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SECURITISED ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND

COMMUNAL CONFLICTS:

A Need for Problem-Constructing Conflict Resolution?

Tarja Väyrynen

The paper is inspired by Ernesto Laclau's (1996, p. 46) observation of the terrain into which history has thrown us. The terrain is characterised by:

[...] the multiplication of new--and not so new--identities as a result of the collapse of the places from which the universal subject spoke--explosion of ethnic and national identities in Eastern Europe and in the territories of the former USSR, struggles of immigrant groups in Western Europe, new forms of multicultural protest and self-assertion in the U.S., to which we have to add the gamut of forms of contestation associated with the new social movements.

More specifically, the aim of the paper is to discuss why 'violent ethnic identification' takes place. In other words, it is asked why ethnicity is seen to be the point of identification in the late modern world and why it is a source (actual and rhetoric) of violent performances. A tentative answer is given by studying the features of modernity and the social practices which are embedded in the modern condition. Furthermore, the question of conflict resolution is entertained in the paper. Given the nature of modern practices and agency they produce, it is asked what are the conditions of conflict resolution, and what is the political space of conflict resolution in the world of 'ethnic conflict.'

At the center of the question, 'why violent ethnic identification' takes place, is the question 'why do some identities become securitised,' i.e. perceived to be threatened in a manner that the way to maintain (or, rather, 'construct') the identity becomes to be seen to be an issue of survival. In general, issues become securitised when leaders (whether political, societal, or intellectual) begin to talk about them in terms of existential threats against some valued referent object. Securitization is, thus, in essence, an intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects requiring emergency measures outside the normal bounds of political procedure (see Buzan, 1997; Waever et al., 1993; Neumann, 1997). For example, the process of the break down of Yugoslavia was a process of securitising collective identities and of perceiving and expressing the issue of identity in terms of collective survival.

Furthermore, it needs to be asked why securitised identity leads to violent performances. It should be noted that violence may have its own instrumental rationale, i.e. is more than that (see Arendt, 1970). Violence is also a transformative prcts poles of enactment and reception. Furthermore, violence can detach itself from initial contexts and become the condition of its own reproduction. It may become an institution possessing its own symbolic and performative autonomy as has happened for example, according to Feldman, in Northern Ireland. Violent performances construe and construct novel subject positions (1991, p. 21). In other words, they do not arise from fixed subject positions or from fixed identities (ibid, pp. 20-21). A 'Tamil Tiger' performing a violent act is not a fixed historical agent behaving violently. He or she has,

rather, a subject position in violent practices--a position of enactment and reception which is continuously created and transformed, and which continuously produces his or her identity as a 'Tamil Tiger.'

The Process of Ethnic Identification in Lebenswelt

In order to understand 'violent ethnic identification' the condition of human existence needs to be discussed. The study needs, thus, to start with the description of the structures of the life-world (Lebenswelt) of social actors and ask whether there is something in these structures which make ethnic identification particularly important and prone to violence.

Man (the unfortunate English word 'man' refers to both women and men) is born into a world that existed before her or his birth. This world is from the outset not merely a physical but also a sociocultural one. The sociocultural world is a preconstituted and preorganised world whose particular structure is the result of a historical process and is therefore different for each culture and society. The social world is experienced by man as a web of social relationships, of systems, signs, and institutionalised forms of social organisation (Schutz, 1964, pp. 226-231).

The meaning of the elements of the social world is taken for granted by those living in the world. There are cultural patterns which are peculiar to social groups and which function as unquestioned schemes of reference to members of a group. In Alfred Schutz's words, "any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardised scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all situations which normally occur within the social world" (1964, p. 49). Being a member of a community is tantamount to being supplied with guaranteed, 'objective' criteria of relevance and knowledge which are taken for granted. The criteria of relevance and knowledge (cultural pattern) give a sense of security and assurance to those belonging to the social group.

Man approaches the world through typifications. Typifications are fundamentally intersubjective and are mainly formed by others, such as predecessors or contemporaries, as appropriate tools for coming to terms with things and men. They are accepted as such by the group into which man was born. Thus, the knowledge of typifications and of their appropriate use is an inseparable element of the sociocultural heritage handed down to the person and stored to person's 'stock of knowledge.' Knowledge included in the individual stock is, therefore, largely socially derived, distributed and approved. (Schutz, 1964, pp. 120-134; Schutz and Luckmann, 1974, pp. 261-262.)

From the point of view of the society, any society considers itself as a little cosmos, and the maintenance of the cosmos requires symbols to keep it together. Societies and social groups need their central myths, or dominating ideologies, to justify and to establish foundations for self-interpretation. The central myth, as a scheme of self-interpretation, belongs to the relative natural conception of the world which the in-group takes for granted (Schutz, 1964, pp. 95-104, 113-114, 121, 129, 227, 230, 236, 244-245, 255; Vaitkus, 1991, p. 82).

Ethnicity guides interpretation and action in the social world. It is, thus, a part of the frame of reference of the social group in terms of which both the physical as well as sociocultural world is interpreted. It is an element of the frame of reference which consists of the sum-total of the various typifications. In other words, ethnicity is a way to typify the world, others and one-self, and as such it implies roles and ways to act. As Max Weber argues, the existence of a marriage or a state means nothing but the mere chance that people will act and will act in a specific way. Similarly, following Schutz's terminology, the existence of an ethnic group means nothing but the mere likelihood that people will act in accordance with the general framework of typifications in which ethnicity, as a reference to certain criteria of communality (e.g. language, history, 'race'), is considered to have high relevance.

Although ethnicity can be a part of the relative natural conception of the world of the social group, it is not a stabile element. On the contrary, its meaning and content are constantly negotiated in the social interaction between social actors. In other words, it is continuously negotiated in encounters which are political and involve power (on the political nature of human encounters see Arendt 1958, pp. 178-184). As Hanna Arendt notes on power, it "springs up whenever people get together and act in concert"(1970, p. 52). Furthermore, ethnicity is employed in order to draw boundaries as to who belongs to the group and who does not. An ethnic group is about boundary maintenance; ethnicity is a way to structure interaction which allows the persistence of differences. Ethnic 'communality' is, therefore, always an artefact of boundary-drawing activity: always contentious and contested, glossing over some differentiations and representing some other differences as powerful and separating factors (Barth, 1969, pp. 9-38; Bauman, 1992, pp. 677-678; for an example see Roosens, 1989).

There is nothing in the structure of the stock of knowledge and the logic of typification which gives ethnic identification particular importance. The meaning and content of ethnicity are constantly negotiated and contested in the realm of the political arising from human encounters, but that does not imply 'violent ethnic identification.' Thus the question, what gives arise to the move from the realm of political to the realm of violence, remains. It needs to be asked, therefore, why ethnic identities become securitised in a way that they are perceived to be a threat to the 'survival' (whatever that term means form the point of view of the actor) to an extent that violence is assumed to be a suitable means or institution to secure the identity.

One answer, given from a post-structuralist perspective, claims that in the (late) modern condition there is a constitutive relationship between the political and violence. The answer studied in the paper will, by being post-structurally oriented, also reshape the original question on securitization and agency involved in the act. Namely, it will shift the emphasis from an actor 'doing the (speech) act of securitization,' to social practices which give rise to agencies prone to securitization and violent identification.

The (Late) Modern Condition: Order, Technology and the Production of Difference

The next step is to assume that our culturally derived, distributed and approved stocks of knowledge are greatly shaped by modernity and then to ask whether there is something in the

modern content of our stock of knowledge which relates it particularly to violent ethnic identification.

It should be noted that modernity is a historical period which matured into a cultural project with the growth of Enlightenment and into a socially accomplished form of life with the growth of industrial society. One of the tasks modernity set for itself was to bring order into chaos. Ordered existence required nature, the unordered, to be mastered, subordinated and remade to meet 'human needs.' The unordered needed to be held in check, restrained and contained. The struggle for order is essentially a fight against ambiguity, ambivalence and fuzziness. Therefore, order is continuously engaged in the war of survival, the enemy being chaos and chaos being understood to be pure negativity. In order to be effective, modern mastery requires (and produces) in its will to design, manipulate and engineer, sovereign agencies aiming at accomplishing the task (Bauman, 1991, pp. 7-8).

Modernity is also characterised by technology. Technology--in the Heideggerian sense--is neither the application of science nor does it refer to the mere instruments we associate with technology. Rather, technology is a mode of thoughtful being characteristic of the Western metaphysical tradition, manifest through the way we bring things to presence. Technology has come to fruition in modern times in the form of calculative and instrumental reasoning which characterises modern rationality. Instrumental reasoning brings things into presence as calculable matter and helps order them. By enframing things in a certain manner, technology holds them readily available, in effect, as a kind of objectivised and homogenised form. Things are, thus, standing in reserve to be employed and re-deployed in continuous exercise of instrumentally propelled production and consumption (Campbell and Dillon, 1993, pp. 20-24).

Therefore, technology is a mode of thought which is also a mode of practice, a way of being in the world. We do not have technology, technology has us. By being a mode of thought, technology relates to political and social life too. As Heidegger argues, all aspects of modern life are becoming, or have become, determined technologically. In other words, political and social life are largely technologised. In short, the mode of enframing the world conditioned by technology prevails also in the spheres of political and social life, not only in the sphere of our relationship to nature (Ibid.)

It is naturally worth entertaining the question whether the 'world society' is, in its totality, characterised by technology or whether there are pockets which have escaped it. If there are such 'unmodern islands,' the characteristics suggested below do not apply to them. One way to answer the question is to claim that the universal 'civilising' and 'modernising' project of European imperialist expansion has reached all parts of the world, evidenced by the resistance arising out of other cultures.

Another, and clearly more profound. way to answer the question is to reveal the assumption underlying it. Namely, the assumption concerning 'otherness.' The question itself supposes 'the other' which is subtly nativized, placed in a separate frame of analysis and spatially located in that 'other place' which is proper to an 'other culture.' The unity of 'us' (modern West) and the otherness of the 'other' (unmodern pocket) is not questioned. The assumption that there are 'unmodern people' does not tackle the core issue, namely, the processes of the production of

difference (us/other) in the world of culturally, socially and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces. (see Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, pp. 6-23)

The issue is present in Marjorie Shostak's *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* and Edwin Wilmsen's critique of it. Shostak portrays !Kung people in the Kalahari (also known as 'Bushmen') desert as almost living on another planet ('in an isolated unmodern pocket') isolated from the outside world and, therefore, bound to be traditional and racially distinct. She assumes the existence of 'the other' in 'other place' as a starting-point for her inquiry. Wilmsen, on the other hand, starts his *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* by asking how 'the Bushmen' came to be Bushmen. He demonstrates that San-speaking people have been in continuous interaction with other groups for as long as we have evidence for, and that political and economical relations linked the supposedly isolated desert with a regional political economy both in the colonial and precolonial era. Moreover, the 'Bushman/San' label is a category which was produced through the retribalization of the colonial period just half a century ago. (ibid., pp. 14-17)

We are, therefore, not dealing with 'authentic' !Kung society. Rather, we are dealing with an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) whose production has taken place in the conjunctures of global economics, politics and culture. Thus, the foundational question, 'how difference is produced,' and not supposing the 'otherness of the other,' gives a totally new account of and perspective to the assumed political, economical and cultural isolation. Furthermore, it forces us to explore the contexts in which the production of the 'otherness' is embedded. The following section outlines some of the contexts or, rather, spaces or 'landscapes' as Arjun Appadurai (1990) calls them.

Global Economical, Political and Cultural Practices and Spaces

Since technology conditions the way we are in the world by forming a part of the content of our stock of knowledge, the question arises concerning what kind of social and political practices can emerge within the framework created by technology. Seen from the angle of ethnic conflict, four social and political practices are especially important: the sovereign territorial state, globalisation, capitalism and media practices. All these create an 'identity space' in which ethnic identification and the production of difference takes place. In short, they are social practices which shape local ethnic identification and produce parochial 'ethnic subjects.'

The sovereign territorial state and its assumed coexistence with the nation is of a vital importance in understanding ethnicity, because it is space within which ethnic identification--and especially violent identification -- often actualises. The sovereign state has traditionally tried to offer the instrumental solution for the challenge set forth by different forms of identity politics (e.g. class, gender and ethnic claims). In other words, the state has aimed at providing a shared domain of meaning for groups located within its sovereign control and territory. The state, as a social and political practice and as a system of inclusion and exclusion *par excellence*, has tried to solve the problem of conflicting identity claims by producing precise distinctions and differences between citizens and aliens, by domesticating particular identities and by creating a coherent sovereign identity (for the sovereign state see e.g. Ashley, 1989; Bauman, 1992;

Campbell 1993; Linklater, 1990; Linklater, 1994; Walker, 1993 and, for example, 'imagining' India Krishna, 1996).

As Bauman describes the modern state:

National states promote 'nativism' and construe its subjects as 'natives.' They laud and enforce the ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural *homogeneity*. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of *shared* attitudes. They construct *joint* historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories that cannot be squeezed into a shared tradition--now redefined in the state-appropriate quasi-legal terms, as 'our common heritage.' They preach the sense of *common* mission, *common* fate, *common* destiny. They breed, or at least legitimize and give tacit support to, animosity towards everyone standing outside the holy union" (1991, p. 64) [emphasis by Bauman].

This state has become more and more contested space. As Appadurai notes, the 'nation-state' is a battle of imagination with 'state and nation seeking to cannibalise each other.'(1990, p. 304) Groups with ideas about nationhood seek to capture or co-opt states power, and states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolise ideas about nationhood. Here is, thus, a platform for separatism and micro-identities to become political projects within nation-states. Ideas of nationhood appear to be steadily increasing in scale and regularly crossing existing state boundaries. Kurds, Sikhs, Tamils, Sri Lankans, and Quebecois represent 'imagined communities' which seek to create states of their own or carve pieces out of existing states. States, on the other hand, are seeking to establish the monopoly of producing distinctions and differences -- a task in which they are never fully successful. From the perspective of the 'nation-state,' an ethnic group claiming a right to produce difference and make distinctions which transcend the official state ideology is an 'enemy within.' Globalisation as social practice is also embedded in technology and in its instrumental rationale. Globalisation implies accelerated processes, growth of global institutions and increased flows of information. It is closely connected with global capitalism, which is in an interesting contradiction with the maintenance of states and sovereignty for the political organisation of international relations. Capital flows across national borders and is, thus, multinational and transnational by nature. Capitol creates and operates in 'finanscape' with fast moving currency markets, national stock exchanges and commodity speculations (Appadurai, 1990, p.298).

Global capitalism produces, with growing internationalisation of production and finance, global divisions of labour. The global division of labour has its local counterpart, namely, the segmenting of labour forces along 'race' and 'ethnic' lines. As Jindy Pettman notes, "the increasingly global economy shapes the new international division of labour along state, national, racialized, ethnicized, and gender divides" (1996, p. 264). The international political economy of, for example, migrant labour is a part of this division, and a motive of huge population movements (Shapiro, 1996, p. 259, for examples see Pettman, 1996; Soguk, 1996).

The movement of bodies, for whatever reason and among other global flows , deterritorialises the world assumed to be divided along territorial lines by shifting labouring populations from poor societies into relatively wealthy societies. Deterritorialisation creates a version of 'ethnoscape' (term Appadurai's) which sometimes has an exaggerated and intensified sense of criticism or attachment to the politics of the home-state. In other words, identity-building becomes deterritorialised and assumes an increasingly symbolic character in a nomadic world. According to Appadurai, deterritorialisation, whether of Hindus, Sikhs, Palestinians or

Ukrainians, is now at the core of a variety of global fundamentalism (1990, p. 301) Invented homelands can become fantastic and one-sided to the extent that they provide material for new 'ideoscapes' (concentrations of images which have often to do with ideologies of states and their counter-ideologies) in which ethnic conflict can begin to erupt. The search for identity is, therefore, at its most intense when identity is located in the not-yet-accomplished future. An intense search for identity takes place, for example, in the West Bank, Beirut, Jaffna and 'Kurdistan.' They are global/local stages where bloody scenes between existing nation-states and deterritorialised groupings are acted (Appadurai, 1990; Bauman, 1992).

The media contributes to ethnic identification as well as to the creation of assumed unified nation-states. As suggested above, ethnic identification consists often of an utopia as a construction of the future state of affairs in which all differences are reconciled around an unified body politic. The media works towards this utopia by producing networks of signs and images representing 'oneness' and 'otherness.' 'Mediascapes' provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and 'ethnoscapes' to viewers throughout the world. They help to constitute narratives of the 'other' and proto-narratives of possible lives which can produce a platform for the desire for acquisition and movement. Furthermore, media helps groups spread over vast and irregular spaces stay linked together and create political sentiments based on intimacy and locality (Appadurai, 1990; Schulte-Sasse & Schulte-Sasse, 1991).

Deterritorialisation and dislocation of peoples, thus, does not remove the need for overcoming separation. Rather, it often enforces the search for unity. Aesthetic experiences of community which allow experiences of unity or community become more and more important when "the self seeks to overcome its separation and the extreme differentiation of modern societies by mirroring itself in signs that facilitate the illusion that the very difference that establishes the sign is overcome in the experience of the sign" (Schulte-Sasse & Schulte-Sasse, 1991, p. 78). For example, a state flag is a sign which stems from sovereign state as social practice establishing differences between citizens and aliens. In other words, differences are constitutive of the sign. On the other hand, the experience of the sign gives an illusory experience of national unity and even a community of citizens which overcomes obvious 'internal' differences.

In sum, these global processes, 'landscapes' in Appadurai's words, affect social and political experiences by creating identity space within which social and political agencies are situated and within which ethnic identification takes place. The next section examines the constitutive nature of social practices for political agency and identification.

Political Agency and Security

Social and political agency (subject) is embedded in social practices. In Feldman's words: "Political agency is not given but achieved on the basis of practices that alter the subject" (1991, p. 1) Political agency is relational--it has no fixed grounds--it is the effect of situated practices." In other words, subject becomes articulated through social practice. Agency is not embedded only in language, but in relational sequences of action. The cultural construction of the political subject is tied to the cultural construction of history. Political agency is the factored product of multiple subject positions; there is no guarantee of a unified subject, as actors shift from one

transactional space to another. Agency is not the author, but the product of doing, and, therefore, formed by a web of subject positions during that doing. It follows that power is embedded in the situated practices of agents: it is neither a resource nor a capacity (Feldman, 1991, pp. 1-5).

What is characteristic to modernity is the shift of man from object to subject positions: to the positions where subject has its own verities and laws. The death of the Subject (with a capital S) has produced a variety of new subject positions, and the production of new subject positions has accelerated in late modernity. The dynamic of 'subjectivation' expands the categories of who or what can be a political subject. As Ernesto Laclau argues, the multiplication of new identities as a result of the collapse of the places from which the universal subject spoke has produced the explosion of, for example, ethnic and nationalistic identities and, therefore, the sites of political mobilisation seem to appear in unexpected places (Feldman, 1991, pp. 1-16; Laclau, 1996, p. 46).

David Campbell and Michael Dillon argue that violence has become the *ultima ratio* of (late) modern politics, because 'subjectivation' has liberated political understanding and framed the world in a 'technological' and instrumental manner. The basic political subject is violent by virtue of its very composition (1993, pp. 1-47). According to Campbell and Dillon, security is the foundational value around which the political subject revolves. Security is not merely the main goal of the political subject of violence, it is, rather, the very principle of formation of that political subject. The political subject of violence, invoking constantly security, comes in a variety of forms: God, rational subject, nation, state, people, class, race, etc.

Thus, what Campbell and Dillon seem to be arguing is that security and the securitization of an identity is not a question of a conscious decision of an already existing political subject as Buzan seems to think. Rather, security is constitutive of political subject, because of the 'technological' framing of the world modernity offers. Social practices, and agency embedded in them, are fundamentally, in Campbell's and Dillon's account, organised around and constituted by security. In a similar vein, Bauman argues that modern 'consciousness' warns and alerts in its will to control and engineer assumed chaos. Campbell's and Dillon's view of security can be, thus, seen to imply that the 'ethnic subject' embedded in global practices ('landscapes' and their conjunctures) is bound to securitise identities and even to seek for violent ethnic identification due to its composition (1991, p. 9).

Violent Political Identification

Since security comes also in the form of ethnic groups, the modern condition characterised by dislocation and a variety of forms of alienation works for the processes of violent ethnic identification and the securitization of ethnic identities. 'Identification' can be best understood in the light of Lacanian theory, and especially from the angle of void in identification.

Accoy of identification, one needs to identify with something, because there is an original and insurmountable lack of identity. The lack is, thus, truly constitutive of any identity (see Laclau and Zac, 1994, pp. 11-39). A vital point from the point of view of 'violent ethnic identification' needs to be noted: the failure in fully constituting any identity. There is always a void in

identification, which is open to distortions and excesses and which produces anxiety and uncertainty. The failure of full identification, therefore, triggers new acts of identification which aim at mastering the disturbing effects.

How does identification, then, relate to securitised identity? The social world presents itself to us, as argued earlier, largely as a sedimented ensemble of social practices accepted at face value. We seldom question the founding acts of their institution in our life-world. However, modern and especially late modern conditions are characterised by increasing awareness of the political character embedded in the institutions of all social identity. The foundation of institutions and practices are put more and more into question in the world of 'subjectivation.' In short, the collapse of the Subject and emerging new subject positions allow the questioning of social practices. According to Laclau, the less the sedimented social practices are able to ensure social reproduction, the more new acts of political intervention and identification are socially required (1994, pp. 3-4). This leads, as Laclau argues, to politicization (and securitization) of social identities as well as proliferation of particularistic political identities.

The opening up of new subject positions in the late modern condition, facilitated by deterritorialisation and dislocation of people, enable the questioning the political foundations of social institutions. Political and social practices and institutions are essentially contingent and, thus, open to contestation, and therefore antagonism. Especially in a time of rapid change when new forms of life emerge too fast to be absorbed and domesticated by the old mechanisms of control and mental frames, new subject positions arise which enable, in Bauman's words, the lifting of "identity to the level of awareness, making it into a task" (1992, p. 680). An attempt to complete the task of identity-making is pursued through imagining of communities; imaging of communities which are founded on securitised and exclusive identities

'Ethnocraft' (the term is derived from Richard Ashley's discussion on statecraft, see Ashley, 1989, pp. 301-309) which works at the local level, but in the conjunctures of global practices, finalises the processes of shaping and securitising identities. It is the knowledgeable practice by which ethnic communities of men are differentiated in space and time. Ethnocraft is a practice of enframing through which boundaries between the in-group and out-group are created and controlled, ambiguities in the order of the domains of relevance solved and, on the other hand, difference marked between man and ethnic community and the dangerous fields outside the group. The practices of ethnocraft work primarily, not by solving problems and dangers in the name of the ethnic population, but by inscribing problems and dangers that can be taken to be exterior to the community. As Richard Ashley claims, without the inscription of external dangers, there could be no well-bounded social identities (1989, p. 305). The practices of ethnocraft work to constitute a coherent and sovereign identity for the ethnic group, securitise that identity and rhetorically legitimise violent performances in the name of survival. Hence, violent ethnic identification has a promising seedbed to grow.

Foundations for Conflict Resolution:

Void in Identification and Dialogical Social Practices

It should be noted that ethnic conflict or violent ethnic identification does not stop the process of identification. In other words, identification continues through and in conflict, as argued earlier. However, conflict situation narratives on ethnicity (e.g. ethnic origin, group memberships) tend to become fixed, and this is often wrongly seen to imply fixed identities. Ethnic narratives in conflict situations do seal off alternative ways to typify the world (see Cobb, 1994, pp. 54-56). They seal off alternative interpretations which could destabilise the dominant interpretations. Ethnic narratives seal off, for example, alternative self-definitions of the group and therewith exclude alternative identifications, roles and modes of action. In the conflict situation, ethnic narratives, thus, become rigid and readily reenacted. However, as Sara Cobb notes, "narrative closure is never complete and contestation is inevitable", for example, "in mediation as disputants refute, deny, and elaborate the discursive context in which they are located by self and other" (1994, p. 56).

Neither does any political and social practice fully totalise society. There is always excess in both social practice and the identification space it creates. As the Lacanian theory states, every signifier fails to represent the subject and leaves, therefore, a residue. According to Aoki's reading of Lacan, linguistic disruption (present in metaphors and metonyms) 'determines the indeterminacy of the subject' (1995, p. 49) Excess leaves a residue on basis of which a continuous constitution of identity takes place. Similarly, the social world is not entirely defined in terms of repetitive and sedimented practices, because the social always overflows the institutionalised frameworks. It follows, that the fullness of society in which the subject finds its true identity is never finally achieved. Thus, a dimension of construction and creation is inherent in all social practice - even despite the modern technological enframing of the world. This constructive moment which exceeds the sedimented social practice creates a space for innovation (Feldman, 1991, p. 5; Laclau, 1994, p. 3; more on Lacan's symbolic order and its indeterminacy see Aoki, 1995).

The void created by excess and the lack of full narrative closure should be employed by conflict resolution practices. The void in identification, the 'unfinished' political subjects it creates, the failure of any social practice fully totalise a society and the openness of all narratives, bring about space in which conflict resolution can produce change. It should be emphasised that conflict resolution is a social and political practice among other practices in which political agency, and subject is located. Conflict resolution can create new identification and political sphere *only* if it is based on the creation of 'alternative' social practices and therewith new political subject.

One possible way to create new practice is by producing discursive/dialogic institutions and communities as alternative to instrumental institutions (see Benhabib, 1992; Gadamer, 1991; Bakhtin, 1986). The dialogic community:

[...] anticipates non-violent strategies of conflict resolution as well as encouraging cooperative and associative methods of problem-solving. It is a matter of political imagination as well as collective fantasy to project institutions, practices and ways of life which promote non-violent conflict resolution strategies and associative problem-solving methods (Benhabib, 1992, p. 49).

The dialogic community is a moral conversation in which the capacity to reverse perspectives, that is, the willingness to reason from other's point of view and the sensitivity to hear their voice, is paramount.

The dialogic community in which dialogic relations are established is, thus, broader than dialogic speech in the narrow sense of the word. The aim of dialogue is not consensus or unanimity, but the "anticipated communication with others whom I know I must finally come to some agreement" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 9). In such a conversation, which is called by Benhabib also 'enlarged thinking,' the identity of the moral self becomes reconceptualised by virtue of the nature of community.

Since there are no standpoints which are not dependent upon socially produced, shared and approved ways to typify the world and subject positions, the aim of the establishment of the dialogic community cannot be the finding of a set of universal moral principles, values or reason. Rather, the emphasis should be on "sustaining those normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement as a way of life can flourish and continue" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 38). An inability to come to a shared understanding is not a final outcome, but indicates that one has been unable to bring the process of understanding to a conclusion. Dialogue is, by its nature, repeatable and, by being repeated, it can be moved forward.

It should be noted, that official and formal negotiations seldom bring about a dialogic framework, for they aim at reaching agreement on an exchange or on the realisation of a common interest in the context created by technology. Negotiations which rely solely on instrumental bargaining on interests--or rather, interests turned into utilities--do not produce 'new subjects' or new points of identification. Neither does the bargaining structure with the manipulative (biased) mediator generate the dialogic community, because the biased third party operates in a context of power politics and, therefore, in a context of cost-benefit calculations. Official negotiations and biased mediation tend to re-enforce ethnic structures by appealing to a limited set of negotiable interests and utilities which necessitates the existence of an assumed coherent and sovereign identity; they necessitate agency entitled to resort instrumental reason and institutions.

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