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Robert Gary Minnich. *Homesteaders and Citizens: Collective identity formation on the Austro-Italian-Slovene frontier.* Bergen: Norse Publications, 1998. 283 pp. ISBN 978-82-7855-006-9.

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National Identity within Transnational Spaces

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Now that the European Community is a fact, the question of how local communities face this new reality takes on greater importance. This book considers identity formation among European Union citizens as a reflection of political-economic change; it illuminates how identity and national sentiments are anchored in the minds of local villagers. The author implicitly addresses issues relevant for understanding the unification and shape of Europe.

In 1981, twelve years before the Treaty of Maastricht came into force, Robert Minnich began an ethnographic study of the "Three Country Region" (hereafter: TCR) located at the crossroads of Austria, Italy, and Slovenia–a region of cultural diversity generated by numerous migrations documented since the sixth century. The TCR encompasses the historical interface of Europe's three major language groups (Germanic, Romance and Slavic) established centuries before the region became the site of ethnically inspired national confrontation during the twentieth century. But the TCR's inevitable partition by nation-states following World War I is currently under deconstruction. In 1996 the state frontier between Austria and Italy was dismantled and Slovenia's full incorporation in the European Union is awaited in 2004. This monograph critically examines local declarations of collective allegiance ("collective self-understandings") with regard to both the TCR's division by nation-states and its integrity as part of the "circum-alpine" culture area.

The fieldwork for this monograph had its locus among the Slovene dialect speaking indigenous majority of Ugovizza (called "Ukve" in local Slovene dialect), a village in Val Canale (Italy). But in order to present the overall region in comparative terms Minnich also undertook field research elsewhere in Val Canale and on the other side of the Carnian Alps in Gailtal (Austria) where the same dialect remains the mother tongue of a population that is necessarily bilingual, speaking as well the dominant language of their respective country.

Minnich demonstrates that identity formation in the TCR builds upon the local agrarian adaptation and locally founded institutions organizing households and local communities; these are seen to constitute a local social order which articulates with larger scale institutions of the state and global economy. Even as the face of Europe is redrawn, people's allegiance to various social formations is still deeply rooted in their local circumstances. Current social, political, and economic changes in Europe require us to examine closely the formation of identity and its perpetuation in terms of local contexts.

Collective identity formation implies that individuals recognize themselves as belonging to a specific group with a common heritage. Minnich's ethnography is founded upon an awareness that this topic is of immediate importance at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The social personality of "homesteaders" (i.e., the members of agrarian households) throughout the region has been shaped and reshaped over time by diverse factors giving them a distinct socio-cultural identity. To study this identity, Minnich focuses on the formation of social persons in terms of their statuses and roles in households and community organizations, as well as in the states to which they belong, hence, the book's title "Homesteaders and Citizens."

The monograph is organized in three parts and subdivided into eight chapters. The first part, "The Three Country Region," begins with a chapter presenting the TCR as an alpine habitat where the region's integrity as part of the circum-alpine culture area (as outlined by Conrad Arensberg and Robert K. Burns Jr.) is emphasized. The following chapter critically evaluates the TCR's representation in local historical scholarship as the site of distinct ethnic groups each of which have been identified during the past century and a half with nationalist claims over local territory. In this way, Minnich contrasts a cultural ecological understanding of the TCR's

socio-cultural integration with a model of social order emphasizing ethnogenesis of the region's assumedly distinct "peoples." The door is thereby opened for considering collective identity formation in terms of collective self-understandings that refer to a wide range of affiliations spanning from households and local communities to the modern states which have sought to incorporate these local entities into their respective national projects.

In the second part of the monograph, "Homesteaders at Home," the author shows how social persons are reproduced in the community. He treats institutions such as the household, various village organizations and local ritual events and ceremonies as referents for the construction of collective self-understandings among Ukve villagers. These institutions are seen to integrate the social personality of Ukve homesteaders. While participation and membership in local institutions clearly demarcate "insiders" from "outsiders" the construction of the social person nevertheless occurs within a greater environment where the individual realizes his identity by using resources both inside and outside his immediate social sphere.

Minnich initiates his discussion of identity formation in chapter three, "The People of Pavr." He describes his participation as a resident of the highland homestead called "Pavr" and reflects over his own socialization in the life-ways of Ukve homesteaders. At the beginning of his fieldwork and with reference to his own social identity–clearly an aberration from local norms–he engages homesteaders in conversations elucidating their own complex collective self-images. Since their self-understanding cannot be reduced reasonably to the ethnic and national categories prevalent in earlier scholarship describing the TCR Minnich sets out to investigate what he terms an "ecology of identity formation."

In order to elucidate the social personality of Ukve homesteaders he begins with a systematic portrait of local households. His immediate involvement upon arriving in the field with the renovation of his host's highland residence provided the author with critical clues for further investigation of Ukve homesteads. He discovered social networks integrating families, households and the local community. Patterns of reciprocity demonstrating different degrees of social proximity became apparent. For example, family members or individuals belonging to a close circle of friends do not receive wages, rather they reciprocated in kind. Such close networks are essential to the preservation of Ukve's agrarian households. Using his sojourn among the "people of pavr" as a point of departure Minnich comprehensively discusses the reproduction and productive activities of Ukve's agrarian households in the following fourth chapter, "Ukve Homesteads–Estates and Enterprises."

The fifth chapter, "Pavr Persons," describes the roles and functions of individual homesteaders in relation to the Ukve community. Minnich initiates this chapter by outlining the centrality of agrarian households and their male heads in local perceptions of the village socio-cultural order. Relationships of interdependence among Ukve's homesteaders are seen as the main parameters for the construction of social identity. Through his earlier discussion of the household in Chapter 4 Minnich discovers several village organizations that historically have facilitated the management of common interests among homesteaders such as the village commons association, the board for managing local Servitude forests, and more recently, the cooperative dairy association for Val Canale that is located in Ukve. Participation in these organizations not only satisfies material needs, it also serves as a basis for villagers to attain an integrated image of themselves as individuals. Minnich also describes other village institutions affiliated with the local church parish and various secular organizations serving village interests. These are also seen as relevant for the self-realization of Ukve villagers and complete a portrait of a village social order.

Chapter 5 concludes with description of the death and funeral of a prominent Ukve homesteader. Here the author provides us with an unique opportunity for understanding identity formation in both Ukve and the TCR in general. The funeral's capacity to mobilize a significant segment of the village population and the ways in which it involved participation from many significant local organizations convey powerful images of the local social order. Attended by kith and kin of the deceased from outside Ukve the funeral also manifested a demarcation of social boundaries separating the people of Ukve from their compatriots elsewhere in the TCR. In sum, the funeral is interpreted by Minnich as a representation of the social personality of an Ukve homesteader. It demarcated many of the central statuses and roles manifested through the course of a homesteader's life and thus opens the way for generalization about the relative importance of the homesteader–called the "pavr person"–in the overall formation of locally founded social identities. This becomes the theme of chapter 6, "Homesteaders and the Village Universe of Discourse."

Here Minnich emphasizes analysis of recurrent institutionalized village events and the role of village based

organizations in the reproduction of social persons. Such an approach is very relevant. Events such as the local patron saint day celebration and voluntary fire-brigade competitions provide villagers occasions for self-realization while experiencing affirmation as members of the local community. Minnich also demonstrates how non-indigenous residents of Ukve, without rights to a homestead, find opportunities to integrate themselves in village society through participation in various religious and secular organizations outside the traditional political entities reserved for homesteaders. In conclusion, the status of homesteader is found to dominate the village social order. Though active agrarian households represent only a minority of the Ukve population today, homesteaders prevail in the formation of a moral discourse sanctioning the behavior of Ukve villagers in the context of their home community.

Throughout the second part of the book Minnich demonstrates ability to achieve acceptance among his field hosts. He reflectively encounters and analyzes a patriarchal family system where male household heads are upheld as autonomous and dominant actors in the public domain of the village life. Yet, Minnich documents the interdependence of these men with their spouses who frequently assume vital roles in the management and productive activity of homestead enterprises while their male counterparts are vested with rights essential to the preservation of homestead estates. This observation leads into a discussion of strategies male homesteaders employ to convey an image of autonomy and sovereignty as the heads of their households. It is through his apparently successful enculturation in Ukve life-ways that the author achieves convincing interpretations of deep seated values embedded in homesteader society.

The third part of the book, "Homesteaders Abroad," discusses Homesteaders' identification with social formations beyond the homestead or village and is introduced through description of the dedication of a wooden cross on a prominent summit overlooking lower Gailtal. An announcement of the dedication ceremony was posted in German in both Austria and Italy. And fire brigades from Slovenia, Val Canale and Germany were invited to attend the ceremony hosted by the Vorderberg fire brigade in Gailtal. Flags representing the visiting fire brigades' respective nations decorated the cross. And a priest conducted a field mass and blessed the cross using Slovene, German, and Italian. As in all formal "international" encounters in the TCR (regardless of how provincial and local they may appear) involving citizens of the region's respective states, the trilingual ceremony acknowledged the partition of the TCR by states legitimated in terms of national languages.

The priest thus confirmed the distinction between the German (Austrian), Italian and Slovene nations established in the hegemonic nationalist ideologies prevalent in the TCR. But while he used the national languages of those invited to the event he also had a second motive. He self-consciously associated, as a native Austrian speaker of Slovene, the Slovene dialect spoken in Austria and Italy with the Slovene nation. He was quite aware that his audience included Slovene speakers from Austria and Italy who for the most part seldom identify their mother tongue with the Slovene nation. He saw his trilingual performance as an exercise in ethno-politics, that is, as a means for substantiating the status of Slovene speakers as an ethnic/national minority in these two countries. In both Carinthia and Northeastern Italy public recognition of the indigenous Slovene speaking populations, and their status as members of national minorities, remains contested in public media and by state institutions. The hegemony of German and Italian language in the public sphere of these countries multi-lingual regions remains strong.

In chapter 7, "Coming to Terms with the World," Minnich investigates how Ukve homesteaders respond both explicitly and implicitly to perturbations in their greater environment. This discussion leads to conjecture about a cognitive model that homesteaders use to interpret their greater environment. The author portrays an "eyeglass for viewing the world" which is reflected in Ukve homesteaders' strategies for copying with the world. He describes an eyeglass lens that facilitates vision in terms of one's socialization in homesteads and attendant village institutions. Observing in Ukve the failure of household heads to effectively communicate in the specialized and reified code of Italian state administration Minnich proposes that their socialization in a village universe of social discourse is discontinuous with the universe of social discourse practiced by institutions of the Italian state.

Homesteaders can be thus seen to find themselves "abroad" in certain situations located within their home village. This is manifested in the case of Ukve by indigenous villagers' declared alienation from the Italian school system and political administrative structures controlling important aspects of village life. This understanding is especially manifest among the middle-aged and elderly men at the focus of this ethnography. These institutions, introduced into Val Canale by the Italian state following World War I, have only poorly accommodated the social and cultural norms shared by the indigenous valley population. On the other hand, the common reper-

toire of traditional village institutions found throughout the TCR which relate to the everyday and ritual life of homesteaders (e.g., the village commons association and patron saint day celebrations) represent settings where they can experience being "at home" outside the confines of their home village. For example, the cross dedication was an opportunity for Ukve villagers to be "at home" when they were "abroad."

The concluding chapter, "Homesteaders and Citizens–Collective Identity in the Periphery of a Modern State," begins with a description of Ukve's historical integration into institutions of modern centralized European states. Minnich presents state-making and national consolidation as processes occurring within the confines of villages. But long before these processes intervened significantly in the institutional environment of Ukve society, Ukve villagers were engaged in commercial contact with surrounding regions through the sale of timber and charcoal, livestock trading and participation in seasonal labor migration. Their integration with Europe across the boundaries of pre-modern states preceded their co-option by nation-states of the last century.

During the past century Ukve's residents have been citizens under the flags of many nation-states. Particularly during the reigns of Mussolini and Hitler in Val Canale citizenship was administratively imposed by a heavily centralized state on the community's residents. Elderly Ukve villagers thus have an ambivalent attitude about state claims on their national identity. For example, in 1939 on the basis of the Option Agreement signed by Hitler and Mussolini Val Canale's indigenous Slovene and German dialect speaking residents were forced to opt for return to the German Reich or to declare themselves Italian. For local Slovene speakers no alternative identification with the Slovene national was available and many opted for return to the German nation, interpreting this as a return to the Austrian province of Carinthia of which Val Canale had been a part before World War I. The centrality of ethnic nationalism for legitimating states that have harshly ruled Val Canale has resulted in great reticence, especially among Ukve's elderly residents, to affiliate with any of Europe's "nations."

Nevertheless, as noted in preceding chapters, the institutions of the modern state have been established in Ukve society. Notable among these is the imposition of a standardized national language as the essential means for participating in the modern bureaucratic state. (In this way Ukve villagers have been repeatedly coerced to identify themselves with languages [Italian and German] that are illegitimate as representations of their own mother tongue which is identified with standard Slovene, and the Slovene nation.) Enculturation in a national language depends upon the introduction of local compulsory public education promoting literacy in this tongue. Language is not only a symbol of national identity, it is an essential resource for participating in the modern state as a fully empowered citizens.

In view of the above, Minnich returns to the problem of collective self-identification. He accounts for Ukve villagers' potential for affiliation with the state and nation. In a comparison of code-switching practices between Slovene speakers of Ukve and neighboring villages in Gailtal the author discovers Ukve villagers' failure to acknowledge their dialect as a marker indicating membership in an ethnic group or nation whereas their compatriots in Gailtal acknowledge more readily their ascribed status as members of a Slovene minority in Austria.

For Ukve homesteaders the experience of a common heritage and cultural continuity (essential qualities of ethnic self-identification) is almost exclusively associated with their local community rather than the imagined collective of an ethnic group or nation. In public settings of Val Canale Ukve villagers commonly demonstrate blatant disregard for the presence of non-Slovene speakers by using their own dialect to communicate. This implies rejection of Italian as a dominant language and confirms the strong demarcation in Val Canale between its indigenous population (tracing its local roots to before World War I) and the majority of monolingual Italian speakers who have immigrated to the valley during the past century. Furthermore, when referring to their local Slovene dialect in their own self-representations they emphasize that this code is of local origins–"our tongue"–rather than part of a Slovene language tradition. Their language identity is localized rather than nationalized.

While Gailtal's Slovene speakers express similar strong allegiance to their villages they also demonstrate subservience to the domination of the German nation in their local public settings. This is reflected by their propensity to automatically switch to German in all local public settings where they perceive non-Slovene speakers to be present. This behavior reflects the continuity and dominance of modern state institutions and a cultural elite in Gailtal villages that have consistently legitimated the local social order in terms reflecting the primacy of the German nation in the modernization of bi-lingual parts of Carinthia. Val Canale's incorporation by Italy following World War I disrupted this continuity with institutions of the modern state instituted by the

Habsburgs and the nationalist subordination of Slovene speakers by German nationalists.

In conclusion, Minnich asserts that code-switching practices reflect the social belonging of the speaker and how the speaker wants to be perceived by others. And the case of Ukve demonstrates villagers' failure to identify with any of the region's acknowledged nations including that of the state where their fate is to be citizens - Italy. Nevertheless, Ukve villagers participate in complex modern society and account for this in their self-representation. But their frame of reference for coping with the greater world remains strongly shaped by local circumstances.

By understanding collective identity formation in terms of the lifeworlds of marginal European villagers situated in a multi-lingual borderland this monograph causes one to reflect over how identity is formed in the European Union. If we consider the ways collective self-identification manifests itself in the TCR then questions arise about how the members of similar local communities elsewhere in Europe accommodate the European Union in their self-understanding. In what ways will policy and programs of the European Union facilitate locally founded processes of collective self-representation?

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