Resistance to the securitisation of migration in Hungary: the MIGSZOL network as a case of radical cosmopolitics[1]

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Hungary has been perceived by many recently as a bastion of xenophobic policies. Orban's government has passed new asylum amendments and has been engaging in openly xenophobic rhetoric, the aim of which appears to be the scapegoating of refugees and migrants for the troubles that Hungarian society is currently facing. These moves have helped to portray these migrants and refugees as a threat both to Hungarian and European society – in other words, to securitize them.

On the other hand, however, islands of resistance can be seen rising. We have seen an anti-governmental billboard campaign, numerous demonstrations, and an amazing wave of humanitarian effort. The aim of this paper is to analyze one specific stream of resistance to the securitization of migration in Hungary – the Migszol movement – through the lens of so called Radical cosmopolitics, the radical normative framework elaborated by James Ingram.

The securitization of migration in the European context

The European context is often described as essentially pro-migrant. According to many it has suppressed the national sovereignty of member states in favor of migrants' rights. This perception is especially vivid in the rhetoric of prime minister Orban. But this superficial view does not correspond to what has actually been happening in the process of cooperation and harmonization of European migration policies. The process of integrating these policies has in fact been one of the main factors in the securitization of migration in Europe.

The roots of perceiving migration through the lens of security lie in the 1980s. It was only then that the economic rhetoric and institutional setting, as the main framework in the field of migration, was replaced.[2] Since then, a series of both discursive and non-discursive moves has been introduced, helping to construct migration as a "natural" security threat.

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[2]   J. Huysmans, *The politics of insecurity: fear, migration and asylum in the EU*, London: Routledge, 2006, p.65.

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One of the first steps in this Europeanization of migration policy was the introduction of the Schengen treaty, which was first to connect migration with the institutional field of security.[3] This trend was later deepened by the shifting of migration to the third pillar of the Maastricht institutional architecture – together with issues of terrorism, international crime, drugs and other police and judicial concerns.

Another important step was the communitarization of migration in the treaty of Amsterdam, without abandoning the security understanding of it.[4] The events of September 11th influenced the securitization of migration as it partly connected migration with anti-terrorist measures.[5]

There have been many more measures and events which have contributed to characterizing migration as a security issue – e.g. the militarization of borders; building fences in Greece; Bulgaria and Spanish enclaves in North Africa; the absence of true search and rescue naval missions; and the latest attempts to sink smugglers' boats – but it is not necessary to list them all here. The goal of this short overview is to provide a context, and to make it clear that, generally speaking, the process of harmonization of migration policies in the European Union amounts to a process of securitization of the issue, and is in dialectical relation with similar processes which have been going on within member states, e.g. Hungary under the current regime.

Securitization of migration in Hungary

Even though the consequences of Orban's wish to securitize migration became visible for the most part only in the last couple of months, his anti-migration stance has been quite obvious for some time. This chapter will review the arrangements he has made in this regard, and understand them as a prominent example of the process of securitization of the issue that has been going on in the whole of Europe.

It was back in the summer of 2013 that the Orban government passed new asylum law amendments, which introduced the detention of asylum seekers for up to six months, making judicial control of decisions regarding unlawful asylum practically impossible.[6]

His rhetorical campaign blaming migrants for the troubles of Hungary started minimally in the spring of 2014, when Orban claimed:
> We want a Europe that recognizes that any community that is incapable of biologically preserving itself is doomed to disappear. We do not want any policies that back immigration, nor do we want migrating masses that cause tension that is impossible to contain.[7]

[3] J. Huysmans, "The European Union and the securitization of migration," *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 38, No. 5, 2000, p. 752; L. Gabrielli, "Securitization of migration and Human Rights: frictions at the southern EU borders and beyond," *Urban People* Vol. 16, No. 2, 2014, p. 312.

[4] D. van Dijck, "Is the EU policy on illegal immigration securitized? Yes of course!" Paper presented at third Pan-European Conference on EU politics, Istanbul, 2006, p. 14.

[5] T. Faist, "The migration-security nexus. International migration and security before and after 9/11," *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations* Vol 4, No. 3, 2004, p. 3.

[6] "Hungary as a country of asylum. Observations on the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in Hungary," UNHCR, 2012. Available online: http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=4f9167db2 (accessed on August 27, 2015).

[7] "PM Orbán: 'We are heading towards the center'," *Ference Kumin Blog,* May 14, 2014. Available online: http://ferenckumin.tumblr.com/post/85725934204/pm-orb%C3%A1n-we-are-heading-toward-the-centre (accessed on August 27, 2015).

He also misused the tragedy of Charlie Hebdo and the subsequent solidarity march for yet another discursive securitizing move: "While I am prime minister, Hungary will definitely not become an immigration destination. We don't want to see significantly sized minorities with different cultural characteristics and backgrounds among us. We want to keep Hungary as Hungary."[8]

But it is only in the last couple of months that we have witnessed a series of systematic anti-migration measures in Hungary.

Probably the most visible step of these measures has been the plan to build a fence along the 175 kilometer-long border with Serbia, in order to shut down the movement of refugees – mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq – into the European Union. This plan was announced on June 17th and the estimated cost is around 100 million euros.[9]. The fence could be finished by Ocotober 2015.

The government justifies the new fence as a necessary and legitimate measure in order to protect and preserve European and Hungarian identity, characterizing the migration using dehumanizing metaphors like "flood"[10] or "hords."[11] We need to realize that such moves are in no way unique to Hungary. The use of negative metaphors for migration has proved to play major role in the securitization of migration in many countries, both European and non-European. And the fence that is being built is in no way the first one to appear on the external borders of the EU. Similar walls have been erected between Greece and Turkey, Bulgaria and Turkey, and around the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Mellila.

While it is the fence that has provoked the biggest public outrage, this is only one of many recent acts of securitization and abjectification of refugees and migrants. The Hungarian authorities under the leadership of Orban have applied a series of both discursive and non-discursive moves which have characterized refugees and migrants as a threat.

One of them was the so called National consultation on migration and terrorism.[12] The government sent out eight million questionnaires in May with questions such as: "According to some, immigration, which is badly handled by Brussels, is connected with the expansion of terrorism. Do you agree with this opinion?"[13] This deliberate artificial link between the movement of people and violence is without doubt one of the most overtly xenophobic acts of European "elites" in power, and replicates a "certified" way of constructing the threatening figure of a migrant-terrorist. On the other hand, not even do Orban's voters buy into such an

[8]   "Orbán to attend Sunday commemoration for Paris victims," *Politics.hu*, January 11, 2015. Available online: http://www.politics.hu/20150111/orban-to-attend-sunday-commemoration-for-paris-victims/ (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[9]   "Hungary races to build border fence as migrants keep coming," *BBC*, August 6, 2015. Available online: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33802453 (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[10] "Migrants on Hungary's border fence: 'This wall, we will not accept it'," *Guardian*, June 22, 2015. Available online: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/migrants-hungary-border-fence-wall-serbia (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[11] "Hungary races to build border fence as migrants keep coming," *BBC*, August 6, 2015. Available online: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33802453 (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[12] "Hungary: Government's national consultation on immigration and terrorism creates widespread debate," European Commission, May 31, 2015. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/hungary-governments-national-consultation-on-immigration-and-terrorism-creates-widespread-debate?pdf=1 (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[13] "Translation of the national consulation," *Migszol*. Available online: http://www.migszol.com/ (accessed on August 27, 2015).

obvious attempt to securitize refugees and migrants, as only 12 per cent of the questionnaires were received back.

Directly connected to this National consultation was an anti-migration billboard campaign. Dozens of billboards all over country were telling refugees and migrants that once in Hungary they cannot take over the jobs of Hungarians, and need to follow Hungarian laws. The populist goal of the campaign was easily recognizable, as the billboards were all written in Hungarian.[14]

Other steps are not so visible yet may have a bigger impact on lives of refugees, being part of the securitizing mechanism and directly connected to the legal amendments mentioned above. The main non-discursive act of securitization is the systematic detention of asylum seekers. According to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee 10 per cent of asylum seekers have been detained, and in April 2014 it was as high as 40 per cent of male asylum seekers.[15]

This speaks against everything that is usual and should be applied to detention in Europe. According human rights treaties and court decisions, detention should be decided upon individually, proportionally and only as an *ultima ratio*. Yet as we can see in Hungary the detention is applied *en masse*, preventively, and the decision whether one ends up in detention or in an open reception centre is made arbitrarily. Moreover, the basic similarity between detention and jail helps to promote the connection between migration and criminality.

Orban has persisted with the asylum law amendments. These became effective in August 2015.[16] Their main aim is basically to eliminate the possibility of asylum seekers being granted any status in Hungary, and to have them physically removed from the country.[17] One of the most dangerous amendments is a newly adopted list of so called safe third countries. Since the list includes Serbia, basically all refugees (as 99 per cent of them come through Serbia) can be deported back without their being able to apply for asylum in the EU. Other key steps were the introduction of an accelerated asylum procedure, and the de facto elimination of any effective judicial remedy against unlawful asylum decisions.[18]

What is important to understand, and what makes Orban's securitizing moves much more obvious, is that Hungary is overwhelmingly a transit country.[19] Up to 90 per cent leave the country in a matter of days. And even though they should be returned back to Hungary according to the Dublin regulation , only 827 out of tens of thousands were returned back in

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14 "Hungary's poster war on immigration," *BBC*, June 14, 2015, Available online: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33091597 (accessed on August 27, 2015).

15 "Information note on asylum-aeekers in detention and in Dublin procedures in Hungary," Hungarian Helsinki Committee. Available online: http://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Hungary-info-update-May-2014.pdf (accessed on August 27, 2015), pp. 6–14.

16 "UNHCR urges Hungary not to amend asylum system in haste," UNHCR, July 3, 2015. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=559641846&query=hungary (accessed on August 27, 2015).

17 "Information Note on Asylum-Seekers in Detention and in Dublin Procedures in Hungary," Hungarian Helsinki Committee. Available online: http://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-Hungary-info-update-May-2014.pdf (accessed on August 27, 2015), pp. 6-14.

18 "Changes to Hungarian asylum law jeopardise access to protection in Hungary," Hungarian Helsinki Committee, August 7, 2015. Available online: http://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC-HU-asylum-law-amendment-2015-August-info-note.pdf (accessed on August 27, 2015).

19 "Hungary: transit country between East and West," *Migration Policy Institute*. Available online: http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/hungary-transit-country-between-east-and-west (accessed on August 27, 2015).

2014.[20] This shows that migration is not actually a threat to Hungary, but is used by Orban as a political instrument for regaining political power, enabled by the context of the European process of securitization of migration.

Radical cosmopolitics

While there may be many ways to conceptualize the "resistance" to securitization, if we want to offer a truly alternative point of view to its practices and state-centric assumptions we must move towards a cosmopolitan way of thinking. Cosmopolitanism has been the main alternative to the dominant political conception for hundreds of years. Yet in recent years there has been solid criticism put forward that the hegemonic articulation of cosmopolitanism – i. e. liberal cosmopolitanism – is actually not an alternative to the modern state-centric international order and its practices, but is rather its mirror image and shares its main assumptions.[21]

However, there has been a clear trend of articulating cosmopolitanism "from below." The new approaches take many different adjectives: critical, political, postcolonial, emancipatory, etc. The approach I would like to present here is the so called Radical cosmopolitics elaborated by James Ingram. Summed up in his book *Radical cosmopolitics: the ethics and politics of democratic universalism,*[22] it is one of the most sophisticated and coherent versions among the alternatives to liberal cosmopolitanism. I claim that Radical cosmopolitics is the most appropriate theoretical framework for understanding the logic and activities of the most interesting example of resistance to securitization in Hungary – the Migszol network.

Ingram's articulation differs from the liberal variety in that it does not try to introduce a universal blueprint for institutions, or universally valid norms, as every instance of cosmopolitanism is always anchored in its own particular context. He conceptualizes cosmopolitanism as the "critical [democratic] politics of Universalisation."[23]

Ingram understands universality – mainly with Bourdieu and Butler – in a negative sense. Universality is to be perceived as a particular challenge to a particular "denial of the logic of universality."[24] He understands universality rather as Universalisation – a process of resistance to asymmetric power relations masked by false Universals on the basis of an evaluative standard of equality.

In his understanding of democracy he makes a similar move. Building on the tradition of radical politics – Arendt, LeFort, Wolin, Abensour – he understands democracy as a transformative political activity against particular injustices and tyrannies, rather than a state-centric set of formal institutions or legal framework.[25]

[20] "Europe's borderlands: violations against migrants and refugees in Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary," *Amnesty International*, July 6, 2015. Available online: http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/europe-s-borderlands-violations-against-migrants-and-refugees-in-macedonia-serbia-and-hungary (accessed on August 27, 2015), p. 54.

[21] R. Walker, "Polis, cosmopolis, politics," *Alternatives: Local, Global, Political* Vol 28, No. 2, 2003, pp. 267–86.

[22] J. Ingram, *Radical cosmopolitics: the ethics and politics of democratic universalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

[23] Ibid, p. 8.

[24] Ibid, p. 7.

[25] Ibid, Chapter 5.

Connecting these two branches of his theory, mainly through the writings of Rancière and Balibar, he constructs radical cosmopolitics. Ingram claims that it is Rancière's writings that help one grasp how a particular democratic struggle can be understood as universalistic. The key is Rancière's understanding of radical equality. He perceives it not as a goal but rather as a presupposition to be acted upon[26] against any social order, as the founding principles of such orders are all completely arbitrary and contingent.[27] This understanding of radical equality is connected to something that Rancière calls subjectification. It is probably the key element in his understanding of radical politics. It is actually the struggle to be perceived as a political subject; to get a voice. Rancière's democratic politics starts with scattered voiceless individuals, who – in the process of dis-identification from roles and places assigned by the order – become a new collective democratic subject. This democratic subject can be seen as an embodiment of the universalistic logic of radical equality, even though it is fighting a very particular struggle in a particular context.

Ingram then concludes that the main aim of radical cosmopolitics is the opening of new and thus far unimagined political spaces through the democratic resistance of the marginalized themselves, who contest the universals used to mask domination.

Resistance of Migszol network as an instance of radical cosmopolitics

The Migszol Csoport or Migrant solidarity group of Hungary is a quite exceptional entity in Central Europe. In the Czech Republic, at least, it would not be possible to find such a movement.

In November 2012, some 120 recognized Afghan refugees were protesting the rules which would push them out of the pre-integration camp in Bicske (Hungary) into de facto homelessness at the end of April 2013.[28] These were joined by long term activists[29] in the field of migration, and on December 1st, 2012 Migszol was founded.

There are a few features of its principles, membership, goals and activities that make Migszol different from other civil society actors. Migszol is grass-roots; a truly informal, nonhierarchical, consensus-driven movement. It does not accept money from the state, political parties, the EU or the corporate world. "This separates us from 95 per cent of everything else going on in the field of migration in Hungary."[30]

It has not built an official structure like other migrants' rights NGOs, and works on volunteer basis only. What also distinguishes it from other movements is that its openly political activism is seeking social and political change regarding migration, not just the better management of migration or humanitarian relief.[31]

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[26] J. Rancière, *Disagreement: politics and philosophy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 33.
[27] Ibid, p. 16.
[28] "Protests by Bicske refugees at the Hungarian Parliament, in November 2012" Migszol. Available online: http://www.migszol.com/blog/archives/12-2012 (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[29] Two of the activists I had a chance to interview – JD and V – have been active in the field long before Migszol existed. The both began in Ireland, in a group called "Residence against racism." They both stress the fact that it is their migrant experience itself that prompted them to this kind of activism.
[30] Interview with JD – one of the activists of the Migszol group, Budapest, July 27, 2015.
[31] Interview with V – one of the activists of the Migszol group, Budapest, July 27, 2015.

What is quite exceptional, and what has induced me to portray Migszol activism as an instance of radical cosmopolitics, is that it started as, and still is, an organization of refugees and migrants as well as Hungarian citizens. So there is an element of subjectification, in that even though the refugees and migrants do not have the full status of citizens, they behave as if they did. They fight for their own rights on the basis of radical equality, and as such they become democratic subjects in the Rancierian sense. Moreover, even when they collaborate with refugee and asylum seekers outside of the group they speak "together with refugees and asylum seekers, not *for* them."[32] It is solidarity that drives Migszol's political activism, not the paternalism typical of most advocacy NGOs nowadays. But there is a downside as well. The main complication is that the membership of the group is very fluid. The original refugees are gone – it being hard to hold on to refugee-activists as they want to move on to other countries – and there are not enough Hungarians either.[33]

I claim that the group's activities and goals can best be interpreted via Ingram's framework of radical cosmopolitics. Since the establishment of the group it has been actively fighting for the proper housing of refugees, as well as for jobs and schooling. After the Hungarian government did not respond to these demands in any way, Migszol took part in a protest in front of the European House in Budapest in February 2013, appealling to EU officials. Decent housing for all in Hungary has become one of the mantras of the movement. The claim that housing and health care belongs not only to citizens but to all human beings, regardless of status, corresponds to action on the basis of the logic of radical equality. According to V "this event was probably the highlight for the group . . . The immigration office [OIN] was afraid of us."[34] But beginning in June 2013 the state pushed back, and rules started to be more restrictive than before. The government planned and later approved stricter rules for detentions of asylum seekers, and even a shorter period for judicial appeal against unlawful asylum decisions. Since then, the anti-detention and anti-deportation (anti-Dublin) campaigns have been among the group's main pillars, in contrast to other NGOs. "We are not one of these liberal NGOs. We are against detentions. Period."[35]

Since that time, Migszol have been visiting detention centers, monitoring violations of the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, raising awareness of the issues, organizing demonstrations, acting in solidarity with hunger strikers, organizing the Migszol language schools, etc. In 2015, the movement has made itself heard in the context of protesting Orban's hate speech regarding Charlie Hebdo, and on some other occasions. Moreover, it has organized two main demonstrations, with rising attendance. One was organized in May, in reaction to the National consultation on "migration and terrorism." The second demonstration took place in July, in opposition to the plan to build a fence along the border with Serbia, and attracted about 800 people.

In addition to such "short term goals" as proper housing and health care, or a better integration system,[36] Migszol holds certain central values which determine its long term goals. The main long term goal or value since its establishment has been freedom of movement for all, and

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32 "Our values," *Migszol*. Available online: https://www.migszol.com/our-values.html (accessed on August 27, 2015).
33 Confirmed by both JD and V.
34 Interview with V – one of the activists of the Migszol group, Budapest, July 27, 2015.
35 Interview with JD – one of the activists of the Migszol group, Budapest, July 27, 2015.
36 Better integration is deeply needed, as summed up by V: "Hungary is unique in the fact they don't really offer much for refugees already recognized . . . it is an implicit way of Hungary saying to people 'do not stay here'." (V)

a Hungary (and world) in which "the label of 'refugee' or 'immigrant' is no longer needed . . . against the notion that people's identities are determined by bureaucratic categories."[37] The goal of the movement is a radically different world, where mobility is perceived as natural and is not securitized by states or other regulatory bodies such as the European Union.

Of course, the movement is not without its problems, and its activists have their complaints about the development of its activities. As JD has summed it up: since the protest of 2013, when the refugees were able to refuse the state something it wanted (i. e. for them to leave the camp), the group has not had any such leverage, and it is easier for the state to simply ignore it.[38]

The particular struggles of Migszol against the specific injustices and denials of universality to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants by the Hungarian authorities, may be perceived as a form of resistance to the fictive universals – of European civilization and nation-state citizenship – that help to mask relations of domination. Migszol resistance is based on the logic of a radical equality, against the arbitrary practice of European and Hungarian securitization of migration. These particular struggles should be perceived as part of the larger struggle for new spheres of political activity for those who nowadays are perceived as not having political subjectivity – abjects/non-citizens. It is a struggle which questions the principle that freedom of movement is guaranteed only for some, based on the arbitrary criteria of European or national citizenship. Thus, even though the struggles of Migszol are local, they may be perceived as part of the bigger fight for making fictive universals more universal than they are today. In this sense, Migszol's local resistance to Hungarian and European securitization may be perceived as radical cosmopolitics, fighting for a radically different world in which movement is neither a crime nor a privilege, but a normal state of affairs.

Conclusion

Even though the current Hungarian regime has been quite successful in feeding xenophobia into the society, it nonetheless provokes resistance. The aim of this paper has been to analyze one of the streams of this resistance through the lens of the theoretical framework of Radical cosmopolitics. I claim that the Migszol movement can be perceived as translating radical cosmopolitics into action. Even though it represents a local movement fighting its particular struggles against a particular injustice, it bases its resistance on the universalistic logic of the radical equality of all refugees, migrants and citizens, all of whom deserve freedom of movement no matter what legal status they have.

Even though such movement has its issues and problems, I believe it represents a valuable island of resistance against one of the worst examples of xenophobia in current-day Europe.

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[37] "Mission statement," *Migszol*. Available online: https://www.migszol.com/mission-statement.html (accessed on August 27, 2015).
[38] Interview with JD – one of the activists of the Migszol group, Budapest, July 27, 2015.