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Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

This book finds that historical narratives institutionalized during early periods of nation-state formation have long-term effects on national identity. These narratives provide points of resistance to alternative citizenship models and can prevent the enactment or implementation of laws. While historical narratives do not make change in citizenship policies impossible, they make the articulation of new forms of national identity and the adaptation of alternative citizenship models significantly more difficult.

As the Turkish case illustrates, organicist historical narratives lead to inclusionary but homogenizing identity models. The dynamic aspect of the narrative along with the integrative capacities it attributes to the Turkish nation enable inclusion. Yet the same narrative with its unidirectional, teleological elements that view change through the desired end point, block the way to ethnic pluralism and recognition. An organicist narrative does not include the means to interpret pluralism in a positive way, and therefore does not legitimize minority recognition.

Contextual historical narratives on the other hand, foster a citizenship model where historical minorities can preserve their group rights and still be considered as part of the nation. Hence, contextualism is conducive for a pluralist and inclusionary national structure. The Austrian case has illustrated that contextualism enables minorities to have a non-threatening, even meaningful existence in the political community. The contextual mode of argument can be fragile however since neither inclusion nor exclusion is defined based on certain principles; each is historically conditioned. The plasticity of contextualism creates a political sphere open to be filled. In the Austrian case, the FPÖ took contextualism in a restricted sense and excluded new minorities whereas the Greens tried to extend the discourse to immigrant minorities by
strategies, such as showing the analogies between old minorities and immigrants and the more recent ones. In this struggle, the mechanistic elements in Austrian history, which depict Austria as the bulwark against the East, shifted the balance to the more restrictive end for new minorities.

As the discussion of mechanistic elements in Austrian official history and their relationship to citizenship and immigration debates in Austria have shown, unlike organicist and contextualist narratives, mechanistic narratives do not provide legitimization for any form of inclusion and therefore are exclusionary towards ethnic minorities.

The restrictive and exclusionary characteristics of mechanism deserve further consideration. Further research on a predominantly mechanistically narrated case to see the links between mechanism and exclusionary minority policies could be fruitful. To show how the findings of this study on mechanistic narratives apply to an out of sample case, I will discuss the application of the mechanistic framework to one case which is often noted for its exclusionary policies toward ethnic minorities. I will focus on the exclusionary aspects of the mechanistic narrative in the context of Israel. The Israeli example shows very well how a state that has neither contextualism, nor organicism as an important part of official history has significant difficulties in implementing policies to integrate and/or recognize minorities as part of the political community.

The mechanistic narrative framework applied to Israel

Studies on Israeli politics have often highlighted the exclusionary characteristics of the Israeli citizenship framework. The exclusionary aspects of the immigration and citizenship policies in Israel are mostly criticized within the context of the Law of Return (1950), which enables the granting of citizenship to people who can prove Jewish heritage, while it is exclusionary toward other groups. Further, unwillingness to accept non-Jewish immigrants is expressed through exclusionary immigration policies such as restrictions on family reunion and the refusal of a secure residence status while Jews are encouraged to immigrate.

In addition to the conditions for immigration and citizenship, policies toward current Arab citizens also receive criticism. Among these policies, Gavison counts the complete exclusion of Israeli Arabs from centers of decision-making related to resources, budgets, and land and the absence of Arabs from the high positions of the Israeli civil service.