakia, but I think it also describes a more general pattern. See also: Rovny 2014.
Hungarians (Stroschein 2012; Kiss and Székely 2016). Conversely, even though the MRF was initially conceived as a genuinely ethnic party, it has reinvented itself as a party of general appeal. This transformation, that ensured the party’s its survival and success in the Bulgarian party-system, was easily achieved because of the absence of a strong educated Turkish minority middle class, and a non-existent stratum of non-elite ethnic activists that would have been able to keep the minority political leadership in check.

That the MRF has adopted an integrationist agenda is often explained by the constraining effects of particularly negative public attitudes in Bulgaria, both by party officials and the literature (Rechel 2008; 2009). This brings me to the second factor that, under the conditions of democratic governance, has been said to determine institutional choice and change apart from elite-level bargains: the opinion of the general public (see: Lijphart 1968), which we can more or less equate with the opinion of the majority. Even though I have not examined this systematically, nonetheless I touched upon this issue in Chapter 6, as a variable that may explain whether a specific institutional solution might be achieved or, at least, achievable. The chapter showed that it is not a measure of nationalist sentiment or anti-minority prejudice in the population that defines this opposition, but, rather, whether minority rights have been securitized or not (Kymlicka 2009). The physical separation accommodation entails is, for obvious reasons, especially likely to combine with anxieties of disloyalty and secessionism, which may exert pressures towards integration instead. On this count, political elites and policy-makers have indeed followed the public sentiment, which was more favorable – meaning less securitized – in the case of the Hungarians in Romania as opposed to the Turks in Bulgaria.

**Social and institutional dynamics**

That being said, this thesis demonstrates that an overemphasis on deliberate design may obscure the role spontaneous social dynamics play in ethnic politics and minority rights. While the two are obviously interconnected, the social and
institutional reality often diverges from neatly planned political programs and coordinated identity projects. First, such projects when interacting with social dynamics may have unintended consequences. For instance, too harsh nationalizing pressures may prove counterproductive by encouraging in-group solidarity and further solidifying group boundaries, by, for example, feeding into narratives of interethnic injury.

Second, the evidence of this thesis shows that both minority resources and opportunities and majority strategies are, to a large extent, endogenous to policy formation and institutional design. The simultaneous feedback effects created by existing institutions must be, therefore, incorporated into an aspiring theory of institutional choice. This is true in any area, but it is particularly so in the case of education, which is a central mechanism of social and cultural reproduction; here institutions are inextricably linked to the resources available to minorities. This thesis has shown that once minority institutions are put in place, they become reference points, by creating vested interests and by driving actors' expectations. Schools may even become part of collective self-definitions and central elements of identity narratives that powerfully and effectively mobilize minorities to collective ends. Such multiple ties make it particularly difficult to abolish this *acquis*. Even in the case of Turks in Bulgaria, a particularly disadvantaged social category, it took a century to eliminate minority schools, and only under the conditions of authoritarian governance, an exceptionally high level of repression, and following rather than preceding the slow and steady deterioration of the social position of this social category as compared to the majority population.

Further, it is also true that nationalization may occur even in lieu of nationalism, simply by way of unplanned intergenerational assimilation that is bound to ensue, especially on the margins of the ethnic community (Brubaker 2009B). Further, extensive minority education quite paradoxically may undermine the very institutional order that made it possible in the first place, by increasing the likelihood of migration, for instance. Rogers Brubaker notes that the extensive
Hungarian educational infrastructure that exists in Transylvania may have perverse consequences in that it prepares individuals of minority background who participate in this type of education for a life in Hungary, rather than in Romania. This, he argues, in the long run, contributes to the weakening rather than strengthening of the Hungarian ethnic community – a result that is exactly the opposite of what was intended (Brubaker 2009B).

Migration

But this is not the only way migration-dynamics come into play. First, population movements are important from a purely demographic point of view. While the size of a given minority is not directly proportional to the level of their social influence or political power it constitutes an important factor to reckon with. Second, emigration also has qualitative and not merely quantitative aspects. The historical analysis presented in Chapter 4 has shown that three factors matter particularly: the timing of emigration, the composition of the migrant group, and whether it is sustained or not. Third, and related, when emigration becomes the dominant path to upward mobility, as it has in the case of the Turks in Bulgaria and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia, this is associated with integration, rather than accommodation as an institutional choice. The massive and prolonged emigration of the Turkish minority from Bulgarian lands contrasts with the migratory patterns of the Hungarians in Romania, which have been relatively short-lived and less persistent. But, even more importantly, the fact that the most educated and well-off Turks have been continuously leaving Bulgaria has been of a decisive importance in terms of the political power and the educational objectives of this social category.

Migration and minority education are also multiply interconnected, and this connection may go in two ways (of which Brubaker describes only one): minority education may both encourage and prevent emigration, depending on the prevailing circumstances. On the one hand, separation along ethnic lines averts exit (emigration as well as assimilation) as long as the utility of education in the
domestic context is relatively high. Crucial for this is the general institutional framework: the existence of tertiary education and/or a well-developed ethnic economy, which can absorb the graduates of minority education and that can provide paths for upward social mobility. However, if the utility of participating in separate education is relatively low, then the likelihood of emigration increases. In this case, minority schools are preparing students to migrate, typically, but not only to their “ethnic homelands”. On the other hand, integrated education lowers the likelihood of emigration, but increases the likelihood of assimilation to the majority, which is yet another form of exit. Moreover, when the utility of participating in integrated education is perceived as relatively low (because it is, for instance, less accessible for minorities and less responsive to their special needs) then, again, the attractiveness of emigration may increase.

**Kin-states**

This brings me to the role of the kin-states as a factor that is also connected to social and institutional dynamics. While kin-states’ intervention can directly shape institutional arrangements and minority policies in the places where ethnic kin resides, what also transpires from this thesis is the way kin-states shape social dynamics *indirectly*, by influencing minorities’ sense of space. To begin with, external homelands enter minority individuals’ utility calculi as migratory pull-factors. This may happen even in lieu of deliberately designed and carefully deployed diaspora engagement strategies, though many kin states do in fact facilitate repatriation, including contemporary Hungary and Russia. This thesis shows that historically, migration towards Turkey has not only been the dominant path for upward social mobility in the case of the Turks of Bulgaria but also a way to escape poverty, deprivation and mistreatment for the lower strata. Ethnic Hungarians have been migrating from Transylvania to Hungary in search of better working conditions and educational opportunities too (Fox 2007). While the volume of Russian-speakers’ migration to the Russian Federation from Estonia has been much smaller, members of this minority are more likely to emigrate than Estonians,
especially when they perceive ethnic inequalities in the country to be high (Aptekar 2009). What these patterns demonstrate is that individuals with a minority background will migrate towards states (including kin-states) that are either more prosperous than the states of residence or when the position of minorities in the ethnic stratification in the country of residence is so low that even a weaker overall economy can offer better opportunities for advancement.

These processes, as aforementioned, are connected to education. Participation in a minority educational system may prepare people to relocate to a context where the cultural capital they have acquired has more value. Nonetheless, a sense of belonging to a shared national and cultural community also plays a role. Namely, the extent to which minorities perceive themselves as being part of a shared community of fate transcending national boundaries (what I have termed in Chapter 6 “meaningful reference-word”) is directly related to the modalities and success of diaspora engagement projects (Csergo and Goldgeier 2013). This sense is also linked to education, as the institution that produces the cultural references and collective loyalties necessary for the development of such attitudes.

**Incentives**

My analysis also puts in a different light minority incentive-structures. In this thesis I have argued that ethnic institutions, and especially schools determine how (groups of) people perceive their interests, in the first place. The model of incremental change outlined in Chapter 6 captures exactly this aspect and describes it with the metaphor of gradually expanding horizons. Participants adjust their preferences to the prevailing circumstances, which also means that change can only be slow and incremental. Because ethnic institutions are collective and educational institutions produce and reproduce their own social bases, the utility of participating in minority education for each individual will depend on the size of the entire system.
Moreover, the larger the system the more vested interests it creates that work towards its preservation and even expansion.\footnote{Indicatively, as noted in Chapter 4, as many as 10,000 teachers are employed today in Hungarian education in Romania. They make up 5 per cent of the total number of educators in the country (Kiss 2015, p. 54). Arguably, then, such a numerically strong and strategically positioned interest group can be expected to powerfully influence policy-decisions.}

I believe that the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia is an example of the contrary, namely of \textit{steadily diminishing expectations}. There the extensive educational infrastructure inherited from the time of the USSR has been steadily shrinking in the past 25 years. Even though this process has not been without conflict, this was resolved predominantly within the institutional context and, in fact, the switch to the Estonian language has never been seriously questioned (apart from some relatively marginal actors from the NGO sector). It is indicative that in this case the main issue of contestation has been not the direction, but the pace of change. While Hungarian demands are made upward toward full cultural and eventually even territorial autonomy, Russian-speakers’ preferences seem to be for scaling back, i.e. for a move toward integration. Despite this divergence, what both cases have in common that actors take the already existing institutional framework as a point of reference.

This also shows that large, territorially concentrated minorities do not necessarily and under all circumstances hold the desire to flourish culturally, but that material considerations may play an equally important role. When such material considerations predominate, minorities on both the mass and the elite level may increasingly choose integration since this is the best way to ensure upward social mobility. This is especially true when the minority in question is in an economically especially disadvantaged position (like the Turks in Bulgaria). Even in the case of the most cohesive and socio-economically relatively strong minority examined here, the Hungarians in Romania, a strong desire to flourish culturally and a clear preference for the intergenerational transmission of Hungarianness within accommodative educational structures emerged \textit{in combination with considerations}
about what the economic repercussions of this arrangement would be. As Chapter 6 shows, the desire for structural parity and the desire for cultural equality jointly contribute to preference formation.74

**Opinions**

As has been mentioned, research on minority rights has been particularly preoccupied with the importance of the public's attitudes for the development of minority protection. Conceptions about what groups of people are and what they deserve, it has been argued, are intimately linked to policy orientations and outcomes (Aukerman 2000). In democratic settings, moreover, a certain degree of support from majorities is a necessary precondition for minority rights agendas to be advanced (e.g. May 2012: 191). But it is more difficult to establish where this line should be drawn, i.e. how much favorable opinions must be? Even if this was possible, another question still remains unanswered: where do ideas and opinions come from?

This thesis empirically demonstrates how ethnic institutions create their own legitimations in Chapters 5 and 6: arrangements already put in place drive notions of justice, and contribute to generating ideas about the feasibility and desirability of given outcomes, or, as Richard Jenkins puts it, “‘the way things are done’ may quickly become ‘the way things should be done’” (2008B: 159; see also Mahoney 2000: 517). It appears that the preservation of what is already there is more easily defensible than advancing claims for something to be established anew – mirroring a universal tendency of reference-dependent fairness (Kahneman 2011). The defense of ethnic institutions or their offense may be based on abstract political ideologies and policy ideas, but there are other drivers of human behavior, too: a tendency to hold on to what is already there and to avoid change. This is not only so for minorities, but also for majorities.

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74 Terminology from Cornell 1996.
Indeed, during my interviews with participants as well as reading the related academic literature (e.g. Elchinova 2001; Rechel 2009; Fatkova 2012; my interview with the former Presidential Advisor on Minority Affairs – BU/12), I often encountered the argument according to which the Bulgarian majority’s strong disapproval of minority rights hampers the advancement of this agenda in the country. If this is true, we should be seeing more positive opinions in relation to the Hungarians in Romania. Survey data from the early 1990s lend some support to this argument, by showing that Bulgarians indeed opposed minority rights to a much greater extent than Romanians (McIntosh et al. 1995).

However, the researchers conducting the study also noted that sentiments and policies were disjointed. They suggested distinguishing between feelings toward the minority (which they termed *prejudice*) and specific policy orientation (which they termed *tolerance* of group rights). A simple cross-tabulation of the two yielded the baffling result that, while Romanian respondents were generally more prejudiced against Hungarians, they were also more willing to approve of extensive minority rights than their Bulgarian counterparts (see Table 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 19: Prejudice by tolerance in Romania and Bulgaria (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Bulgarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprejudiced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less tolerant</td>
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</tr>
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*Source:* McIntosh et al. 1995, Table 2.

McIntosh and collaborators’ proposed explanation of this discrepancy is, in essence, an institutionalist argument. They write:

“[… ] ethnic Hungarians have enjoyed greater rights relative to ethnic Turks over the last few decades. Thus, it is not inconsistent that roughly half of the ethnic Romanians
voice lukewarm support for minority rights but also express an unfavourable opinion of ethnic Hungarians. In Bulgaria, where minorities enjoyed fewer rights, especially in the last few decades, attitudes toward ethnic Turks and support of minority rights are more consistent.” (McIntosh et al. 1995: 946.)

In other words, arguments about the importance of majority opinion are inadequate in that they cannot account for where these opinions come from. In fact, it is just as plausible to reason that the causal arrow runs not from opinions to institutions but the other way around: that it is exactly because a relatively high degree of cultural autonomy has existed for a long time in Romania that majorities continue to support it, and that the contrary is true in Bulgaria. I think that there is a strong case to be made that, in line with the argument advanced in Chapter 6, majorities’ preference formation is adaptive, just as minorities’ is.

**Identities**

That collective identifications play an important role in ethnic politics is not a novel finding. Rather, in the past few decades, the objective has been to understand when exactly do identities matter and how. Of the most important findings of this research paradigm has been that institutions contribute to the creation of particularistic self-understandings. “Fixity”, writes Kanchan Chandra, “is not an intrinsic quality of ethnic identities but a product of the institutional context in which ethnic groups are politicized.” (2005: 245, emphasis added). But politicization is not the only way institutions help to create and/or solidify ethnic identities. It is also because institutions constitute a key cohesive power in group-life. Institutions stabilize group-boundaries by channeling human interaction, by shaping patterns of association, and by forging cultural bonds. Schooling, in particular, is a strategically positioned mechanism of social reproduction that contributes to the formation and intergenerational transmission of identities.

Along these lines Chapter 5 adds additional nuance to the relationship between ethnicity and institutions. It shows that, when certain conditions are met, schools can be turned from boundary-makers into boundary-markers. This, I believe, is a
particularly useful way to capture when collective identity matters, but also to dismiss it when it does not. Namely, ethnic identification is not the only way people may come to feel attached to “their” institutions and, through them, to “their” group; simple convention or tradition as well as collective ownership also play a role in the creation of a sense of groupness, and there is nothing necessarily ethnic about this.

The multiple ties that bind people together are, of course, not equally strong. Some are tougher and more durable than others. Collective past, in particular, seems to be a key variable in this respect. Not only do associative patterns need time to transform into substantial cultural bonds (Cornell 1996: 276), but also the passage of time renders collective possessions all the more valuable, imbuing them with inter-subjective meaning that connects ancestors and descendants. The contrast between the education-related narratives of a relatively older and a relatively recent immigrant minority – that otherwise show important similarities – underlines exactly this point. Namely, while Hungarians in Romania have constructed a collective sense of belonging around their minority schools, Russian-speakers in Estonia see these institutions as little more than necessity or convention. Consequently, the former tend to contest the nationalization of minority education on grounds of a real or perceived identity threat, while the latter tend to object to centrally commanded hyper-changeability and the high levels of uncertainty accompanying it.

Further, when institutions become intrinsic to a group’s identity, narratives of victimization and unjust dispossession can become a particularly successful tool for the purposes of collective mobilization and may, ultimately, contribute to ethnicized conflict. The relation between ethnicity and conflict constitutes, of course, an exhaustively researched theme. While essentialist assumptions that directly link interethnic conflict to antagonistic group identities and “ancient hatreds” have been largely abandoned, the complexity of how collective identifications relate to conflict-dynamics has not yet been entirely well understood. **Chapter 5** proposes an innovative way to think about this problem, by showing how ethnic institutions may
become integral to collective identification. Therefore, whenever majorities are perceived as attacking minority institutions, minority participants may, under certain circumstances, extend this onslaught to the entire minority community, seeing it as an attempt to diminish its collective self, and, ultimately, to eliminate it. In the ethnicized conflict that arises on such grounds, collective identity may indeed act as a causal force. However, an equally important finding of Chapter 5 is that reasons other than ethnic identification may also lead to conflict outcomes. On the surface, this manifests as struggle along ethnic lines, but it can actually be detached from a sense of belonging, i.e. identity. Confrontation may, instead, be motivated by resistance against (what is perceived as) unjust expropriation and/or a general human tendency of aversion from change. Underlying such opposition is not a common ethnic identity, but other modalities of group belonging, based on common interests rather than ethnicity per se.

**Limitations and further research**

In the final part of this thesis, I would like to discuss potential objections that could be raised against the arguments I advance. I will begin with the problem of endogeneity, which constitutes perhaps the most serious limitation of my work. I will then examine two competing approaches to the explanation that I decided not to take on board, but that arguably merits thoughtful consideration both advancing arguments for the externally driven change. I will close by briefly outlining an agenda for future research.

**The problem of endogeneity**

In my research I have emphasized the endogeneity of institutions and their dynamic interaction with other features of societies in affecting outcomes. In doing so I followed the theory of the new institutionalism in sociology, which posits that
institutions shape outcomes by influencing norms, actions, and behaviors. However, it is also obvious that institutions also depend on the conditions under which they emerge and endure (Przeworski 2004). This raises the problem of how to disentangle cause from effect, i.e. how to distinguish between the circumstances that give rise to institutions from the independent effects of these institutions (Ibid.). The same limitation has been articulated also as the “problem of embeddedness”, which suggests that on-going social relations constrain behaviour and institutions to such an extent, so as analysing them independently becomes impossible (Granovetter 1985).

This is a serious limitation that has to be taken into consideration, and that, ultimately, cannot be completely overcome. However, as I also note in Chapter 3, within the field of the sociology of ethnicity the recognition that identities arise out of the surrounding institutional contexts constitutes an important finding in and of itself. It does so because linking identities to institutions has helped to highlight their social constructedness and has thus contributed to de-essentializing research in the field. In this respect the new institutionalist approach constitutes a variant of constructivism, exactly because this allows for thinking about institutions as not merely the context where the struggles of interests and identities play out, but also as having the capacity to actively shape – construct and deconstruct – these identities in the first place (Chandra 2005: 246). The realization that “institutions – much like identities – [...] are as much emergent products of what people do, as they are constitutive of what people do” (Jenkins 2008B: 158, emphasis added) is becoming one of the central underlying assumptions of social analysis in the field, which increasingly seeks to describe and explain this complexity rather than to overcome it. Accordingly, influential works within this research tradition have made it their explicit task not so much to disentangle cause and effect – identities and institutions – but to show precisely the ways in which they interconnect, and the dynamic interplay through which they constitute each-other (e.g. Brubaker et al. 2006, Chapter 9).
A historical perspective helps to fend off the criticism of endogeneity from another, perhaps more pragmatic angle. Given that the main problem with endogeneity is that it makes it difficult to account for change when that change arises from within the system then, logically, the effects of institutions must depend on the conditions under which they come about and function – in particular the distribution of power in a society (Przeworski 2004: 529). This is why it is crucially important for my argument that the specific institutions I analyze have been inherited from an era of vastly different power-relations. The border movements that redraw the map of ECE after the First World War, as well as following the collapse of the USSR, constitute paradigmatic examples of critical junctures. These sudden and unexpected shifts have resulted in a unique situation whereby the institutional infrastructures left behind by the newly designated borders did not reflect the prevailing power dynamics, but were the remnants of the old. This historical course of events, while it does not dismiss completely the criticism of endogeneity, it decreases to a large extent the limitations it poses.

*Externally-driven change*

The findings outlined here go against arguments of externally driven institutional design, which have been especially influential in the context of Europe's Eastern periphery (the most prominent include: Kelley 2004; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005A; 2005B Vachudova 2005). It is certainly true that following the fall of state socialism international organizations, first and foremost the EU, were actively involved in setting the standards of minority protection throughout the area, within the broader context of democratization and economic liberalization. Yet, identifying as the primary driver of developments in the field of minority protection the influence of the “West” is, I think, misplaced. One of the reasons why theories of externally driven change fail to capture dynamics on the ground is because they focus predominantly on legal transformation and parliamentary politics instead of patterns of social organization and institutional processes.
Numerous studies that are typically based on extensive fieldwork have already established the primacy of domestic contexts over international ones, including, among others Csergő (2007) writing on linguistic rights, Stroschein (2012) and O’Dwyer (2006) on democratization, and Hughes et al. on regionalization (2004). Others have shown that not only was the EU’s power limited to specific time-periods (i.e. the start of the accession negotiations), but also that it varied significantly across policy areas (e.g. Haughton 2007). It has been demonstrated that the EU’s pre-accession conditionality in the field of human and minority rights has been further limited by a number of factors, including superficial monitoring and lack of standards and expertise (e.g. Rechel 2008). I do not, therefore, intend to provide a thorough critique of the argument of externally driven change. In Chapter 3 I explicitly positioned my analysis against this approach. I do, however, wish to submit two points that are, I believe, of particular relevance.

First, this thesis shows that the literature on externally driven minority policy adaptation is temporally inconsistent. Kelley (2004), for instance, begins her chapter on the Hungarians in Romania at the time of the regime change, when minority rights were at their historical lowest. From this angle, the introduction of any positive measure seems as an improvement. However, a historical perspective shows that socio-demographic dynamics and institutional memories were much more deeply ingrained and robust than an analysis from a formal-legal position might suggest. In fact, as virtually all of my interviewees asserted, the Hungarian education system spontaneously split from the Romanian one, and the level of institutionalization of Hungarianness in the country “bounced back” almost immediately to where it had been, i.e. approximating its previous levels. Crucially, this happened before the involvement of any international actor in Romania’s domestic affairs, and well before EU accession negotiations started. This seems to hold across the region, where the limits of the status and rights of minorities in most states were already established in the early 1990s (Rechel 2009A: 10).
Further, specifically in the case of the Bulgarian Turks, there are reasons to believe that the de-legitimation of accommodation as a possible institutional arrangement is also an indirect and unintended EU effect, caused by the EU’s clear overemphasis on the “Roma issue”. As I briefly outline in Chapter 6, I think it is plausible that this overemphasis was motivated not by a concern for Roma rights, but by anxieties of the increased possibility of post-accession migration. This has contributed to rendering the Turkish minority less visible in the public sphere and also to delegitimizing physical separation as an institutional solution (which in relation to the Roma is a clear case of unjustly imposed segregation, rather than an accommodative solution). This brings me to my second point that as long as the EU and the international community has had an influence, this might have been not in the right direction. For instance, the Commission’s overemphasis on the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia (Hughes and Sasse 2003) may have been instrumental in defusing tensions at a relatively early stage when high levels of uncertainty predominated, but, in the long term, it may have contributed to the sustained framing of ethnic diversity as a threat to security (see: Kymlicka 2002). Further, specifically with regard to the question of institutional design, the international community appears to have been particularly anxious with accommodation. Not only are the Commission’s regular pre-accession reports riven by ambiguities and inconsistencies, but they also indicate a “clear preference for assimilation” (Hughes and Sasse 2003: 16). Similarly, the 1995 FCPNM and the related activities of the Advisory Committee to this Convention show a similar unease with institutional separation. As Ringelheim remarks:

“Confronted with the question whether states should support the creation of separate minority schools or rather promote the integration of the teaching of minority language and culture in institutions attended by children from all communities, the Committee as a general rule strongly favours integrated education.”

(2010: 121; see also: Kymlicka 2007: 18 ff.)

This means that in states where minority institutions did not exist or were weak, the role of the international community was to lock these institutions into their prevailing conditions. Where, conversely, they did exist, this was predominantly
because of domestic reasons, including local institutions and the minorities’ self-organization. All in all, the involvement of the EU in domestic affairs had the result of facilitating the adoption of some basic rights for minorities (which, perhaps, would have been granted anyways), but did not go further than integration.

This is not to say that international factors did not play a role in minority politics at all. They most certainly did. But only insofar as EU dictates were aligned with the preferences of domestic factors (see: Csergő 2007). Moreover, the effect seems to have been rather superficial, with change located primarily in the formal legal domain, rather than in deeper constructs such as norms, attitudes, and institutions (Sasse 2008; Rechel 2008; Ram 2003). Perhaps it is best to conceive of the EU as a discursive trope imbued with a symbolic meaning – of democracy, prosperity, civility – and instrumentalized in the domestic arena as a political tool (Grabbe 2001; Sasse 2005; Stroschein 2012). Overall, as I see it, the intervention of the international community in the specific case of institutional design in minority education has constituted secondary, as opposed to major causal force.

Diaspora politics

In this thesis I frequently mentioned the role of external kin-states in influencing ethno-political and ethno-social dynamics in the minorities’ states of residence. Indeed, any analysis of this topic in ECE is practically impossible without reference to these kin-states’ direct or indirect involvement and a large literature has developed that examines the modalities and the effects of kin-state interventions (e.g. Jenne 2006; Saideman 2001; Saideman and Ayres 2008; Tarrow 2006; Waterbury 2011). Moreover, in the past few decades the scope for diaspora-politics has increased even more, facilitated by telecommunication and transportation technologies as well as the process of EU integration (Csergő and Goldgeier 2004). Hungary, Turkey, and Russia, which are the three kin-states relevant to my research, have all been implicated in the affairs of their co-ethnics abroad. My aim here is not
to negate this role. Rather, it is to argue that endogenous forces have primarily driven the historical development and current shape of the institutional design, which was influenced but not governed by kin-state intervention (see also: Csergo 2007; O'Dwyer 2006; Stroschein 2012).

First, the involvement of homelands has not been consistent over time. Boris Yeltsin’s administration took a very different stance towards minorities in the Baltic States than Vladimir Putin’s has more recently done. The same goes for conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in Hungary. And while Turkish governments have also generally supported the Turks in Bulgaria, attention was primarily directed towards the large immigrant diaspora residing in more affluent West European countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Okyay 2015). Second, similar to my criticism of the international community’s involvement, kin-state engagement has a mixed record in in terms of policy outcomes, i.e. helping ethnic diasporas abroad. In some cases they can improve the conditions of these external co-ethnics, but they can also make it harder for minorities to integrate in the host state, by perpetuating, for instance, dependence on the kin-state or by prompting negative responses from the states of residence that feel their sovereignty and authority compromised. (Waterbury 2009; Pogonyi 2017). Moreover, policies that are introduced with the aim to support external diasporas may do so only on paper, being in fact designed to strengthen the position of kin-state political elites domestically (Csergő and Goldgeier 2013). Moreover, involvement perceived as too activist, for instance, is likely to

All in all, it is important to remember that kin-policies are designed in the national center and often serve the special interests of domestic politicians (Waterbury 2011), and that, ultimately, it is the degree of political organization and the institutional and socio-economic resources of the minorities that determine whether these minorities insist on kin-state support and/or the degree to which these groups will respond positively to the kin-state efforts (Csergő and Goldgeier
2013). That said, as aforementioned, in this thesis I have also stressed the importance of a channel of indirect influence, namely, kin-states’ roles as migratory pull-factors and/or spaces of collective identification.

**Avenues for future research beyond ECE**

These theoretical and methodological findings go beyond the three case studies I analyzed, and also beyond the regional context. First, this thesis contributes to the better understanding of what drives the institutionalization of ethnicity in the state structure. It advances the scholarly debate around this problem by endogenizing and historicizing research and demonstrating how change occurs via complex interrelated dynamic processes. I have argued that that institutional arrangements shape and are shaped by preferences, ethnic politics, and demographic patterns. I have also claimed that collective identifications and preferences for cultural flourishing are an important feature of ethno-political contestation and ethno-social dynamics, but that they are not themselves independent from the institutional contexts themselves.

Second, to arrive to these conclusions I have proposed a shift in the research agenda from majorities’ identity projects (also in relation to EU accession conditionality) to minorities’ voice and agency and from policy-making to institutions. On the one hand, this means that there is no need to decide beforehand what the interests of the minority are, but that these can emerge freely through the exploration of the participants’ perspectives. On the other hand, while legal frameworks and policies are important objects of study, sociologically informed analyses of institutional persistence are more precise approximations of the complexity of experience. This can be achieved by focusing on - more or less - spontaneous social dynamics *in addition to* coordinated identity-projects.

Developing and refining these findings could proceed from here on at least three directions: different policy-fields, different types of minorities, and different
regional contexts. Such investigations could take the form of single case studies of a theory-testing character or comparisons organized around different axes of variation. Within ECE the obvious examples would include the education of the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and the Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia, which I decided to leave out from my analysis. But similar studies could extend also beyond the ECE context to the survey of Western European cases. The trajectory of Catalan education, in particular, invites comparisons with ECE states also because of the relatively recent experience of totalitarianism. Further, the Southeast Asian context offers a good ground for extending these findings either through single cases, intraregional or inter-regional analyses. Chinese education in Malaysia, for instance has been shaped in the context of imperial legacies, state-seeking nationalisms and a considerable mismatch between state and nation (Brown 2007). As mentioned in Chapter 1, there is a possibility that different dynamics and/or different factors shape the different policy-fields and so extending the scope of the discussion either comparatively or, again, in a single case study to look at fields other than education would also advance the understanding of how ethnicity and institutions interlink.

Further, an avenue for future research could be to look at different types of minority categories, especially those that are constituted by migration. This would also contribute to better understanding of the difference between “institution-seeking” and “institution-preserving” minority projects, i.e. the differences between endeavors that aim to establish rights and institutions anew, as opposed to those geared towards protecting what already exists. Distinguishing between types of collective action on the basis of the diverse normative projects that underlie them is not new. As early as 1978 Charles Tilly distinguished between defensive and offensive group claims (Tilly 1978). He found that the former, in particular, tend to be framed primarily in terms of resistance and the insistence on the priority of tradition, and hence they engage dense symbolic meaning and expressive action.

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75 The Russian-speakers in Estonia are a minority of predominantly migrant origin sensu stricto, but I would not consider them as a paradigmatic immigrant minority.
Theoretically, a systematic analysis based on this dichotomy could bring us closer to understanding the broader problem of whether and in what ways the causal forces that lead to the establishment of institutions differ from those that lead to their preservation. It would also further our understanding of how and why “history matters”, in terms of institutional legacies and mobilizational narratives, for instance.

Thematically, the interconnection between minority educational arrangements and migration patterns would be an interesting direction to develop future research. As discussed already in previous sections, this relationship is complex in that both accommodation and integration may, under certain circumstances, increase the chances of exit, but for different reasons. Moreover, in today’s increasingly interconnected world, migration seems to be taking over the homogenizing task that was hitherto the domain of intergenerational assimilation. Arguably, disentangling these dynamics could lead to some very interesting conclusions about the questions of institutional design.
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Appendix

List of interviewees and position/affiliation

Romania

RO/1 Academic, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
RO/2 Academic, Babeș–Bolyai University, Vice-president and former president of the Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Cluj
RO/3 Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, President
RO/4 Independent researcher, formerly officer at the Executive Bureau of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
RO/5 Academic, Department of Hungarian and General Linguistics, Babeș–Bolyai University
RO/6 Academic, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania; President, Association of Hungarian PhD Students and Young Researchers in Romania
RO/7 Student representative, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
RO/8 Hungarian Teacher’s Association of Romania, Regional vice-president
RO/9 Executive Vice President, Department for Social Organization of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, president and vice president of several organizations in the field of youth, culture and education
RO/10 Transylvanian Reformed Church District, Director
RO/11 Regional school inspectorate, Deputy Director
RO/12 Executive Vice President, Department of Education of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
RO/13 Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania, President
RO/14 Dean, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
RO/15 School principal, Hungarian school, Cluj
RO/16 Academic, essayist; formerly: Soros Foundation of Romania in Cluj-Napoca, Ethnocultural Minority Resource Center, Vice-Rector of Babeș–Bolyai University
RO/17 Vice-Dean, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania; “Foundation for School” Program coordinator
RO/18 Editor, publicist, formerly Head Department, Hungarian Language and Culture Department, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
RO/19 Academic, Vice-Rector of Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj
RO/20 Counselor, Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports
RO/21 State Secretary, Romanian Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports
RO/22 Political representative, Member of Parliament, Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
Bulgaria

BU/1 International affairs and public relations officer, Grand Mufti’s Office of the Muslim Denomination in the Republic of Bulgaria
BU/2 Deputy Mufti, responsible for the educational sector, Grand Mufti’s Office of the Muslim Denomination in the Republic of Bulgaria
BU/3 Political representative, Movement for Rights and Freedoms, formerly vice-minister of education
BU/4 Academic, formerly political representative, Movement for Rights and Freedoms
BU/5 Political representative, People’s Party Freedom and Dignity
BU/6 Officer, international NGO devoted to human rights
BU/7 Political representative, Member of Parliament, Movement for Rights and Freedoms
BU/8 Member, Turkish cultural and educational association
BU/9 Program Officer, NGO devoted to human rights advocacy
BU/10 Program director in the field of education, NGO devoted to human rights advocacy

Additional interviews (for background research only)

BU/11 Project manager, Paideia Foundation, Sofia
BU/12 Academic, formerly the President’s Advisor on Minority Affairs
BU/13 Researcher, Institute of Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
BU/14 Director, Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
BU/15 Researcher, Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
BU/16 Academic, Department of History of Philosophy, Sofia University
BU/17 Director, European Policy Institute, Sofia
BU/18 Researcher, volunteer in NGOs in the field of training and community organizing

Estonia

ES/1 Political representative, Member of Parliament, Estonian Centre Party
ES/2 Officer, Integration and Migration Foundation; academic, University of Tallinn
ES/3 Director, Legal Information Centre for Human Rights
ES/4 Officer, Legal Information Centre for Human Rights
ES/5 Political representative, Member of Parliament, Estonian Centre Party
ES/6 Academic, School of Humanities, Tallinn University
ES/7 Political representative, formerly Member of Parliament and vice-mayor of Tallinn
ES/8 Officer, Estonian Language Immersion Center
Deputy mayor of Tallinn with a portfolio in education, culture, youth, sports and integration

Headmaster, Russian-language school in Tallinn

Academic, School of Humanities, Tallinn University

Political representative, Member of Parliament; formerly: chairman of the Narva City Council

Headmaster, Russian-language school in Narva

Narva Education Committee, Director; formerly local government official

Deputy Mayor, Narva city government; academic

Headmaster, Russian-language school in Narva; formerly local government official

Additional interviews (for background research only)

Academic, University of Tallinn

Academic, University of Tartu, Narva College

Political representative, Reform Party; Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee of Cultural Affairs

Officer, Language Immersion Center

Head of the General Education Department, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research

Project Manager, Teacher and Youth Program; educator