
MÁTÉ ZOMBORY *

Beyond Recognition: Crises of Politics and Representation

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* [zombory.mate@tk.mta.hu] (Institute for Sociology, Centre for Social Sciences)

Following the identity political turn in the Western hemisphere, the social sciences in the 1990s witnessed a considerable shift of focus to the notion of recognition. Problems of inequality, oppression, injustice, and social struggle have increasingly been conceptualized in the framework of a rising recognition paradigm. As Charles Taylor aptly summarized, '[t]he thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.' (Taylor, 1992: 25) By raising the problem of the inherent tension between two modes of recognition, between the demand for universal dignity (equality) and particular identity (difference), Taylor aimed to contribute to contemporary North American debates about multiculturalism. However, he did not pay much attention in his analysis to the role of the social, historical and geographical context of the ongoing social struggles he looked at when he linked social struggles driven by the demand for recognition to the modern condition, the transition from collective honour to individual dignity. The same is true for Axel Honneth, the other seminal early theorist of the social (theoretical) relevance of recognition, despite the significant differences between their approaches. When aiming to build a grand critical theory à la Frankfurt School applying an immanently social basis of normativity, Honneth did not focus on the social historical specificities of the shift from the social to the moral grammar of social conflict either.

Since the early 1990s, the recognition paradigm in the social sciences has received various criticisms. From the perspective of this special issue, aiming to contribute to the discussion about recognition theory by focusing on its historical and social embeddedness, the role of Nancy Fraser is central. Not only because she had one of the most influential voices in the critical choir on recognition politics, pointing precisely to the shift from transformative politics to the moral grammar of social struggles, but because of setting the discourse about recognition in a way that for a long time determined further critical questionings. Especially since her famous exchange with Honneth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003), critiques of recognition have tended to, in one way or another, position themselves in the recognition vs. redistribution framework. In this sense, Fraser's theory on injustice proved to be impactful in two aspects. On the one hand, she exclusively differentiates between two distinctive logics of social reality, economics and culture, each having its own principle of justice. Culture is the field in which (in)justice is framed as (mis)recognition, while economy would be the sphere of (un)equal (mal-/re-)distribution. This ontological differentiation rendered the

systematic critique of (post-1970s) capitalism with the concomitant recognition discourse more difficult (Leeb, 2018). Moreover, by conceptualizing the shift of the 1980s in the feminist movement as a transition from redistribution to recognition, Fraser radically limited the critical assessment of the role of early (feminist) social movements with a clear anti-systemic agenda, given that the concept of redistribution as the affirmative remedy for mal-distribution, leaving the basic economic structure intact, is rooted in the liberal welfare state. On the other hand, '[t]he problem with Fraser's dual model of redistribution-recognition is that it accepts the ideal of "mutual recognition", which covers over, rather than exposes, class antagonisms at the heart of capitalist societies' (Leeb, 2018: 552). Fraser's dual model oriented criticism on 'too much' recognition, thus it paradoxically contributed to the legitimacy of the ideal of mutual recognition. By taking these two aspects into account, the articles of this special issue aim to critically approach the recognition paradigm by breaking out from the iron cage of the recognition-redistribution antagonism.

Our point of departure is the growing awareness of the cases when reconciliation, based on the model of mutual recognition, actually fails. When looking at the recurrently arising social conflicts around the unjust distribution of recognition, the promise of reconciliation of the recognition paradigm seems to be less realistic than ever. Presupposing an ideally equal distribution of recognition, the politics of recognition paradigm typically focuses on how parts of society presented as voiceless, groupings of individuals subjected to past or present oppression, are given voice by various sorts of activism. The articles of this special issue seek to explore when and why the actual politics of recognition results in the competition of at least two exclusive, self-totalizing moral universes mutually degrading each other. In the often unfolding victimhood competition each side strives to get its own social suffering publicly recognized by the other, and the position of victimhood functions as the condition of possibility of entering into the field of recognition claims. In this social dynamic, recognition appears not so much as a basic human need but as prestige. The socially hyper-valORIZED notion of trauma well exemplifies that what is at stake is the redistribution of symbolic resources among those speaking in the name of the victims (Fassin and Rechtman, 2009).

In order to face the lost illusions of reconciliation in those cases, the articles of this special issue aim to critically approach the paradigm of recognition politics in diverse empirical fields, not only feminism but also the housing crisis, memory politics, or restitution. We believe that this diversity, both thematic and geographical, is an apt reflection of the fact that recognition politics has deeply embedded into various domains of our social and political life. The papers of the special issue apply two main perspectives when critically discussing empirical or theoretical questions of recognition: politics and representation. One approaches recognition politics as a crisis of political representation. From this perspective, competitors for equal recognition have more direct experience about each other than about the society at large or the particular social group they claim to represent. The crisis of politics (moralization, extreme polarization, two-sidedness, exclusive competition) has not so much to do with fatal cleavages in the value

system or ideological landscape of society but with the institutional transformation of political representation. As Péter Csigó and Máté Zombory demonstrate in their paper, the recognition politics of European integration resulted not in the historical reconciliation of different regional and local memories, but to a compromised, declarative and unstable moral union in which the humanitarian norms of recognition are easily reappropriated and reversed by the outright enemies of liberal-European values. The paper introduces a theoretical framework in which the failures of recognition politics are addressed as the crisis of political representation. Questions of representation, that is, who can speak in the name of the victims in a legitimate way, are central in Roma memory politics too. Gergely Romsics's case study deals with the occupation of the Roma Holocaust memorial in 2016, Berlin, by activists of Roma not holding German citizenship. Struggles around the event were structured by different principles of political representation that Romsics terms the opposing referentialities of the memorial site: should it represent Roma in the national German framework or every Roma as a (potential) victim of Nazi aggression? The paper argues that governmental action was constitutive in the eventual co-optation of one memory political initiative to the detriment of the other. Questions of representation arise sharply in the continuing debate about prostitution. Noémi Katona studies the conflict between the abolitionist and the sex work movement as a social field in which players strive for the legitimate representation of victimized women, influenced by the actors' position in the global relations of force.

The other critical approach of the special issue has to do with the global ideological-political embeddedness of the recognition paradigm. Cristian Cercel investigates the possible routes of research addressing the apparent historical parallel of the memory boom, one of the main fields of recognition politics, and the rise of neoliberalism. The global neoliberal hegemony is in the focus of the article of Dalma Feró as well, who aims to reconstruct the shift from liberation to the recognition paradigm in Western feminism that she terms as a transition from 'the personal is political' to the 'politics is personal'. Both papers address the crucial question of the radical transformation of politics, usually designated by a prefix such as post-politics. This emphasis on post-1970s developments is counterbalanced by the historical case study of Dustin Stalnaker who explores how early Cold War ideological considerations shaped the ways in which the West German state processed recognition claims of two distinct groups of German veterans of the Spanish Civil War: German antifascists and those who fought in support of the National Socialist regime. Last but not least, Kata Ámon's paper investigates the responses to the post-2008 housing crisis on Europe's two peripheric countries, Spain and Hungary. She proposes to adjust the Fraserian model with Karl Polányi's theory on the double movement, the tension between market extension and social protection. Connected to the topic of the special issue, Zoltán Háberman reviews Jelena Subotić's recent book *Yellow Star, Red Star*, which, going beyond the criticism of relativization, discusses the way geopolitical insecurity and cultural resentment influenced post-communist states in appropriating the memory of the Holocaust in order to legitimately represent a different suffering.

Though the picture the cases presented in this special issue provide is far from exhaustive, the diversity it shows hopefully calls for the further reassessment of the recognition paradigm in social theory and practice.

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