Borderland identities of Bratislava: balancing between Slovaks, Germans and Hungarians in the second half of the 19th century

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Borderland Identities of Bratislava: Balancing between Slovaks, Germans and Hungarians in the Second Half of the 19ᵗʰ Century

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Abstract: *The article regards the urban space of Bratislava as an area contested by several national groups with their competing state-building strategies in the second half of the 19ᵗʰ century, when the city's status of a cultural and social crossroad started to be challenged by its' inhabitants and their respective political agendas. While offering a category of a "mental borderland" rather than a geographical one, the paper investigates the ways in which the three major groups living in the city attempted to claim it, presenting it as a centre of their culture, while reinterpreting its landscape and history. Although the case of Bratislava-Pressburg -Pozsony fits into the context of entangled histories, connecting the social and cultural networks of the region, the approach used in the current article is more comparative, since it regards the Slovaks, Germans and Hungarians as opposing parties, whose status of a "privileged" group was changing radically during the decades. The idea of resistance is highlighted as a driving mechanism of one's group's successful claim. Moreover, borders are seen as categories that are socially produced within the multinational and multicultural environment of Bratislava. The article states that the city's diverse character and multiple legacies were successfully claimed by groups most accustomed to "resisting" its "privileged" and "better standing" opponents. Therefore, the previously widely underestimated Slovak population finally turned Bratislava into its capital in the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century.*

Key words: *borderland identity, state-building, Bratislava's cityscape, Magyarisation, assimilation policies in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*

Introduction. Picturing a borderland

The notion of a "borderland" itself indicates marginalisation[2] that provokes cultural and political division. Separating states and nations, geographical borders become the most obvious markers of political boundaries, often serving as indicators of disputed zones, where different nation and state-building programs overlap and clash.[3] The cases of such territorial debates are numerous;[4] yet, they mostly encompass lands that lie on a

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[2] Misra Sanghamitra, *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India* (New Deli: Routledge, 2011), 1-5.

[3] Vasile Nitsiakos, *On the Border: Transborder Mobility, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries along the Albanian-Greek Frontier* (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 44-55.

[4] For further details, see the Macedonian case in the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century. Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). For the case of the borderland of Dobruja, see Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation- and State-building: The Integration of*

certain geographical border,[5] while non-border cities and towns, where distinctly different and often opposing groups of populations co-exist, are usually described as "multicultural"[6] rather than "borderland", unless they are situated on the edge of a state.

The idea of a border as a buffer zone[7] suggests immediate existence of various cultural and political entanglements taking place in a space, where several states or nations intersect. However, this approach slightly limits the idea of a borderland to geography, while its cultural aspects remain less explored. Gloria Anzaldúa explains that intersectionality as such is an ever-present factor that highlights identities, while putting people between genders, ethnicities, classes etc.[8] Hence, the "identity border" represents a far more suitable notion for describing a clash of mind-sets, state-building projects and complicated ways of coexistence that inevitably mark any "boundary".

Referring to identity as a catalyst that highlights a cultural, geographical or political division,[9] the current article addresses not a "traditional" borderland space, situated on an actual line separating several states, but rather a crossroad, where these lines meet. Following this tactic, Bratislava,[10] an "unexpected" Slovak capital,[11] with its changing cultural landscape, claimed by several national groups inhabiting the city, offers a demonstrative example of a real mental borderland, where "struggles and reconciliations of identities" leave traces not only on its architectural image and its subsequent interpretation, but also on its political structure. Therefore, the aim of the current analysis is to present a cityscape as a contested identity border,[12] where "multiculturalism" inflames under certain circumstances that contribute to the rise of one group with its state-building agenda over another one. In order to view the example of Bratislava as a case of competing nation and state-building projects, one should first clarify the notion of a "space based identity" and that of a "core group", a "more privileged" national and/or social cluster of people, whose position, as it is shown later, was often in flux.

Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1873-1913 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, Center for Russian & East European Studies, 2002).

[5] David H. Kaplan, *Boundaries and Place: European Borderlands in Geographical Context* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 7-9, 259.

[6] As an example see the 20th century cases described in Alisdair Rogers, *Multicultural Policies and Modes of Citizenship in European Cities* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2001), 1-15.

[7] Marek Szcepanski, "Cultural Borderlands in Sociological Perspective (The Case of Upper Silesia)," *Polish Sociological Review* 121 (1998), 69-82.

[8] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 1-8.

[9] Madeleine Hurd, *Borderland Identities: Territory and Belonging in Central, North and East Europe* (Eslov: Forlags Ab Gondolin, 2006). On the linguistic border in Eastern Europe, see Dieter HubertStern, *Marginal Linguistic Identities: Studies in Slavic Contact and Borderland Varieties* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 103-161.

[10] In this work the city will be mostly called by its contemporary official name "Bratislava" in order to avoid misunderstanding.

[11] For information of the centres and ideas of the Slovak national revival, see Imrich Sedlák, *Pavol Jozef Šafárik a slovenské národné obrodenie: zborník z vedeckej konferencie* [Pavol Jozef Šafárik and the Slovak national revival: the conference proceedings] (Martin: Matica Slovenská, 1989).

[12] For a similar approach in the Romanian case, see Marius Turda, "Transylvania Revisited: Public Discourse and Historical Representation in Contemporary Romania," in *Nation-building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi et al. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 198-200.

The current article, when focusing on a certain cityscape, refers to "identity" as "regionally fixed" [13] and strongly connected to the national ideas that gained their importance and new meaning in the 19th century, the way it happened in the case of Bratislava, claimed by Hungarians, Germans and Slovaks.[14] The idea of common cultural, ethnic and linguistic ties was never a novelty,[15] although the issue of a deeply enrooted idea of a shared background that predated modern nations with their following "identities" did not play a similar significant role before the 19th century.[16] Nevertheless, its existence did lay a basis for the 19th century identity debates that would involve also the process of culturally "marking the territory". Therefore, the current research views nations as "interest clubs", expanding Abner Cohen's idea of nations as groups of people "defending and advancing their common interests".[17] In the case of Bratislava, this "common interest" became a cityscape; therefore, one may switch from the notion of a national identity to that of an identity of a place that underwent a series of interpretations in order to become a Slovak capital in the 20th century.[18]

The identity disputes were orchestrated by three of the major groups in the city that are featured in the current article: the Germans, the Hungarians and the Slovaks.[19] Each of them passed through a period of being a "core" and a "non-core" group.[20] In addition, those were the nation-building strategies of these groups and their successes in "marking" the architectural, cultural and public[21] space of Bratislava that determined the city's shifting "borderland" identities.

The example of overlapping and conflicting agendas makes 19th century Bratislava a representative case of various "entangled histories".[22] However, the approach chosen for this article is rather comparative, since it explains the successes of one group's

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[13] On the regional aspect of identity, see Kazimiera Wódz, *Regional Identity, Regional Consciousness: The Upper Silesian Experience* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Sląskiego, 1995), 7-13. For an international and cultural perspective, see Janette Sampimon, *Becoming Bulgarian: The Articulation of Bulgarian Identity in the Nineteenth Century in Its International Context: An Intellectual History* (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 2006), 1-23.

[14] Peter Brock, *Slovenské národné obrodenie 1787-1847: k vzniku modernej slovenskej identity* [The Slovak national revival 1787-1847: approaching the Slovak modern identity] (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2002).

[15] Pierre Van de Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981), 15-37, 58-83.

[16] Eric Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15-18; Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47-50.

[17] Abner Cohen, "Variable in Ethnicity," in *Ethnic Change*, ed. Charles Keyes (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 306-310.

[18] Alexandar Kiossev, "Legacy or Legacies. Competition and Conflicts," in *Europe and the Historical Legacies in the Balkans*, ed. Raymond Detrez and Barbara Segaert (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008), 49-69.

[19] The case of the Jewish population is not regarded in the current article, since this highly important group did not pursue any state-building agenda and were much less involved in the identity debates in Bratislava. For further details regarding the city's Jewish history, see Robert A. Neurath, *Bratislava, Pressburg, Pozsony: Jewish Secular Endeavors, 1867-1938* (Bratislava: Alexander Robert Neurath, 2010).

[20] For further elaboration on the term core-group and its place in a state-building strategy, see Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-building: Making Co-nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5-9, 23-35.

[21] Hans Speier, "The Rise of Public Opinion," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 27.

[22] Michael Werner, *De La Comparaison Á L'histoire Croisée* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

agenda by opposing its tactics to those of the others and viewing them as a parallel.[23] Those parallels turn Bratislava into a "mental borderland", a contested territory that, although not at all "marginalised"[24] in the 19th century and beyond, notably became a geographical space, whose identity aspects, including its name, were constantly subjected to manipulations. Since all the three groups were referring to the same cityscape they were sharing, it was not simply the urban "identity" that shifted, but rather the accents and the ways of its interpretation.

Nowadays the Slovak capital and once an important centre of the Habsburg Empire, Bratislava changed its names several times during the period of its existence: from the Latinised "Posonium" and Hellenised "Istropolis" to the Slavic version of "Presporok", from the German "Pressburg" to the Hungarian "Pozsony".[25] The current name Bratislava, although known and used by Slovak-oriented (and Slavic-oriented) inhabitants of the city, was officially adopted only in 1919 after the creation of a new Czechoslovak state.[26] The city is still called differently by the representatives of several ethnic groups living on the territory of contemporary Slovakia and the neighbouring countries, who once played a significant role in creating its specific cultural landscape.

Modern Bratislava with its culture and architecture was formed at the zenith of the Habsburg Empire, in the 18-19th centuries. One should bear in mind that the city played a significant role in the life of the region even long before that, nevertheless, it was the imperial legacy that gave an impulse to its cultural development.[27] In 1536, the city became the capital of Royal Hungary under the imperial rule of the Habsburgs. In subsequent years, the Hungarian Diet was moved to Bratislava and the city became the coronation place for Hungarian kings and queens. The strategic, political and cultural importance of Bratislava reached its peak in the 18th century after the coronation of Maria Theresa.[28] However, a period of extreme significance was followed by the decrease of the city's weight in the Empire.

By the middle of the 19th century, Bratislava was still culturally and politically essential to many people in the state, but its influence and imperial status could not be compared to that of Budapest, Vienna or Prague. Bratislava was no more the coronation place for the Hungarian monarchs or a vitally important Austrian centre, and its image started changing rapidly through the magyarisation of the population, the opposition of the Slovak national movement and the distinct voices of its German population. The current article concentrates on the ways and strategies these three groups used in order to mark their urban space. Highlighting the necessity of examining the interconnections between

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[23] Cyril Edwin Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 13-18.

[24] Bratislava's socio-economic development demonstrates that the city was hardly a backward town. Pieter Van Duin, *Central European Crossroads: Social Democracy and National Revolution in Bratislava (Pressburg), 1867-1921* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Vladimír Horváth, Darina Lehotská, and Ján Pleva, *Dejiny Bratislavy* [The history of Bratislava] (Bratislava: Obzor, 1979).

[25] Anton Špiesz, *Bratislava v stredoveku* [Bratislava in the Middle Ages] (Bratislava: Perfekt, 2001), 9-11.

[26] Van Duin, 1-4.

[27] Ján Lacika, *Bratislava*. *Poznávame Slovensko* [Bratislava. Getting to know Slovakia] (Bratislava: Dajama, 2000), 62-65.

[28] Ibid., 32-36.

them, one may refer also to "the inclusion of its history with a broader framework, in our case, Central European developments".[29]

In Bratislava, beginning almost from its first mention in the chronicles in 907,[30] one may find three dominant groups, the presence of which has been shaping the image of the city for centuries: these are the Hungarians, the Germans and the Slovaks. The Renaissance burial monuments of the representatives of the Hungarian aristocracy can be found in St. Martin's cathedral [31] (from 1563 to 1830 the coronation church of the Kingdom of Hungary) along with the later masterpiece of Georg Rafael Donner,[32] a famous Austrian baroque sculptor. And in the same city some decades later, a young Slovak poet Janko Matúška wrote a profoundly patriotic poem reacting to the dismissal of his much-respected teacher Ľudovít Štúr from Bratislava Lutheran Lyceum.[33] The poem "Lightning over the Tatras" later became the Slovak national anthem.[34] Artistic activity and political life of people who belonged to different cultures was flourishing within one city, whose destiny they shaped. Therefore, the city represented a border on a mental map and a competition that took place between groups adhering to different types of agendas and propagating them in their pursuit of culturally and politically appropriating a city.

In Bratislava the three major national groups have been coexisting for centuries, however, it was the middle and the second half of the 19th century that sharpened the distinctions between them resulting in active Magyarisation, Slovak and (much less fervent) German resistance to it. This period of Bratislava's history is essential for the understanding of its later development, as well as for perceiving the reasons that explain why the city finally became a Slovak capital with predominantly Slovak (or "Slovakised") population.[35]

In the current work, Bratislava is presented as a place whose destiny in the 19th century was created by various representatives of its three dominant national groups. The influence of the city's Jewish population, although it did exist, will be omitted, because of its partial autarchy and its much-outnumbered status.[36] The main attention will be focused on the forming Slovak, Hungarian and German identities and their reflections in the city's past and present of the middle of the 19th century. The key events of the 20th century and their analysis is left aside, although some references to them have to be made in the course of analysis.

The amount of the existing literature regarding Bratislava as its main subject can hardly be considered exhaustive. Mikuláš Gažo's and Štefan Holčík's book *Bratislava pred sto rokmi a dnes*[37] [Bratislava one hundred years ago and nowadays] brings up to the

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[29] Eva Kowalská, „The Creation of Modern Society in Slovakia and Its Evaluation in Slovak Historiography," in *Nations, Identities, Historical Consciousness: Volume Dedicated to Prof. Miroslav Hroch* (Praha: Seminář Obecných Dějin Při Ústavu Světových Dějin FF UK, 1997), 68.

[30] Peter Salner, "Ethnic Polarisation in an Ethnically Homogeneous Town," *Czech Sociological Review* 9, 2 (2001): 235-246.

[31] Géza Pálffy, „A Pozsonyi Márton templom késő reneszánsz és kora barokk siremlékei (16-17.század)" [The late Renaissance and Baroque burial monuments of the Church of Saint Martin in Bratislava], *A Művészettörténeti Értesítő* [The art history review] LI, (2002), 1-2.szám.

[32] Andor Pigler, *G.R. Donner élete és művészete* [The life and work of G.R. Donner] (Budapest: Bisztrai-Farkas, 1933), 33.

[33] Zdenka Sojková, *Knížka o životě Ľudovíta Štúra* [A book about Ľudovít Štúr's life] (Bratislava: Slovensko-český klub, 2005).

[34] Dušan Kovac, *Kronika Slovenska* [The Slovak Chronicle] (Bratislava: Fortuna Print, 1998).

[35] Political and social history of Bratislava in the 20th century is unfortunately left aside in the current work.

[36] Neurath, 5-8.

[37] Ivan Lacina and Vladimír Tomčík, *Tvoja Bratislava* [Your Bratislava] (Bratislava: Mladé letá, 1992).

reader the atmosphere of a multicultural and a multi-ethnic capital, but one may argue its basis of evidence. The work of Jan Lacika actively used in this text mainly focuses on the Slovak history of the place, but, because of the wideness of the chosen topic, is not detailed enough.[38] It should also be admitted that the work presents mostly Slovak point of view, which does not make it less trustworthy, but only frames its specific character. The two more recent volumes that address the parallel identities of the city and offer valuable ethnographical information are the works of Pieter van Duin and Eleonóra Babejová[39]. Both authors demonstrate good knowledge of sources and inquiring interest in the destiny of the city, however, both of them concentrate their attention more on the social than on the cultural issues.

Information about Bratislava's architectural and artistic heritage can be found in separate sources that do not regard Bratislava-Pressburg-Pozsony as a special environment that stimulated the artistic activity of its residents and, therefore, reflected their nation and state-building agendas.[40] The topic of Bratislava's architectural landscape and its development during the 19th century as well as the destinies of its earlier monuments is barely touched upon. Moreover, very little is written about the image of Bratislava in the literature of the 19th century. The lack of information and appropriate and easily accessible sources can be viewed as one of the reasons why Bratislava as a city space in the 19th century still requires profound research and exploration.

One of the crucial questions that may arise in the mind of a researcher who is willing to understand the unusual cultural landscape of Bratislava in the middle of the 19th century is connected to the city's historical identity and relates to the its Slovak, German or Hungarian character and the views of its inhabitants. Hence, one should first define the status of the cultural and political heritage of Bratislava in the 19th century.

Slovak visions

Ľubomír Lipták in his article "Bratislava als Hauptstadt der Slowakei" [Bratislava as the capital of Slovakia] notes that the mere notion that the city could be the capital of Slovakia was untypical.[41] The author also underlines that the name Bratislav, Břetislav or Bratislava was used exclusively by Slovak patriots, but not by large masses. Therefore, it was almost unfamiliar to the local Germans and Hungarians, who used their versions of Pressburg and Pozsony instead of a word with distinct Slavic connotations. Another researcher, Jan Lacika, writes that the Czech-sounding version of Břetislav was first suggested in 1839 by Pavol Jozef Šafárik, who connected the name of the city to Břetislav I, the legendary ruler of Bohemia.[42] However, the Slovak version "Bratislava"[43] was attributed to Ľudovít Štúr, who, also being influenced by the Pan-Slavic idea, saw the references to "Slavic brothers" in the meaning of the word. In the middle of the 19th

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[38] Lacika.

[39] Eleonóra Babejová, *Fin-de-siècle Pressburg: Conflict & Cultural Coexistence in Bratislava 1897-1914* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2003); Van Duin.

[40] György Enyedi, *Social Change and Urban Restructuring in Central Europe* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1998), 142.

[41] Ľubomír Liptak, "Bratislava als Hauptstadt der Slowakei" [Bratislava as the capital of Slovakia], in *Heroen, Mythen, Identitaten, Die Slowakei und Osterreich im Vergleich* [Heroes, myths, identities: Slovakia and Austria in comparison], ed.Hannes Stekl and Elena Mannova (Wien: Facultas, 2003), 135.

[42] Lacika, 6.

[43] Ibid.

century, no great and distinct Slovak centre existed.[44] Unlike the neighbouring Prague, which was also multi-ethnic but still home to the Czech national revival of the 19th century and an important Czech centre,[45] Bratislava was the Slovak metropolis only in the minds of a thin layer of Slovak patriots. In Prague, such eminent representatives of the national intelligentsia like Jan Neruda, Karolina Svetla, Vaclav Levy and many others were living and working in their capital, describing it and linking their own destinies to it.[46] Many of them were born in Prague, and those who were not spent significant parts of their lives or died there. This was not the case of Bratislava.

Among the distinguished figures of the Slovak national revival of the middle of the 19th century, it is hard to find anyone born in Bratislava. Pavol Jozef Šafárik was born in Kobeliarovo (Kisfeketepatak) and spent his life living between Serbia, Slovakia, Bohemia, Hungary and Germany. [47] Jan Kollar studied in the Lutheran lyceum in Bratislava, but he was born in Mosovce and lived mostly in Pest[48] and Vienna. Ľudovít Štúr was born in Uhrovec and died in Modra. The romantic symbol of the Slovak national revival were the Tatra mountains, but not the metropolis Bratislava and much less the river Danube.[49] Slovak patriots were idealising their rural roots, but the rural population they were trying to attract cared very little about their Slovak and Slavic roots, as they did about Bratislava. However, Bratislava was present in the minds of Slovak activists.

Štúr unsuccessfully tried to promote his ideas in the Lutheran lyceum, taking the place of the recently deceased eminent professor Juraj Palkovic. Lawyers and patriots influenced by Pan-Slavic ideology like Vendelin Kutlik and Jozef Miloslav Hurban[50] followed the same pattern trying to present Bratislava as *their* Slovak capital, but not as a Hungarian or a German place.

The majority of them envisioned a great Slavic union in which the Slovak and the Czech lands would be free from Habsburg power.[51] However, this "romanticised idea" of freedom did not presuppose the expulsion of the representatives of other nationalities from Bratislava (or from Prague, for instance). Not a single eminent Slovak figure in the middle of the 19th century expressed a thought of sending the Germans and the Hungarians away from Bratislava. Their reluctance can be easily explained by their marginal position. While the German core-group and the Hungarian "core-group-to-be" were dwelling in Pozsony and Pressburg forming its upper social strata, the Slovak intellectuals were

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[44] Dušan Kováč, *Nemecko a nemecká menšina na Slovensku (1871-1945)* [Germany and the German minority in Slovakia (1871-1945)] (Bratislava: Veda, 1991), 16-18.

[45] For a general overview, see J. F. N Bradley, *Czech Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Boulder: East European Monographs), 1984.

[46] Matthew Campbell, *The Voice of the People Writing the European Folk Revival, 1760-1914* (London: Anthem Press, 2012), 35-45.

[47] Hugh Chisholm, "Schafarik, Pavel Josef," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

[48] Peter Petro, *A History of Slovak Literature* (McGill Queens's University Press, 1995), 66.

[49] Ľubomír Lipták, "Die Tatra im Slowakischen Bewusstsein" [The Tatra mountains in the Slovak consciousness], in *Heroen, Mythen, Identitaten, Die Slowakei und Osterreich im Vergleich* [Heroes, myths, identities. Slovakia and Austria in comparison], ed. Hannes Stekl and Elena Mannova (Wien: Facultas, 2003), 265.

[50] Babejová, *Fin-de-siècle Pressburg*, 95.

[51] As one of the most prominent examples, see Joseph M. Kirschbaum, *Pan-Slavism in Slovak Literature: Ján Kollár - Slovak Poet of Panslavism (1793-1852)* (Cleveland: Slovak Institute, 1966).

mainly concentrated on resistance and identity forging,[52] but had no means of expanding their state-building project further.

The apex of their "vision" was an idealised pan-Slavic union or, generally, recognition of a Slovak nation.[53] In this case, the "recognition" was a crucial notion, since the status of the Slovaks was that of an "unrecognised" and largely ignored "ethnic group" with less long-lasting nation-forging disputes than the Germans and fewer means to assert their national status than the Hungarians.[54] The most obvious challenge they were facing was "recognition", since any Slovak "vision" of Bratislava could only come true with the change of the status of the Slovak nation either within the borders of Austria-Hungary or separately.

In her book dedicated to Bratislava, Eleonóra Babejová sheds light on the influence of the social situation on the city's population, while highlighting a special "Pressburger identity" and describing it in the following way: "Its main components were multi-linguality, lack of specific ethnic identification and ascription, and loyalty to Pressburg".[55] This specific identity had been deeply enrooted in the minds of many of the city's inhabitants and even visitors who spent a significant amount of time in the city. Among such "Pressburgers" of the 18th century were Johann Nepomuk Hummel, an Austrian composer and pianist brought up within the German culture, an inventor of Hungarian origin, Wolfgang von Kempelen, a German-Austrian sculptor Franz Xaver Messerschmidt,[56] who moved to Bratislava and spent the last years of his life in the city. Another eminent Austrian sculptor, Georg Raphael Donner, also lived in Bratislava, although he was not born and did not die there. Nevertheless, he did hold the city as his own home and his influence on the works and style of many Slovak and Hungarian sculptors can hardly be overestimated.[57] These examples are numerous, and they all prove that in the18th century the "Pressburger" identity was strong and did exist. One could still feel it in the middle of the 19th; however, that was the period when the notions of "appurtenance" and "identity" became involved with the nationalist ideology, switching accents from "the identity of a citizen" to that of a Slovak, Hungarian or German.

One cannot assert that before the revolution of 1848 or the establishment of the Dual-monarchy the inhabitants of Bratislava did not know that they were Hungarian nobles, German burgers or Slovak peasants coming from the countryside. They were definitely aware of their origins: but the "Pressburger" identity was the main one and it dominated city life. The picture remained similar, but not the same in the middle of the 19th century when the local Hungarians and Slovaks (and to a lesser-extent Germans) began to care much more about their national identity and attempted to promote Bratislava with its

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[52] György Csepeli, *Grappling with National Identity: How Nations See Each Other in Central Europe* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000).

[53] Kirschbaum, *Pan-Slavism*, 13.

[54] Kowalská, 67-74.

[55] Babejová, 85.

[56] Mária Potzl-Maliková, *Franz Xaver Messerschmidt a záhada jeho charakterových hláv* [Franz Xaver Messerschmidt and the puzzle of his characteristic heads] (Bratislava: Albert Marenčin Vydavatel'stvo), 2004.

[57] Darina Chudomelková, *Donner a jeho okruh na Slovensku* [Donner and his circle in Slovakia] (Bratislava: Tvar, 1954). This work is a rare example of an investigation of Donner's influences in Slovak and Hungarian art with many examples of works created by artists living in Bratislava and imitating Donner's masterpieces or learning from him. The author also provides the reader with many valuable quatations illustrating the attitude of Donner's circle to the great sculptor and his contribution to the development of art in Central Europe.

landmarks as "their" city. [58] That competition dramatically changed the statuses of the privileged Germans by enhancing the city's Hungarian population. And, while the Germans were to a large extent uneager and unprepared to face Hungarisation, the Slovaks, accustomed to being a "marginalised" and "unrecognised" group were ready to resist it.

Mapping Hungary, shifting accents, erasing borders

The Hungarian element became extremely active after the establishment of the Dual-Monarchy, when the Hungarians seized being a non-core group and achieved the status similar to the Germanic inhabitants of the empire.[59] Eleonóra Babejová points out that after a short period of stagnation and a series of epidemics, Bratislava gained part of its former prestige because of the administrative changes in 1867. [60] The dominant role belonged to Budapest, but Pozsony was still significant for the Hungarians because of its strongly associated past with that of the Hungarian nation, granting it a place in the Hungarian nation-building program. In addition, the benevolent location between Vienna and Budapest, good drinking water and fresh air also contributed to the city's growing significance.[61]

Before referring to the Magyarisation of the city and the activities of the Hungarian nationalistic circles, one should briefly regard the history of the city viewed by its Hungarian and German population. In his impressive work about the history of Pozsony / Pressburg published in 1903, both in Hungarian and in German, Tivadar Ortvai thoroughly explores the history of the city, giving quotations from numerous sources and skilfully describing almost all the aspects of its past.[62] He professionally deals with the collected materials, but one aspect may still surprise the reader. The author concentrates only on the Hungarian legacy and heritage of the city. He does admit the existence of the Germans, but the presence of the Slovaks passes almost unnoticed in his massive work.

Two years later another interesting book was published. In 1905 Emil Kumlik created "Pozsony und der Freiheitskampf 1848-49" [Bratislava and the struggle for freedom]. [63] One may probably consider the author a representative of the old "Pressburger" identity: he is of Slovak origin, he writes in German and he uses the Hungarian name "Pozsony" instead of the German name "Pressburg". In his work, he focuses mostly on unity, thinking of Bratislava as a place where all three cultures create one identity out of parallel ones. The first, the impressive study of Tivadar Ortvay, is an example of the Hungarian view of Bratislava's history, typical not only for the turn of the centuries, but also for the period after the establishment of the dual monarchy, the second, although published already in the 20th century, preserves the atmosphere of Imperial Austrian-German culture, that describes the way the German middle-class population viewed it, a sort of a nostalgic "multicultural ideal".

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[58] Peter Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 7.

[59] Arthur James May, *The Hapsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).

[60] Babejová, 22.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ortvay Tivadár, *Pozsony város története* [The history of Bratislava] (Pozsony: 1903). 2nd volume. The current article refers to the second volume, although there are three of them. Two are available in Hungarian and the third one could be found only in German.

[63] Emil Kumlik, *Pozsony und der Freiheitskampf 1848-49* [Bratislava and the struggle for freedom], (Pozsony: K. Stampfel. 1905).

Pieter van Duin in his profound study dedicated to Bratislava, brilliantly describes the methods and the consequences of the Magyarisation of the city.[64] The oppressive program was introduced only after the establishment of the dual monarchy, when Hungarian nationalists acquired enough rights to conduct their own policy. The Slavs and the Romanians, although they did make attempts to get autonomy and recognition of their national rights in the Empire,[65] never managed to gain the status of Hungary with its political and social-liberties.[66] However, in the Slovak case, even the intellectuals and representatives of the "National revival" were far from being united, not even taking into account the rural masses, who seemed to express little interest for the national cause.

Ľudovít Štúr and his circle, who believed in creation of Slovakia with Slovak language not being considered a dialect or a version of Czech or any other Slavonic language, but still joint with its Slavic brothers, did not achieve any success in agitating the rural Slovak-speaking people. Štúr's dreams and hopes crashed after the events of 1848-49. His bitter disappointment became even more desperate in the beginning of the fifties. His personal tragedy can be fully perceived only after realising that his contemporaries could never bring his romanticised national ideas to life.[67] Ľudovít Štúr died in a hunting accident near Modra some years later. After his tragic death, his ideas began to spread more rapidly than ever before, laying the foundation of the Slovak national ideology.[68]

Pieter van Duin and Eleonóra Babejová both describe in great detail the severe methods of Magyarisation introduced in the city that, however, were not unique for Bratislava. The "Magyarisation" of Croatia represents a similar story with the same goals of appropriating urban spaces primarily under the banner of modernisation.[69] Bratislava, similarly to a number of multinational spaces in other parts of Greater Hungary was supposed to become a city of one language and people loyal to this language and to the Hungarian state. However, one should notice that those goals were originally introduced not because of the national hatred towards one's nationality, but because of the need of the country's industrial modernisation and a dominance of an idea of a nation-state rather than adherence to the federative principles. Without one official language and a "simplified" identity, modernisation of a state would have been an unlikely prospect.[70] As David P. Caleo explains it: "In short, higher human progress required accepting and relishing the diversity of nations. But maintaining that diversity meant a world of nation-states with all

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[64] Van Duin, 25-113.

[65] On the case of Romanian national movement in Austro-Hungarian Transylvania, see Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1860-1914* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Pub. House, 1999). For further information on the Serbian movement in Voivodina and its reactions to Magyarisation, see Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 255-266.

[66] Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening*, 52. Ľudovít Štúr and his Young Slovaks called for Slovak autonomy first within Hungary and later as a separate crown land of the Habsburg monarchy.

[67] Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the German Nation: Collective Identity in an Axial Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80-95.

[68] Ibid.

[69] For an interesting case of Croatian resistance to Austro-Hungarian dominance, see Stefano Petrungaro, "Fire and Honor. On the Comparability of Popular Protests in Late 19th Century Croatia-Slavonia," in Sabine Rutar, *Beyond the Balkans. Towards an Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe* (Berlin: Lit, 2014), 247-265.

[70] Myron Weiner, *Modernization; the Dynamics of Growth* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 23.

its innate potential for conflict".[71] This fact explains to some extent the reason for the establishment of such strategy that soon became very oppressive.

While in the fifties the people who declared themselves Hungarians were outnumbered by the German majority and a rather large number of Slovaks, by the beginning of the 20th century the situation changed completely, the Hungarians being the majority in the city.[72] The main "victims" of this process, however, were not the Slovaks, whose position in the state was much weaker, but the prosperous educated middle-class Germans. Eleonóra Babejová explains it the following way: "Pressburg was seen as a defensive bastion on Hungary's frontier against the spreading Germanisation".[73] The fight against Germanisation and the widely spread German language in the city was made the priority of the nationalistic Toldy kor, an overly patriotic Hungarian organisation active in the city. The same chauvinistic group also organised the ostracism of a Slovak lawyer and Professor Vendelin Kutlik, who shared pan-Slavic views. The Hungarian nationalistic students even broke the windows of his house in Bratislava.[74]

The position of the local Germans was politically and culturally better than that of the Slovaks, since had never been "officially" marginalised. Their transformation into an "unwanted" non-core group was much more subtle. A person could be accused of Pan-Slavic views and arrested even for reading a Slovak book in public in Pozsony.[75] One could never imagine the same being done to a German Pressburger. Nevertheless, in the 60s Pan-Germanism became a threat just as great as Pan-Slavism.[76] Moreover, unlike the Slovaks, used to being a non-core group in opposition, the Germans were unprepared to face the methods of rapid Magyarisation. Being a privileged nation, who could freely speak their language, establish schools and being the majority in the city, they suddenly became subjects to a de-nationalising process. Middle-class Germans wanted to preserve their position in the city and many of them did finally adopt Hungarian identity.[77]

However, it should be underlined that even the ethnic Hungarian population of the kingdom of Hungary had internal debates regarding the methods and aims of Magyarisation. Such people as Lajos Mocsary of the Independence party strongly criticised the Hungarian Prime Minister Kalman Tisza[78] and his attempt not to recognize the multi-ethnic character of the kingdom. Nevertheless, since "modernisation" was viewed as an ultimate goal of the project, the policy continued to flourish, being "reversed" only with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Another important aspect that should be explained in order to fully clarify the ethnic situation in Pozsony after the establishment of the Dual monarchy is that the Magyar chauvinism was not one based on blood, origin and social status, but one defined

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[71] David. P. Calleo, "Reflections on the Idea of a Nation-state," in *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, ed. Charles A. Kupchan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 23.

[72] Van Duin, 31-43.

[73] Babejová, 156.

[74] Ibid., 98.

[75] Ibid. Also, for further details on the policy of Magyarisation see Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 136-139.

[76] Van Duin, 80-81.

[77] The adoption of a "convenient" Hungarian identity (that in many cases was also easily reversed with the change in the core-group statuses) was common not only in Slovakia, but also in Transylvania, Croatia etc. See, Ioan Lupaş, *The Hungarian Policy of Magyarization* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1992), 17-20.

[78] Van Duin, 31.

by language and devotion to Hungary.[79] In the 19th century those who felt Hungarian and willingly adopted the Hungarian identity and language, were considered Hungarians by society. For this reason, even such eminent people like Hungarian revolutionary and recognised national hero Lajos Kosuth who denied the existence of the Slovak nation being of Slovak origin himself, [80] could become famous Hungarians and contribute to the cultural and political development of the Hungarian nation. The key-notion in this case was the lack of knowledge and understanding, since Kossuth's non-recognition of Slovaks was truly motivated by his misconception of the entire idea of "being a Slovak", but not by his "extreme Hungarian chauvinism".

Peter Brock notes that "Magyar nationalism was linked primarily to the state, not to the language"[81], one still can doubt that affirmation regarding the principles of the Magyarisation in Pozsony, oriented mostly on the introduction of Hungarian into all spheres of life in the city. The national state did count, but the road to a completely united society went through the unification of the language. In Pozsony a person was considered a Magyar if he or she saw Hungarian primarily as their Mother tongue regardless of one's ethnic background.

Another important aspect that should not be omitted is the social position of the people who became subjects to Magyarisation. Van Duin's book clarifies that the Slovaks were mostly servants, sellers, workers or peasants coming from neighbouring villages and in some cases, representatives of the Germanised lower middle class, while the German population made part of the Upper Middle class. The local Hungarians were either the descendants of the noble families or the important intellectual elite of the city.[82] However, that does not mean that there were no Hungarian or German workers in the city, who felt that their interests coincided more with those of the Slovak low-class people than with those of the more prosperous layers of Hungarian and German population. They did exist and that fact made the national picture more complicated and mixed with the contradictions not only between different nationalities, but also between different social strata. The privileged class was more inclined to accept their new status, since they had more to loose and gain by becoming part of the core-group.[83] Since the German mainly made up the Upper Middle Class, they were more exposed to active Magyarisation and had much less experience in dealing with assimilation than the local Slovaks.

German legacies and non-resistance

The Germans view on their Pressburg seems to be to some extent different from that of the Slovaks and the Hungarians. Their language had always been recognised in the

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[79] George Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism, 1791-1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[80] Piotr Stefan Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1992), 50-63; Paul Lendvai, *Tisíc let Maďarského národa* [Thousand years of the Hungarian people] (Praha: Academia, 2002), 457. An example of another famous Hungarian politician, writer and publicist of a Slavic origin could be a Croat-Slovak Táncsics Mihály.

[81] Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening*, 38.

[82] For a more detailed picture, see Sándor Varga, Magyarok Szlovákiában: Adatok, Dokumentumok, Tanulmányok [Hungarians in Slovakia: Data, Documents, Studies] (Bratislava: Nemzetiségi Dokumentációs Centrum, 1993).

[83] Christian Promitzer, *(Hidden) Minorities: Language and Ethnic Identity between Central Europe and the Balkans* (Wien: Lit, 2009), 75-109. Since the Germans had never been seen as minority, unlike many other groups inhabiting the empire, they appeared to be much less prepared to "resist" it.

Empire as well as their existence, for a long period of time they were officially and unarguably the majority in the city. Moreover, their enormous impact on the "image" of the cityscape could not remain unnoticed by the Slovaks and the Hungarians: the architectural portrait of Bratislava seems to be most influenced by its German population.[84] German "Pressburg" was present not only in the name of the German-language newspapers, it was in the architectural image of the city, an obvious "marker", yet, never used as such by the German population slowly departing to the margins of their city's political life.

Pressburg did possess the reminiscences of the late gothic and renaissance art, which was very important for the city's landscape[85] (like St. Martin's cathedral with its interior, for instance), but it was the baroque oriented to the Austrian Imperial fashion that was flourishing in the city. Its bloom resulted in the construction of numerous palaces of Hungarian and German nobles (Grossalkowich palace, Kutscherfeld palace, Erdody palace, etc.). In his massive work dedicated to the influences of the Austrian baroque on the contemporary Slovak lands, Jan Papco constantly notes the architectural masterpieces created under the Austrian influence and in most cases by Austrian-German architects had a great impact on the Slovak population of the city.[86] Without them, one can hardly imagine the development of any Slovak architectural school in Pressburg.

The middle of the 19th century, still aware of its rich baroque heritage, gradually turned Presburg to historicism. Situated extremely close to Vienna, the city was again trying to imitate the tendencies spread in the Imperial capital of the time. However, an inquiring observer could still notice that a paradigm shift had occurred: the important city buildings were projected not only by the Germans, but also by the Hungarians and even the Slovaks, who were referring to the Austrian tradition.[87] That tradition did not get "privatised" by the local Germans. Instead, they remained rather indifferent to its influence on the Slovak and Hungarian developments.

One of the results of such a development was a Slovak architects Milan Michal Harminc, born in the middle of the 19th century, who worked in Budapest, became famous and died in Pressburg.[88] He later projected the main building of the Slovak national museum. Being brought up within the Habsburg Empire, Harminc became one of those who contributed to the development of historicism in Pressburg. Some time before Harminc started his career, the Viennese architects, Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann

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[84] Jörg Garms, "Die Residenz von Pressburg. Bau- und Ausstattungsprojekte in mariatheresianischer Zeit" [The residence of Pressburg. Construction and furnishing projects in the time of Maria Theresia], *Barockberichte* [The Baroque reports] 55/56 (2011): 589-602.

[85] J. Bálogh, "A reneszánsz kor művészete" [The renaissance art], in *A magyarországi művészet története* [The history of the Hungarian art], ed. Fülep L. Szerk, D. Dercsényi and A. Zádor (Budapest: Ákademiai Kiádó, 1973), 191-256, and see also Pálffy.

[86] Ján Papco, *Rakúsky Barok a Slovensko: Nevé Nálezy, Atribúcie / Österreichisches Barock Und Die Slowakei: Neue Funde, Attributionen* [The Austrian Barique and Slovakia: new findings, atributions] (Prievidza: Patria I, 2003).

[87] Adolph Stiller, *Architektur Slowakei: Impulse Und Reflexion / Architektura Slovenska: Impulzy a Reflexia* [The Slovak architecture: impulses and reflections] (Salzburg: Pustet, 2003).

[88] Jana Pohaničová and Matúš Dulla, *Michal Milan Harminc – architekt dvoch storočí 1869 – 1964* [Michal Milan Hraminc, the architect of the two centuries] (Bratislava: Trio Publishing, 2014). It should be noted that Harminc was never very devoted to historicism. During his long lifetime he was experimenting with styles trying to catch up with the new tendencies and epochs.

Helmer, built an elegant neo-renaissance Opera House in Pressburg.[89] Their company was the one creating theatres and opera Houses almost everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Bratislava did not become an exception. Its Opera House was created with the latest imperial trends of the epoch. Moreover, among the famous Hungarian architects active in Bratislava one should definitely mention Ignac Álpar as one of the most well known, but not the only one.[90] Although a Hungarian by origin, Álpar was still dwelling within the boundaries of Austrian and German architectural traditions, perceiving the mixed character of the city and contributing to its development. The German traditions were very alive in the minds of the people changing Pressburg's landscape, yet, they slowly turned it into "Hungarian" and "Slovak", while the German intellectual circle did not invest much energy in justifying its claims over Pressburg by relating to its architectural landmarks. Therefore, one may see the indifference of the German population of Pressburg as the most important key-factor of their subsequent loss of influence and status of a core-group.[91] While both Slovaks and Hungarians willingly adopted and altered German cultural cityscape, the German population did not get involved in the identity debates, allowing two other groups to take the dominant position.

In the second half of the 19th century even under the influence of Magyarisation (that was overturned as quickly as it was introduced later in the 20th century), Austrian/German architectural and linguistic domination and the Slovak national movement, the Germans turned out to be unprepared to adhere to their core-group status. The local Slovaks, being used to their marginal position, quickly adopted the lessons of Hungarisation and applied them later, when they in their turn became a core group. The Germans, on the other hand, were more successful in blending in with the core-group, while highlighting primarily their "Pressburger" identity, not the "national" one. As an example, the story provided by Eleonóra Babejová may be presented. In her book, the author writes about the sad destiny of a Pan-Slavist and a lawyer Vendelin Kutlik and another lawyer and Slovak patriot sharing the same views, Michal Mudron, who was much more successful in his life than Kutlik. The author explains this, pointing out that Mudron's Slovak identity did not contradict with his Pressburger identity. Therefore he was able to integrate easier. The combination of these two qualities made him a real citizen of Pressburg-Pozsony-Bratislava, respected and recognised not only by the Slovaks, but also by the Germans and the Hungarians.[92] Therefore, he was able to integrate easier into the core-group, serving as a mediator and paving a path for the future Slovakisation, while many of his compatriots remained "marginalised".

Bratislava's case is very specific: the city situated in the midst of the predominantly Slavic lands and still considered first a Hungarian and then a German centre, had to overcome several historical "obstacles" to become a Slovak capital. Examining Bratislava, one should take into account the fact that it has usually remained in

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[89] Jacek Purchla, *Theatre Architecture of the Late 19th Century in Central Europe* (Cracow: International Cultural Centre, 1993), 20, 29, 42.

[90] Alpar projected several schools in Bratislava and achieved a big success in the city. For further detail, see Martin Kusý, *Architektúra na Slovensku 1848-1918* [Architecture in Slovakia 1848-1918] (Bradlo, 1995).

[91] The aftermath of the end of the 19th century events is analysed in Andreas Schriefer, *Deutsche, Slowaken und Magyaren im Spiegel deutschsprachiger historischer Zeitungen und Zeitschriften in der Slowakei* [The Germans, the Slovaks and the Hungarians in the mirror of the German historical journals and news papers in Slovakia] (Komárno: Forum Institute, 2007).

[92] Babejová, 96-98.

the shadow of the neighbouring metropolises (especially in the 19th century),[93] although frequented by eminent individuals almost from all the corners of the Habsburg Empire, it was still considered to be less important than Vienna, Budapest or Prague. Bratislava may be compared to some extent to those three cities: it is multinational like Prague or Vienna, the imperial capital, it is linked to the Danube and bears the reminiscences of the Hungarian aristocratic culture just like Budapest, but it was not a centre, but a "mental borderland", contested by national groups just the way borderlands usually are. Its multinational character is more distinct than that of the 19th century national capitals, its geographical position is too close to Vienna and its Hungarian element was far more active than the Slovak was in the second half of the 19th century.

Conclusions

The example of Bratislava's multiple identities in the 19th century and their interpretations by the three national groups inhabiting the city clearly demonstrates the dominant role of an active state-building agenda in the process of claiming a borderland - geographical, mental or cultural. Independently of the disputed territory's character, the idea of resistance remains a driving mechanism essential for a group's successful claim. Moreover, borders become categories that are socially produced within the multinational and multicultural environment of Bratislava, a city not situated on a geographical boundary separating several states. Therefore, the Slovaks, the Hungarians and the Germans mostly relied on cultural, political, linguistic and class differences in order to brand their presence in the city as dominant. While before the 19th century various class divisions were seen as decisive, the series of "national revivals" turned cultural and linguistic markers into main indicators of belonging to a certain group, highlighting identities that had previously been less important. Those markers were used by Bratislava's inhabitants as mobilising factors that could "activate" the national group from within.

The city's diverse character and multiple legacies were successfully claimed by groups most accustomed to "resisting" its "privileged" and "better standing" opponents. As a result, the Slovaks, as the title of Kirschbaum's book eloquently puts it,[94] were well prepared for struggling against more advantaged core-groups primarily due to their predominantly peasant background and their lower social and political status in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Therefore, the previously underestimated Slovak population was used to resisting assimilation attempts and quickly reversed them after gaining the status of a core-group in the city. Positioning Bratislava as an essential element of their state-building agenda, the Slovaks finally turned it into their capital in the beginning of the 20th century following several decades of active identity debates.

Bratislava's identities, contested by three major groups inhabiting the city in the 19th century, did not disappear, dissolve or turn to be entirely Slovak. After Bratislava stopped being an identity "battleground", the accented features of its cityscape and lifestyle shifted, leaving the Slovak legacies more highlighted than the Hungarian and the German ones. Some decades would pass before Bratislava would turn into an almost mono-ethnic Slovak city (at least considered mono-ethnic)[95] but its past would still be influential within it. It remained a "borderland" with its own ethnic and cultural mixture, which produced a Slovak capital in 1919.

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[93] For further information on the idea of "imperial representation," see Felix Driver, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[94] Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia*.

[95] Salner, 235-237.

Branded as a multicultural crossroad nowadays, Bratislava is a cultural border, although much less contested than in the second half of the 19th century. This last remark may lead the argument to a slightly different direction, making the case of Bratislava not simply a story of a city, where cultural and ethnic boundaries intersect, but making the Slovak state itself a place, where these overlapping identities create a dominant culture.

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