

Learning Nation in Early Childhood Education: Multi-Sited Comparison between Pedagogies of Nation in Australia and Hungary

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Abstract

This study investigates how nation is taught, learned, practiced, and performed in early childhood educational settings in Australia and Hungary. Analysis, based on comparative multi-sited ethnography, reveals nationhood as a taken for granted, unreflexively promoted framework for organising social life. The ‘pedagogy of nation’ operates in different ways in these two settings. In Australia, it draws on contemporary patterns of lifestyle, whereas in Hungary it rekindles past traditions within contemporary global flows of culture. The paper concludes by calling for the relevance of revealing everyday nationalism in institutions for young children and for reflexivity to trouble its exclusionary forms.

Keywords: Comparative Ethnography, Everyday Nationalism, Childhood Studies, Preschool, Early Childhood Education, Socio-material, Hungary, Australia

Introduction

In his book titled *National Belonging and Everyday Life*, Michael Skey (2011, p. 9) calls for understanding national sense-making as embedded in everyday routines and practices through which nationhood is continuously produced and reproduced. This approach focuses on those on the ground and their agencies, and add the empirical lens that Hobsbawm (1992) calls for.

Hobsbawm argues that to understand nationalism, we need to explore its dual aspects: one that is constructed from ‘above’ (by elites) and which cannot be understood unless explored empirically from ‘below’ (masses) as the “assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 10). Following this call, scholars of everyday nationalism (e.g. Billig, 1995; Skey, 2011; Fox, 2017) consider the role and relevance of the everyday (Knott, 2015). Nationalism from ‘above’ portrays the nation as an established community to which people may relate with national pride, attachment or criticism. Despite its constructed nature, the imaginary of nation has real effects. It shapes discursive and institutional practices, and relations between people, bodies, material and symbolic objects and the environment (Fox, 2017; Antonsich, 2015; Millei, 2019a,b). Educational policies (re)assert the primacy of national community in its citizens’ thinking, being and feeling, typically through history, geography or social studies curricula or civic and citizenship education (Bonikowski, 2016). Everyday nationalism, considered from ‘below’, is somewhat hidden in the familiarity of everyday practices and routines in early childhood institutions, and often operates below the radar but intensively shapes belonging and national sense-making (Millei, 2019a,b; Lappalainen 2009). Being invisible, everyday nationalism is hard to research but can be made visible and interrogated by a comparative approach (Löfgren, 1993). In order to explore how the ‘nation’ lends children a sense of belonging and offers a frame for sense-making acquired as part of their routine institutional life, we focus here on how nation is learnt and performed in two national early childhood educational context: one in Australia and the other in Hungary.

We make no attempt to generalize from one setting to how national cultures in general operate in every institution within a country, which would maintain a form of methodological nationalism already critiqued in comparative education (e.g. Dale & Robertson, 2007; Amelina,

Nergiz, Faist, Schiller & Glick, 2012). We rather sensitize researchers and educational actors to the complex, context specific ways in which nation operates below the radar, innocuously or habitually (Fox, 2017). We take these preschools as cases in which we can explore the specific operation of everyday nationalism. We take these cases to learn from in context-rich ways instead of striving to extract a rule based or generalizable knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This method resembles the case knowledge that helps professionals' work in any field. We consider this way of studying everyday nationalism the most fruitful, since everyday nationalism continuously reinvents itself adjusting to changing circumstances in the social, political and economic world (Skey, 2011 Antonsich, 2015; Fox, 2017) and within specific preschools, as it pervades curriculum, pedagogy, everyday routines and activities (Millei 2019a,b). Our research question is: How is nationhood invoked, taught, learned, related to, felt and performed in two early childhood educational settings by adults and children? The aim of the study is to problematise the innocence of nationhood as a taken of granted framework of belonging that is unreflexively accepted, and to move beyond exploring nationhood from 'above', in its ideational form.

Our analysis is informed by a socio-material approach, that de-privileges human agency and focuses on how "the animate and inanimate together produce the world" (Fox & Alldred, 2015) where the material effects of thoughts, memories, desires and emotions are recognised with the same importance as the capacity of matter (objects, such as maps, flags and so on) to affect. The structure of the article is as follows. The next section briefly outlines the main features, relevant in terms of nation making (nationhood from 'above' and early childhood education (ECEC)). We then move on to methodological framework and further to data generation and analysis to reveal nationhood from 'below'. The analysis is divided in three sub-sections: first and second sections are focusing on objects (maps and song). The third section highlights how emotions are 'put to

work' for nation in investigated ECEC contexts. After summarizing the analysis, in the concluding section, we call for pedagogical practices, which challenge nationhood as a taken-for-granted framework for belonging in pedagogical practices.

National Imaginaries and ECEC Systems in Hungary and Australia

Hungary and Australia have different national histories and systemic provisions of early childhood education and care (ECEC), which makes a comparative approach particularly interesting. The historical border of Greater Hungary changed under the Treaty of Trianon (1920) reducing Hungary to less than two-thirds of its territory (Antonsich & Szalkai, 2014). Re-creating the pre-Trianon nation thrives in the national imaginary even today. Greater Hungary's historical borders are considered as the natural and organic border of the Hungarian nation. The seven adjacent states' Hungarian minorities thus are all considered as part of the national imaginary, albeit they are mostly without citizenship (Molnár, 2017; Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox & Grancea 2006). Since 2010, the tendency to bind transborder and diasporic Hungarians more tightly to the nation through the concept of non-resident citizenship and voting has been part of Hungarian centre-right policy (Pogyonyi 2015). As part of this strengthening nationalist politics, folk traditions and national culture are portrayed prominently, a culture that was initially created during the 19th century romantic period utilising folk traditions collected and categorized as Hungarian.

Australia is a settler post-colonial nation on its own continent. Its colonial history, includes the exploitation, killing and forceful assimilation of its indigenous peoples. Since colonial settler societies do not acknowledge the previous complex structure of local groups, they involve in their national culture 'making' the coloniser's culture of British Imperialism, and more recently Western emigrant societies (Pettman, 1995; Stratton & Ang, 1999). As Taylor (2014, p. 171) argues,

settler's sovereignty over colonised land in Australia was established through the notion of Terra Nullius and "heroic white narratives of discovery, exploration and settlement". Indigenous peoples' ownership to land was legally recognised only in 1992. The Australian national imaginary hinges on the myths of Australians' "informality, classlessness, and love of the natural" in which outdoor spaces generate an interpersonal quality of shared social life with an inherently egalitarian quality (Bradford, 1995, p. 112).

Hungary, due to its history as a socialist country, has a well-developed kindergarten system (considered as education and a readily accepted part of children's upbringing) with compulsory participation for children aged 3-6 in full-time kindergarten (introduced in 2014). During state socialism, preschools were considered prime socialising institutions for the state and society, which lingers in its current rationales of provision (Teszenyi & Hevey, 2015) and also in the practices of teachers, most of whom worked in kindergartens during state socialism (OECD, 2017). The state funds full-time ECEC; parents pay relatively little. The first expansion of Australian ECEC provision coincided with the second wave of feminism during the 1970s and arguments for women's workforce participation. While this thinking persists, today the provision of ECEC is very closely tied to labour force issues in general, such as parental employment or education, and arguments for the competitiveness of the future workforce. Fees, while slightly subsidized by the state and federal governments, are mostly paid by parents. The general preschool enrolment of children over three in Australia is much lower than in Hungary (OECD, 2017).

Methodological framework

Ethnography in childhood studies is a suitable methodology for examining young children's social worlds (James & Prout, 1997; Christensen & James, 2008), but tends to sit

uncomfortably with comparative research examining pre-given units of comparison (Sørensen, 2010; Tobin, 2014). Ethnography seeks to attain an ‘inside’ view of culture and the researcher is mobile as he or she shifts between geographic locations. The ethnographer’s ‘inside’ view of culture emerges in between the culture at the research site and the researcher’s own culture, which needs to develop in tandem with observations. Comparative methods generally favour an ‘outside’ view of culture and immobility, where the ‘unit of comparison’ is determined before comparing sites and where data generation precedes comparison. To overcome this incompatibility between ethnography and comparative methods, Sørensen (2010) proposes a strategy of ‘multi-sited comparability’, suggesting that the researcher alternates between two positionings (‘inside’ and ‘outside’) and between geographic and conceptual sites during the ethnographic fieldwork to create comparability and the research object or unit of comparison. In other words, while developing an understanding of culture at each site, the researcher determines the unit of comparison and how to compare. Moving between geographic sites lets the researcher develop their comparability.

Contrasting and juxtaposing the rich ethnographic descriptions of Australian and Hungarian preschools focused on place and place-making, embodiment and becoming, objects and materialities, and emotions and affects. The differences in observations regarding these aspects highlighted the specificities of national culture at each field site. The ethnographer (Millei) alternated between the ethnographic sites between 2014 and 2017 which helped to identify organising patterns and their characteristics, such as ways of learning to belong or to embody and perform nation, or different objects and materialities that invoked or used to perform nation. Here we describe the ‘pedagogy of nation’ which refers to pedagogical effects performed by human or non-human teachers, such as environment, objects, space or emotions. We take pedagogy of nation

as a unit of comparison. While easier to define than identify, ‘pedagogy of nation’ is part of preschools’ everyday practices. Pedagogy of nation is present in institutions’ daily structuring, routines, rules, norms, the creation of the environment and its materiality often infused with national imaginaries, or sanctioned ways of expressing and feeling emotions (Millei, 2019b). Children experience ‘pedagogy of nation’ in embodied ways as they move through place, act according to, disregard or resist institutional expectations, engage with objects and display, hide or resist emotions and belonging emerging in the ‘interiority of space’. Interiority of space is a quality of space created by teachers and children acting and being together in spaces demarcated by objects, the environment or activities. This unit of ‘pedagogy of nation’ enables the comparison of everyday nationalism at two sites, to reveal how nationhood is embodied, felt, sensed and performed in its everydayness.

Comparing pedagogies in two settings belonging to different nations inadvertently renders the pedagogy described as ‘national’ pedagogy with assumed shared characteristics. While pedagogical ideals and practices common to a nation-state can be characterized as national (see Åkerblom & Harju, 2019) such ‘national pedagogy’ is not our interest despite possible overlaps. For example, while a particular type of child-centeredness may typify a nation-state’s education system, it may also conflate with national sense-making and routines. Thus, our understanding of ‘pedagogy of nation’ is more attuned to the performance of nationhood, rather than an explicit pedagogy that are common to a nation.

Ethnographic fieldwork and analysis

The study started in Australia, initially aimed to explore children’s place-making in a globalising world and consequently focussed on collecting accounts of children’s knowledge, their

engagements and imaginaries about the world (see more Millei, 2018). The preschool is located in a small town in New South Wales, Australia, where the ethnography was conducted during 2013 and 2014 altogether for 18 months and for an additional fortnight in 2017. During this fieldwork, while explicating the global, the nation appeared as children discussed countries, their travels, languages different people used, national celebrations and so on. The ethnographer followed this emergent focus and re-focussed the study on how and when the nation appears and is performed in everyday preschool life, following Brubaker and his colleagues' work (2006).

In Hungary, the ethnography was more intentionally dedicated to explore nation from the beginning of data production. Hungarian educators were informed about the research project with an explicit focus on nation by explaining, here in brief, that young children encounter and learn about the nation in their everyday lives, for example when participating in national celebrations, watching football or travelling, they also build alliances and develop attachments to the nation as they become national citizens. The teachers noted that the theme suited the Hungarian Core Program (national curriculum) and helped to develop children's knowledge about their closer and wider environments, the country and therefore took a keen interest in participating and contributing. It is important to note here, that while the explicit reference to nation is important for our research, we are more interested in how nation operates in everyday life, underpinning not only curriculum decisions but pedagogy, discourses, rhythm of everyday life, material environment, relations between people and so on.

The Hungarian preschool is a kindergarten in a smaller town located at the South West of Hungary. The ethnography took place between 2015 and 2016 for two months, in addition weekly visits during a half a year period following that, and an additional fortnight at the beginning of 2017. Millei had spent previously time in the preschool and interviewed teachers, so was relatively

familiar with the environment from the outset. Both ethnographies were conducted with children between three and six and included one group of children with changing memberships and their educators at each institution. The data comprise observations, field notes, videos, photos, children's artefacts, preschool documents and the ethnographers' research diaries.

In Hungary, curriculum implementation hinges upon a kindergarten's annual thematic plan and is closely aligned with seasons, celebrations and associated traditions. Activities then adopt a weekly theme explored through stories, songs, activities, excursions and so on, planned by the teacher. In Australian preschools, usual planning is guided by the curriculum framework and draws on children's interests, which is then incorporated into the daily curriculum and carried forward for larger projects. The educators responded differently to the research. In Hungary they included some tasks for the explicit teaching of nation as they understood it. In Australia, the teacher followed children's interest and if children referred to nation in explicit or implicit ways, the teacher followed that interest in the curriculum planning. Thus their understanding of the research have not changed their usual planning routines and classroom pedagogies. More importantly, while the content of the curricula may have shifted to contain explicit references to nation or teachers became more aware where the nation was explicitly referred to, the ways in which everyday nationalism operated in the settings have not changed.

We adopted an analytical approach, which can be conceptualised as an 'analysis through discussion' (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma 2000; Lahelma, Lappalainen, Mietola, & Palmu 2014). Millei is both a cultural insider and outsider in both countries, born and lived in Hungary for 30 years, she also lived for 15 years in Australia, acquiring fluency in both languages, familiarity with the cultures and educational systems, policies and curricula, and teacher training. Being both an insider and outsider, she can shift her perceptions between these cultures and contexts, especially

since she lives in Finland at present. This helpful positioning was further strengthened by a collaborative sociologist partner, Lappalainen, from Finland “to harness the strengths of combining multiple linguistic and cultural perspectives, not only in the collection and analysis of data” (McNess, Arthur & Crossley, 2015, 298) but also by fine-tuning the unit of comparison. Lappalainen contemplated the data from an outsider’s perspective. Her only connection to the field was her ethnographic experience and similar research interest in preschools in a Nordic welfare state (e.g. Lappalainen 2006; 2009). During the analyses she asked specifying questions, such as ‘in what sense, you think this example is about nationhood?’, ‘exactly what is it that bothers you in this example?’, ‘how is this different in your view of Finland?’ Our different relations to the data and socio-cultural contexts yielded more nuanced analyses.

We started our analysis with three occasions of two days long ‘data workshops’, watching visual material (photographs and video data), discussing the material, reading articles on everyday nationalism and exchanging experiences of fieldwork, and seeking a methodological framework for our analysis. For further analysis we selected from both cultural contexts three data examples, which we considered analogical incidents in that similar actions were described in all examples (Lappalainen, Lahelma, & Mietola 2015). Moreover, we looked for examples, where the actions were facilitated by material objects laden with meanings, emotions and references to place. Millei transcribed the examples and we continued our workshops making sense of data, these six examples.

In our analysis, we have looked for at least three pedagogic elements connected to the ‘pedagogy of nation’ (see more in Millei, 2019b): 1) *human and non-human didactic means*, which may include the engenderment of students’ own will to learn, mimetic elements when individuals repeat actions that gain some solidity, or others’ performance including humans and the

environment, such as objects, symbols, spaces, places, songs, facial or bodily expressions, images, rhythms of everyday life and so on; 2) *emotions and affects* expressed in embodied ways and verbally; and 3) *interiority of space*, which is the quality of space that plays a crucial role in habituating and teaching children's bodies and actions and locates children's identities. We identified discourses, social and affective practices, including bodily expressions and spatialities (Wetherell, 2012).

In describing the observations, we took a socio-material perspective meaning that human and non-human bodies were viewed as “intimately situationally entangled” (Sørensen, 2013, p. 118). We focussed on how the material and social co-exist and interplay in a symmetrical manner trying to attribute equal importance to both. As Sørensen (2013, p. 118) explains, focusing on socio-material processes “highlights ‘doings’ in contrast to ‘sense’”, shifting the attention towards the situation and its processes. Applying this principle let us describe how humans and non-humans, spaces, feelings and affective relations consolidate situations that together create socialising relations, affective aspects and environments for children.

Pedagogy of Nation in Two Settings

We have selected for analysis six events in which the whole class participated and the teacher was present and where objects and emotions were present and performed. The Australian preschool only had whole-group activity during the morning circle time. The group discussed actual events in the children's lives or in the community, celebrations, or they learned the days of the week or about the weather. In Hungary, whole-group activities included storytelling sessions, singing, physical exercise or excursions, such as seeing a puppet show. With the following two examples, we focus on how the object of map acts as non-human teacher of nation.

Map: non-human teacher

In the following event in the Australian setting, the children play a game as part of the morning circle time after storytelling.

Australia: The large map of Australia is on the floor and children and the teacher form a circle and sing the ‘Travelling around Australia’ song while moving around in a circle over the map holding hands. The lyrics of the song are: ‘I travel around Australia, on highway number 1. I travel around Australia, just to have some fun. When I’ve got to’ and the teacher points to Olli and asks ‘Where do you like to go in Australia? Point to it. Where have you been? Where have you just been now on your holiday?’ Olli doesn’t seem to remember, so one of the teachers helps: ‘Yes, you did with Mom and Dad in your caravan’. The other teacher makes skiing motions. ‘To the snow, Olli says’. The teacher then points to the snow on the map where Olli was. Olli watches the teacher pointing then suddenly looks at the other side of the map and says ‘Perth’. ‘All right I’ll take you to Perth’ the teacher replies. They continue singing: ‘when we’ve got to Perth, we stopped to see someone, and Olli said’ - the teacher asks Olli: ‘What did you do in Perth?’ ‘Jump, jump and spin around and hop’ - Olli responds. They all do these movements in the circle. Then the song starts again ‘I travel around in Australia, on highway number 1.’

This activity is a pedagogical tool often used in the preschool to let children move around a bit when they get restless and then they continue with the morning circle discussion. Teachers also use the song at other times during the day. In this activity, the map and the song have a central role, they act as *non-human teachers*. Through repetition, movement around the map and rhythm and lyrics teachers and children perform in an embodied ways the national space. Tracing the map

with their bodies, approximating the nation's borders and settlements engenders a feeling of belonging in the *interiority of the space* created as children visit places, recount memories of their families and embody the place again and again with their movements. In the affective interiority of this shared space, children are becoming with space. The *inanimate map* conjures Australia, children perform borders and the ensuing collective *feelings* invite children to identify. As Paasi (1999, 8) explains, "how we use our bodies, in the foods we consume and in our relationships with the landscape there is a continual reminder of who we are and what we believe in. This is why individuals do not forget their identity". By recounting the land and children's relations to it, the nation's shape in embodied ways and singing the song, the children learn and perform nationhood.

Olli is called upon by the teacher to locate the place on the map he just visited. He is reminded by both teachers in different ways but he either does not remember or wants to choose a different place. The teacher accepts and goes with Olli's choice. The game continues on, children show places on the map and they enact actions together and sing. In the *interiority of the space*, children and teachers laugh and play in a relaxed way and respect the choices being made. Considering four modalities of nationhood, Fox and Idriss (2008) highlight the ways in which nationhood frame the choices people make and how they make those choices national. Here children's choices are associated with holidaying and enjoying Australian landscape. In the game informality, choice, love of the natural and a relaxed lifestyle are performed to typify Australia (Bradford 1995, p. 112).

Hungary: A large map of Hungary hangs on the wall greeting arriving children, books with pictures of quintessentially Hungarian objects and pictures of dishes placed on tables invite the children to engage with as part of the curricular theme of 'Hungary' prepared by the teacher. A large paper marked with the borders of Hungary is on the floor.

The map is *surrounded* by waiting children. Coloured pencils are handed over to the children by colour. A new child arrives and is invited: 'Come here and see what we are doing. Do you know what this is, can you tell? Children?' The children respond in chorus: 'Map'. Teacher: 'Imagine, this is the map of Hungary! We drew it this large and now we would like to colour it'. After about two minutes all the children were given a pencil and are eager to start colouring. Teacher: 'The task is to draw inside the line' (her hand moves over the border of Hungary and points to the inside of Hungary on the map). Twelve children start working at the same time, their bodies crouch over the map. Pencils moving fast give a rhythmic sound in the quiet room. The pencils are very thin compared to the large size of the map, so colouring goes very painstakingly, and only small areas can be completely covered with colour. A few words and sighs of children break the quiet. Teacher: 'Oh it will be very good. Remain within the borders.' She repeats it a few times. Peter: 'Teacher, my hands are getting tired' - shows that he could hardly move his hand. Teacher: 'From this? (in a surprised tone) It got tired very quickly. Look how much more we need to colour!' A few children complain about their hands. Teacher: 'You are very industrious'. Child: 'Oh, we have to work a lot!' Researcher: 'Maybe you could draw something inside!' Teacher: 'Just keep a bit more colouring on the edges and then we could draw in some things that we have learned about just now' (referring probably to the Hungarian dishes and objects they heard and learned about the day before and the board game that has all these items placed on the Hungarian map). She stops the children and brings over the board game asking: 'Where is the sausage on the map? Now let's find the place on the big map. So where is the sausage on the large map? (children pointing to the sausage) Yes. Now move back (as the children were all over the small map). Where can it

be on the large map? (children point to different places then the teacher points to the right place) Yes, here. Now, who can draw a sausage?’ Hands in the air children say ‘me’ ‘me’. ‘Now please do not start drawing, move back, we have not decided who is drawing. Daniel, can you draw a nice sausage?’ (‘yes’) ‘Now we put a mark here (puts a dot on the large map), draw a large sausage.’ Children watching while Daniel draws. Many national foods and objects take shape on the map for another ten minutes but in the meantime many children leave. Eventually the map is shown to the whole group and the teacher invites positive comments: ‘it is looking great, isn’t it?’

The Hungarian border arrests children’s hands, a border not to be penetrated. The map and border as *non-human teachers* exert a pedagogical force to teach about the border, inside and outside, belonging and exclusion. Children get tired of colouring, the pencil heads are too thin for the task at hand and one child expresses this. In her reaction ‘From this?’, it seems the teacher implies how little colouring he has done with a hint of sarcasm. The teacher then states the norm, to be industrious, and calls children to persevere in the face of hardship.

After enough area is coloured according to the teachers’ expectation, in different geographic areas deemed ‘right’ by the teacher the children draw quintessentially Hungarian objects and dishes. Only those who can draw well are allowed to draw on the territory of nation to reach the desired quality. Others need to wait patiently. Through the creation of this representation of nation, an imaginary and taste of Hungary, expected behaviours – perseverance and patience – , and according to these *feelings* of belonging and place are being performed. Here, symbols and their right places made choices national, and by performing this knowledge and choices, children performed nationhood.

Song: non-human teacher

The seasons of the year are core or traditional contents of ECEC curricula and pedagogy, they create a rhythm in the institution. Two examples illustrate how with songs nationhood emerges in embodied actions and feelings, often unintentionally, as seasons are engaged with.

In Australia: After listening to an Easter song during morning circle time, the children discuss their Easter plans. Some will go camping in the bush, some will stay at home and have a picnic and some will go to an hotel. At the end of the circle time the Aussie Easter song is playing that accompanies the book by Colin Buchanan and John McIntosh. Apparently unfamiliar to the children, sung in country style, the song portrays the Easter long weekend, hot in the bush, the chocolate eggs melting in the back of the UTE (small truck). It is about picnics, playing cricket and the chorus goes: ‘Aussie Easter Oi! Oi! Oi! Aussie Oi! Easter Oi! Aussie Easter Oi! Oi! Oi!’ The teacher sings along and at the chorus raises her hand, straightens her body and, elevated by the spirit of the song, joins loudly in the chorus. The teacher’s excitement seems contagious but the other teacher in the circle seems to be unaffected. The children are animated to different extents. Some children raise their hands and cheer as in football imitating the teacher’s moves. Some join in the singing, others look puzzled, some turn to the researcher showing how they cheer with a smile, others pay no attention. Some others cannot strike the same pose as the teacher but keep trying. As the song goes on the teacher becomes even more animated. More and more children imitate the impetus, better and better resembling the pose and expression of the teacher while they cheer: Oi! Oi! Oi! The children wanted to sing the song again that day.

In this event, the human and the non-human teacher - the song - play equally important roles in what and how nation is being performed. The story draws on a stereotypical Australian imaginary: going to the bush, hot, UTE, picnic and cricket (Bradford, 1995). The teacher enacts the cheers with excitement, drawing together human didactics with *feelings* for the nation that some children *mimic*. The rhythm and melody of the song, as *non-human didactic* means, mobilize the teacher and the children. As the teacher and some children move with the rhythm and the melody, and join in collective cheering, in the *interiority of the space* an emotional atmosphere is created that is contagious to some children. Some children try to follow, others seem less interested or unable to *mimic* the teacher.

Not only the *mimetic elements* are important here in the performance of nation but also the children's and educator's various positionings to the imaginary nation portrayed and performed. Not everyone feels the same way. Whether they are still learning or cannot identify with nation performed here, is not clear. What emerges is how this national imaginary means different things to people, if it carries any meaning at all. While the teacher attempts to draw more and more children into the cheering, she allows the children to follow by choice. It is also noteworthy that the teacher, on seeing the video-recording of this event was shocked at her cheering. Her confusion demonstrates that even if nation is present explicitly, performing nation can proceed under the radar even for the actor herself!

In Hungary, the theme of autumn features the inedible squash in children's books. Instead of inedible squashes in different yellows and greens used mostly for decorations, the Halloween pumpkin is at the heart of activities in the kindergarten. The pumpkin is relatively new to Hungary, likewise the Halloween tradition and pumpkin carving. All around the preschool are typical representations of autumn with coloured and falling

leaves, rain, scarecrows, hedgehogs, but curiously, hanging from the ceiling pictures of the carved Halloween pumpkin dominate the scene. The teacher has made a board game shaped like a pumpkin to learn letters, sounds and numbers. As the children proceed on the trail of the board game, they get to go where they either need to say words starting with a letter or sing a song about banana squash written for children by Vilmos Gryllus, a member of the most famous Hungarian folk band Kaláka.

Peter went to buy banana squash,

But forgot his cash.

How much is the squash?

No matter if no money to pay with.

Buying the squash was left off,

Peter had an empty stomach (translated by Millei).

Following the morning activities, the children set off to bake a pumpkin muffin that many children have never heard of before. The pumpkin muffin recipe was downloaded from a Hungarian baking website. The ingredients and methods for muffin making are closer to Hungarian sponge cake, involving elaborate rounds of mixing, whisking and folding in, and the children participate. Rather than simply throwing it all together and only mixing until it combines, each child takes a turn at mixing the dough. While the muffin is baking in a mini-oven placed on a low table in the classroom, the children sit on each others' laps in front of it at a safe distance and observe what is happening with the mixture in the oven. As they wait for the muffin to be ready, they appear bored. The researcher draws their attention to how the muffins are rising and changing colour to hold their interest. The teacher comes by and starts the banana squash song instead for children to sing again.

The imaginary of autumn-coloured leaves, ears of corn, scarecrows and squashes - is a regular decoration in any Hungarian kindergarten during October and November, remaining unchanged for years. The researcher was surprised by the pumpkin in the kindergarten and wondered why it took such a central stage. In recent years, Halloween has become popular and shops sell large pumpkins for carving, which is relatively new to Hungary. The pumpkin and the muffin merge with the nation-wide imaginary and curriculum performance for autumn. It seems the pumpkin had joined the enactment of regular activities drawing on Hungarian folksongs, poems and so on.

The importance of handing down Hungarian traditions to children goes back at least to pre-WWII years and was maintained even during socialism, when folk dances, songs and stories were performed during large-scale celebrations or as part of the regular kindergarten curriculum. In this scenario, the pumpkin and muffin, as global cultural objects, appear and are being subsumed under the folk tradition and usual autumn curriculum. While the pumpkin and muffin could be used to teach about different cultures, they are inserted into the national culture. The consumption of travelling material objects can be understood, as Franklin (2006, p. 2) contends, as a “central component of modern social identity formation and engagement” that is “infused into the everyday”. Here the appropriation of pumpkin and muffin blends seamlessly with usual activities without creating a global outlook.

The appropriation of pumpkin and the muffin might be also linked to a long and persistent desire to emulate the West, much discussed in the literature on post-socialist transformations (Silova, Millei & Piattoeva, 2017). Material culture in Hungary often makes reference to what is considered western, fixing the West as the hegemonically positive norm for Hungary in opposition to former state socialism (Fehérvári, 2002). Integrating the pumpkin and muffin within the usual

running of the institution perhaps expresses this two-fold desire, first to belong to the West and at the same time to safeguard the existing traditions, also expressed in the nationalist rhetoric of the Orbán government¹. Performing the traditional song (*non-human teacher*) helps subsuming under Hungarian culture the difference represented by the pumpkin and muffin. This power relation also manifests in larger developments, the ruling party's vehement opposition to migrants who could dilute national culture, causing Hungarians to lose their anchoring traditions treasured for a thousand years. What is prominent here is how the cultural logic operating in nationalism from 'above' is performed in the preschool from 'below'.

Emotions teaching nation

Nation is emotional and affective (e.g. Anderson 2009; Millei, 2019a) and our last two examples concern its emotional aspects, illustrating how positive attachment to nation is mobilised. In the first example, while the story explicitly draws upon national symbols, our attention is focused on the emotional ways the teacher performs her reading. In the second scenario, explicit national symbols are shown but our attention is on her bodily actions, emotions and relations to them.

Australia: The morning circle starts with the story, *Possum Magic*, an emblematic Australian children's book written by Mem Fox. In the story, Grandma Poss makes her grandson Hush invisible with her bush magic and in consequence they need to travel through Australia and eat certain typically Australian food, such as Anzac biscuits in Adelaide, mounney and mints in Melbourne, pumpkin scones in Brisbane and vegemite

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/07/viktor-orban-hungary-preserve-christian-culture>
<http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/pm-orban-we-must-protect-our-religious-traditions-in-order-to-keep-hungary-hungarian/>

sandwiches in Darwin, to make Hush visible again. The teacher holds the large book in front of the children sitting on the mat and dramatizes the story.

Teacher: Oh, things are looking grim (she says it in a quiet tone and makes a sad face, mouth dropping down and eyes fixed to the floor, body in stooped position). How do you think Grandma Poss is feeling?

Girl (at front): Sad.

Boy (middle): Sad.

Teacher: The word they use here is miserable. Oh my goodness let's see (she sighs, turns the page and continues reading). Grandma Poss felt miserable (firm and then lowering tone of voice).

Boy (on the right goes up to book, points to the invisible Hush): He is actually angry.

Teacher: Don't worry grandma (elevated tone) said Hush, I don't mind (teacher nods as she turns her head displaying a sad face with corners of her mouth dropped, her eyes meeting the children's eyes).

Grandma was thinking all night. The story goes on.

Teacher: While eating breakfast she realised (teacher gasps with excitement): SHE SHOUTED, IT'S SOMETHING TO DO WITH FOOD (2 sec) PEOPLE FOOD, NOT POSSUM FOOD (While reading this she lifts her fist up in the air and moves it as she was punching the air vigorously two times). The next day the possums left the bush and set off with a bike to visit all of the places. They ate Anzac biscuits in Adelaide (teacher mumbling 'mmmm' it is yummi).

Girl (on left): My mom goes to Adelaide.

As the teacher hears that, she turns excitedly to the child.

Teachers: Where was your mom?

Girl (on left): She was in Adelaide – the child responds and the teacher acknowledges the response with a nod.

Some of the children sit quietly and listen, others come forward to their knees and point at the book and add to the story. Yet others observe children arriving or crying seemingly inattentive to the story-telling.

As with all good children's books, children are invited by the story to identify with the protagonist, in this case Hush, who is searching for his identity. Possum Magic can be found in most Australian preschools and homes promoting an Anglo-centric imaginary. For example, the Anzac biscuits represent a cuisine essentially English, with an Australian variation referring to the Battle of Anzac in WWI and the British Empire. Possum Magic continues the tradition of first Australian picture books and relies on colonial / post-colonial references, native Australian animals as protagonists, the elision of Australian aboriginal culture, and an outdated normative model of Australian subjectivity (Daniel, 2006; Hateley, 2017).

Hush, an Australian animal, consuming Australian foods to become visible incite children to unreflexively identify with nation (Daniel, 2006, p. 4). As Hush and Grandma visit famous Australian towns, consume food and Hush slowly becomes visible, the nation is enacted through body, food, landscape and choice (Paasi, 1999). The teacher uses emotionally charged dramatization to draw children's attention to the story. At the same time as they connect with the story, they identify with Hush, with his misery of losing his visibility / identity and the joy of getting it back by embodying nation through eating national food. The *non-human teachers* present here are the large book and its illustrations, the *interiority of the teaching space* making children

turn towards the story book and the bodily reactions and *emotions* of the presenting teacher. Through these didactic means and *feelings* children are prompted and affected to identify with a fixed and stereotypical nationhood without any critical engagement with it on the teachers' part.

Hungary: The teacher created a Power point presentation for the children with many slides with quintessentially national symbols, food, objects, places. On the second day of the researcher's visit she presented those. The children sat on the floor during storytelling facing the wall onto which the images were projected while the teacher sat by the computer and explained.

Teacher: What is this?

Children in chorus: Hungarian flag.

Teacher: How do you know that this is the Hungarian flag?

Children in chorus: Red, white, green, that is the Hungarian land (rhymes in Hungarian).

Teacher: You are very clever. What do you think the colours on the flag mean? What do you think the red could mean?

Attila: It is blood.

Teacher: Who says something else? (silence for 5 seconds)

Botond: Clouds.

Teacher: Does it mean clouds (with a disapproving tone of voice)? Imagine that the red means power, Hungarians are powerful (excitement in her tone of voice). What could the white mean? (children repeat the word 'powerful' in a quiet voice but with excitement).

Robert: It means that the clouds are white. (Children's hands are up but the teacher doesn't choose anybody).

Teacher: It means loyalty, it means that we love Hungary so much (emphasizing love by dragging out the word). The red means that Hungarians are strong, and the white that we love Hungary so much. And what could the green mean?

Child: Grass

Teacher: Grass? Hope. This is the colour of hope, IMAGINE, it is the colour of hope (with a surprised tone). Red, white, green, this is the Hungarian land (Children join in to say it in chorus with excitement)[...]

The teacher continues to show pictures of food, spices, animals, such as Hungarian dogs, horses, pigs, cows, birds, famous buildings, the Prime Minister, traditional musical instruments, folk costumes, ceramics, hussars, *betyár* (highway robbers). While these pictures are shown and explained, the teacher describes these as ‘big’, ‘famous’, ‘wonderful’, ‘people come to see these from every part of the world’ etc. always using an elevated tone and expressing excitement. The children become more vocal, start to tell their positive experiences with these things and their liking for them as more and more pictures follow but some children become increasingly restless.

The teacher expresses positive feelings of attachment, liking and being proud at the sight of the pictures. What we see on the slides are significant things even in international contexts, the teacher communicates. By passing on knowledge and noting the objects’ importance, aesthetics and long history and by accompanying these explanations with emotions of surprise, liking, wonder and amazement, she does not only portray their significance but also the proper emotions with which they needed to be regarded. All in all, during the 20-minute session, everything presented was introduced as exceptional, and positive *emotions* and pride performed by the teacher

accompanied the pictures. The children *mimicked* these emotions and amazement initially and also shared stories showing their positive attachment to them invoking in turn the teacher's positive response. The nation here, in a similar manner to the Australian scenario, is not only performed with national objects (Hungaricum)² and imaginaries, but also through embodied ways and emotions that customary regard these, foods to like, and ways to relate to landscape (Paasi, 1999).

Concluding remarks: everyday nationalism in two settings

With the six examples we compared the more than ideational ways in which nation operates 'below' and is performed within children's routine institutional lives. In the complex pedagogy of nation, human and non-human teachers, emotions and feelings and the interiority of space created by different objects, spaces, activities and emotions play a crucial role in teaching, learning and performing nation and where children are becoming (national subjects or otherwise). Everyday nationalism in Australia and Hungary operates in different forms as it adjusts to national writing of history and nationalism produced by elites, as well as everyday institutional routines and practices, and local pedagogies. In Hungary, human didactics is explicitly concerned with the ideational elements and the acquisition of 'traditional' Hungarian culture as well as teaching the 'right' behaviours and emotions for nation. In this way, it connects quite closely with nationalism from 'above'. Nonetheless, non-human teachers, such as songs, stories, maps, borders and puzzles, affects and emotional atmospheres help children to acquire the 'right' way to know, act and feel as a Hungarian. Children's ignorance, resistance to or disinterest in these, such as when they felt their hand hurt, lost interest in pumpkin muffin making or learning quintessential Hungarian

² A thing or phenomenon that is unique to Hungary and therefore representing great value for the Hungarians. From combination of the words Hungary or Hungaria and "unikum" meaning "unique" in Hungarian. (<https://www.definition-of.com/Hungaricum>)

things, met with the teacher's immediate evaluation of them and attempt to redirect the flow of activities to the planned one. Critical spaces for reflection or other ways of engaging or feelings for these things were not provided.

In Australia, mixed with children's interests, human didactics worked as selection and interpretation of specific resources, allowing and facilitating children's choice making and maintaining and referencing a relaxed lifestyle. Quintessentially Australian books, songs and imaginaries of nation carried strong non-human didactic elements invoked mimicry, positive feelings for nation and emotional atmospheres. Nation was performed as part of everyday life, like eating, travelling or spending free time and holidays eliciting children's matching activities and feelings. In this setting, these kind of engagements with nation perhaps so much form a part of routine life that they do not gain any specific attention thus seamlessly recreate exclusions. However, as in Hungary, these lifestyle choices are directly related to nationalism of the elite, however in a context where stable stories of national identity is being increasingly troubled and spotted with racism and ethnic discrimination³ (Nolan, Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2018). In addition, nationhood is performed in an unreflexive manner in both contexts, without awareness of the potentially exclusionary nature of 'national culture' invoked and performed in classrooms.

Institutional discourses reproduce ideas of nation and homeland by continuously signalling and performing nation (Billig, 1995). The un-reflexive elements of pedagogy of nation may create divisions and exclusions that can be easily mobilized. National tropes are often mobilized in political discourses, for example, to gain citizen support in stopping migrants at the border. Maps played an important role in the pedagogy of nation, as Paasi (1999) also discussed. While children

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/30/australias-leaders-are-sitting-on-the-sidelines-its-up-to-the-people-to-take-a-stand>

inhabited the interiority of national spaces marked out by maps, the Hungarian children were also alerted to the potential undesirability of crossing the border and leaving Hungary⁴, and to act as ‘border guards’⁵ against global influence whereas local tradition was mobilized to subsume difference and maintain a static national culture. *Possum Magic* excludes Indigenous groups and cultures from the Australian national imaginary. While the Australian national curriculum framework promotes a diverse nation and inclusion of different cultures, including Indigenous ones, practice may promote stereotypical and exclusionary logics contingent upon settler colonialism and stereotypical lifestyles.

Despite efforts to create inclusive classrooms reflecting cultural diversity, exclusionary forms of everyday nationalism operate tacitly. In the Hungarian setting, inculcating attachment to nation in children is an explicit curricular objective, for which folk traditions, knowledge about children’s cultural environments and teaching the ‘right’ choices and behaviour are deemed as best platforms. Only paying attention to what is included, exclusion operates in silence. In the Australian preschool, national culture is more reflected in the unfolding of everyday life, allowing flexibility and freedom from prescriptions with choice routinely offered to children. Accepted in the same relaxed manner, exclusionary discourses, representations, actions and feelings were rarely if ever questioned. Thus, forming attachment to nation in both cases demands further critiques and pedagogical reactions.

If national imaginaries draw on exclusive discourses, engendering separateness and superiority, the danger is that children unreflexively and uncritically accept such divisions,

⁴ <https://hungarytoday.hu/the-hungarian-population-decline-shows-no-sign-of-slowng-down/>

⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/refugee-crisis-hungary-border-police-guards-fence-beating-asylum-seekers-migrants-serbia-push-back-a7610411.html>

hierarchies and exclusions. This danger raises the need for conscious diversity pedagogies related to nation. Equally, in many contexts, such as in Australia, current curricula seek to create global or cosmopolitan citizens, and engagement with global perspectives are therefore encouraged. However, as we have shown, outdated, stereotypical and somewhat stale national discourses and imaginaries in both cases contradict the explicit aims to create global citizens with openness to the world who engage with issues that concern the earth today. While young children are often deemed apolitical, it seems that they learn nation, a form of politics and identity very early on, but often without tools to be critical with, and if necessary, to form alternative imaginaries and belongings or to critique and resist. This is where the development of a critical and explicit national pedagogy needs to be located.

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