

# THE EUROPEAN TRAIL



**Barcelona - June 2010**  
**Ghent - November 2010**  
**Köszeg - June 2011**

## **Editorial**

*'In the end, it is the transaction of meaning by human beings, human beings armed with reason and buttressed by the faith that sense can be made and remade, that makes human culture – and by culture I do not mean surface consensus.'*<sup>1</sup>

*The European Trail. Re-thinking Realities* is a collective project of critical reflection about contemporary society and public culture in Europe – as part of a global world in transition. It is an ongoing conversation between social scientists and researchers about the way we can make sense of notions like 'identity', 'citizenship' and 'culture' within the contemporary European context. Challenged by questions like how to integrate the profound transitions, the disagreement and diversity, the intercultural dynamics and networks in our concepts and imagination, *The European Trail* started to deconstruct and update traditional frames, images and interpretations of 'Europeanness'.

*The European Trail* shifts the focus towards action, by seeing Europe as a common citizens' space. The project unfolds a process of re-thinking the lived realities, by observing and analysing the complexity of today's society in its actual social interactions and the everyday intercultural negotiations. So one of the bottom lines of this project is the perception of Europe as an 'agora of interactions'. It shows a reality that does not function according to nation-state lines, nor as an emanation of static cultural, linguistic, religious identities, but as a lively shared cultural space. The diversity and lack of commonness in many regards is a condition and at the same time a possibility to develop, and even to

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome Bruner (1986), *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press: 159.

discover, a common 'cosmopolitan' sense of belonging for all European citizens.

During the EU-presidencies of Spain, Belgium and Hungary, three *European Trail* symposiums were organised – in Barcelona (June 2010), in Ghent (November 2010), in Kőszeg (July 2011) – to discuss the constraints and possible formats of this kind of contemporary European citizenship. The main issues and contributions of these meetings are collected in this publication. We decided not to publish academic essays, but to present a trail of new ideas, questions and proposals in short essays and quotes.

By addressing you this way, we hope to stimulate your imagination and nourish your critical thinking. We do hope the questions, reflections, and essays in this publication may contribute to the development of a broad and action oriented view on identity dynamics, as well as to the development of a new inclusive discourse, new narratives, new images, to contribute actively to the democratic debate.

This is a story with an open end, an invitation to continue the debate and to start a conversation with the authors of this book. Along a line, step by step, or criss-cross, improvising and composing your own (new) line – making and remaking sense.

Ine Pisters  
Editor







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## **ESSAY**

*Cosmopolitics and cosmopolitanism combined.  
A European Agora.* Rik Pinxten

These disordering transformations, associated with the processes of globalisation, simply cannot be dealt with in the national frame. They cannot be made sense of within the national mentality.

So, I want to introduce a shift of focus, and to move from the national frame to an urban frame.

A city, a metropolis, allows us to reflect on the cultural consequences of globalisation from a perspective other than a national one. The city is a place of inherent complexity – of encounter, but also of opacity.

The experience of the city compels us to think, and may encourage us to think along cosmopolitan lines.

## **Urbanity as a Political Project. Towards Post-national European Cities**

Eric Corijn

*The world is in a transition period with far-reaching social changes. The umbrella metaphor for these changes is the 'process of globalisation'. Both the term and the scale of globalisation are a matter for discussion. At least one important dimension of the process is the precarious nature of the balance between the market-driven world system on the one hand and the political system of nation states on the other hand. The global order is undergoing reform.*

*Within that tension, the increased urbanisation adds a specific dynamic. In the framework of the global restructuring of governance, the urban systems are tending to burst out of the national frames they were caught in during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.*

### **Societies, nations, cities**

The resurgence of the urban in the late medieval and Renaissance period ran parallel with the long logistical wave installing the European world system. The urban network, partially built on remains of the old Roman network and partially on a new concentration of surplus value from agricultural hinterlands, formed a space of commercial flows. It sought its own forms of regulation at odds with the feudal structures of domination. Here is the origin of the specific realm of citizenship, individual rights and freedom, self-government and the 'living with strangers' that have brought the distinctive ingredients of 'urbanity'. The cities took their

specific European form with town halls, towers and belfries with civic clocks, and bourgeois freedoms separated from feudal and religious rule. That all-European network has been overtaken by the system of nation states, installing national urban systems in which inter-urban connections were caught in the inter-national framework.

During the past two centuries, national structures and cultures have gradually come to fashion nearly all modes of social existence, including the urban system. In addition, democratic regulation and social integration have always been considered as matters of people, their nations and their state institutions. Economic practices were acknowledged to have their own logic, based on private interest and regulated exchange, and not really being subject to the scales and forms of social and political frames. As long as the bulk of economic interactions could be contained within the national regimes, the original divide between the world system and the system of nation states was veiled. Further development of the capitalist mode of production disrupted the frail equilibriums within national modes of regulation.

Today, the world is going through a profound rescaling process in which the nation state formations are under huge pressure. Globalisation restructures spaces of flows and spaces of places, repositioning cities and regions on a wider scale than just their national environment. The European unification process is both part of and a reaction to this.

encompassing rescaling process. Now, in 27 member states, the Union is regulating at least half of our daily lives. At the same time, within the national states, important decentralisation processes are occurring, transferring socio-economic regulation in a competitive environment to smaller

The construction of the European Union took place in this all-entities which are more or less self-governing. The European Committee of the Regions has 344 representatives of regional and local governments. They play an important role in attracting European money to regional development. There is a shift of emphasis to regions and metropolitan zones. Competitive regions and cities undermine national solidarities and favour local growth strategies, with a state at the service of global competition.

**Looking at cities and the global-local nexus in a European context thus introduces immediately the question of urbanity as a pre- and a post-national formation, and thus as a para-national domain. Cities are not just part of the country.**

Two aspects have caught our special attention. First, in as much as globalisation causes a disruption of the national inclusion models, the city becomes a junction for political and social reconstruction of another kind. The combination of growth and post-welfare social equity are at the centre of the urban. This opens the specific agenda of new models of urban governance and urban democracy. Second, as these national inclusion models are built on a specific position of (dominant) national culture, one has to identify an urban perspective of culture and its position in social bonding.

### **Urban culture**

The European unification process has been conducted as a dialectic between an integration of markets and economic policies and the socio-cultural reproduction of national states. However, the economic space of flows of the single market coexists with the transnational urban network linked

by high-speed mobility and transportation, thus creating a new geography transcending the 'flat' map of juxtaposed countries into a transnational archipelago of connected cities. The traditional view of a vertically integrated world with continents, countries and cities of a different kind has to be changed into a decentred triangular relationship in which the world system, the system of national states and the networked cities relate in different ways to one other.

The rise of urbanity has introduced in Europe an important shift in mental orientations. Urban culture is not especially built on common history and tradition but is a constructed culture, and it is here that the 'creative city' acquires all its significance. In other words, urban cultural dynamics are not only important economic vectors, or specific institutional or sector activities, but – mainly – different ways of making social bonds or socialising. If cities have to be centres of innovation, cultural creativity stands not only at the forefront in designing new commodities, but also in producing new forms of societal metaphors.

**Innovation is the product of a creative confrontation of differences, of an experience of paradoxes with an unknown outcome. That is ultimately the most characteristic feature of cities: living with difference, with strangers. The dense mix of functions, the proximity of difference and the spaces of flows all determine the dominance of distinction.**

In that sense, the city is an exception to the 'normal' ways of building human societies. These have been founded on senses of commonality, and have been based on what people shared. Social bond has been derived from common characteristics. Cities were states of exception. They had 'privileges' and introduced proper laws of exchange and

hospitality. We are now entering a period in which that kind of living together with strangers is shifting from the exception to the norm. Specifically in Europe, that process is caught between the two movers of the unification: the single market and the national states.

### **Towards the Urban Republic?**

The European integration process is not the building of a new nation. It is not based upon a project of imagining 'Europeanness.' The mental map of Europe remains one of national countries, and represses the centre-periphery dynamics that really orient the economic integration. Labour organisation and labour productivity in the 'Blue Banana' positions the standards in consumer culture in a dialectical relationship with the peripheries in spatial and social terms.

The shift in the relationship between the world market/ the European single market, the national state and the local urban government opens a new agenda for urban governance. The local government is not (only) the lower level of hierarchical state power; it also has to balance its activities between its relationship with the state and its position in a global/continental market.

Urban growth dynamics are caught in an urban regime, combining in a specific way (parts of) the population with (parts of) civil society and (fractions of) local political activities. The binding of these forces necessitates a new 'imaginary constitution of society': a vision, a project, a mission that can be co-produced by these different social institutions. Urban governance demands the development of forms of participatory democracy, complementing

representative democracy with joint decision making of partners in action.

Managing urban society goes beyond master planning and technocratic rule. It is like a construction site without total overview, with built elements and useless remnants, building blocks and partial plans, and a multitude of projects and actors. The city cannot be kept together on the basis of common roots. On the contrary, fragmentation, segmentation and diversity can only be bound together in a common destiny and can only be joined in a programme or an image of the future. It is doubtful that such a projected platform of a common future can be clearly identified from the start. It is a process, and a hybrid product of crossbreeding.

### **The century of the city**

Urbanity is produced alongside the official cultural sector. It is the effect of intercultural bridging, creative encounter between differences, innovative adaptation to change and relations to a wider world. These forms of cultural production have their own sites at the margin, in subcultures, temporary coalitions and free zones. These practices mostly occur in the interstitial spaces, in transition zones and around unsolved matters. It is a form of reclaiming urbanity.

Urbanity focuses on intercultural production, bridging and networking, and creativity as a result of differences in proximity. Free zones and indeterminate spaces are of great importance in permitting informal actors to have influence on the urban agenda setting. Only in the presence of the full creative potential of urbanity can a metropolitan vision

## Globalisation & Urbanity

appreciate the complexity of the situation and search for development opportunities. Cultural creativity in a city is always more plural and diverse than any representation can render.

It took the century of the Enlightenment to think of religious freedom and the possibility of living together without sharing religion. It is a part of Europe's heritage. State religion was abolished but the nation state introduced state culture. It will take perhaps another century of enlightenment to experiment with the possibility of living together without sharing culture. As in the eighteenth century, we will have to think of the separation of state and culture, and invent a multicultural polis. That is exactly what urbanity offers and what makes the twenty-first century the century of the city.

## **Today's multiple mobilities**

These are

- the corporeal travel of people for work, leisure, family life, pleasure, migration and escape, organised in contrasting time-space patterns ranging from daily commuting to once-in-a-lifetime exile;
- the physical movement of objects including food and water to producers, consumers and retailers, as well as the sending and receiving of presents and souvenirs;
- imaginative travel effected through the images of places and peoples appearing on and moving across multiple print and visual media and which then construct and reconstruct visions of place, travel and consumption;
- virtual travel often in real time transcending geographical and social distance and forming and re-forming multiple communities at a distance;
- communicative travel through person-to-person messages via personal messages, postcards, texts, letters, telegraph, telephone, fax and mobile.

In the postwar period these mobility systems have increased in speed.

Fast travel has been accomplished through the growth of car travel throughout the world, increasingly in the world's two most populous societies: China and India.

Second, there has been the rapid growth of cheap air travel based on new budget business models, as well as a significant resurgence of rail transport, especially of high-speed trains across Europe and Japan.

Third, increased 'miles' are being both flown on the world's airlines and sailed on the world's 90,000 ships by manufactured goods, by many different components and by foodstuffs (hence the importance of 'food miles').

Fourth, there are the much greater distances travelled by work colleagues, members of leisure organisations, families and friends in order to sustain patterns of everyday life that are 'at a distance'. There has been the marked growth of 'family miles' and 'friendship miles' as well as the development of new kinds of globally significant themed leisure environments that have to be visited from a distance.

As a consequence carbon use within transport accounts for around a quarter of total greenhouse emissions. It is the second fastest growing source of such emissions and is expected to double by 2050.

We are not only talking about moving from one country to another to integrate a new labour market or to export finished goods, but about coming together internationally to do it all jointly.  
From scratch.

Mobility accentuates economic and geographical inequalities because those from economically less-developed countries or from the peripheries of Europe have additional costs in order to participate in the international circuits.

At the same time, physical and virtual mobilities are blurring not only geographical frontiers but also discipline boundaries and hierarchies. As artists and other art professionals come together to meet, discuss, create and perform across cultures, disciplines, languages and professional profiles, their interest in hybridism and inter-cultural processes grows and more attention is given to experimentation and methods. Processes when collaborative become as important as final outcomes and products.

### **What is sustainability?**

It is about sustaining human welfare:  
ecologically, economically, socially, culturally, and relating to  
health.

Can we preserve our quality of life?  
We are using resources as income instead of capital.

Norbert Kroó

We need to take into consideration the democratic potential of technological developments. In 1968, for the first time the media played an important role. And so the revolution of 1968 turned into what some people call a world revolution. It was happening in different parts of the world that had previously been completely separated: in Prague, Paris, London, Berkeley, and later in Rome and elsewhere, and as it was all televised people immediately knew what was happening. They were actually inter-connected and got in touch with each other, supported each other, and this was the result of the new technological revolution.

Ferenc Mészlivetz

I think the events of 1989 were also very significant in this context. One of the reasons is the development of 24-hour news reporting, which constituted a very interesting globalisation of news. CNN was the first organisation to do this. But it was also at this time that HTML and the World Wide Web were invented by Tim Berners-Lee, which was really the beginning of the Internet. It was also more or less when mobile telephony was invented. So actually when you talk about a network of democracy, which is a very interesting notion, actually the technology to facilitate and orchestrate that democracy was being kind of simultaneously invented.

John Urry

### **The experience of space: the local/global unknown**

Experience itself now seems affected by the impact of new information and communication technologies. These technologies are resulting in a change in the conception of space. On the one hand, media provide unknown 'localities': the local unknown. On the other hand, the conception of space is influenced by the interaction with new ideas that belong to different spaces: the global unknown.

Fernando R. Contreras

The reality is that the world's biggest transnational community connected politically, institutionally, economically and even socially and culturally, has no common transnational media of reference for the whole European citizenship. European media all over the world and all over Europe still operate from a national perspective.

Carme Colomina

In my view any initiative for change should take into account the role of mass media and the language that journalists use and disseminate as a tool for interpreting different things, for constructing identities, for understanding realities. We have to realise that we are talking of aspects of everyday life – for instance, that at this precise moment, millions of people around the world are watching the same soccer match. That is what we are talking about: the way in which homogenisation prevents us from understanding emergent realities and situations beyond mere proximity.

Fernando Navarro Colorado

## **The Network Society: Experiences of a Cultural Manager**

Building up a network and connecting it to the existing ones can be seen as a good example for building up a network society made of temporary communities of members with multiple identities.

The tools of building this network are co-production projects.

Every project builds up a new community with a new identity and enlarges the existing network of stakeholders in past projects.

The new members joined to the unofficial network may be potential stakeholders in possible future projects.

Every potential stakeholder may create links with additional potential resources for the network.

With each project an improvement is achieved in satisfying the needs of the community and developing content, which shapes the network and the future of the community.

**A European flag, a European currency,  
European buildings and European artworks?**

The EU self-assertion in its buildings and symbolic sculptures seems to be taking on almost the same kind of self-promotion that the imperial powers of Europe were adopting a hundred years ago. Over the preceding two centuries the burgeoning nation states had been highly successful in using all sorts of shallow imagery and symbolic sentiment to crystallise and summon support for national integration, so why should it not work at a European level?

A European identity, supported by such icons, was what the EU appeared to lack: that level of majority commitment and loyalty which most national governments can command, but which the EU has always struggled to achieve.

The wheel has come full circle, it seems: Europe is less afraid of itself now than it was in the aftermath of the two World Wars, and the official line is now bordering on a form of triumphalism.

Any reference to visual images has to rely on the strength of the cultural symbols invoked, and their resonance with the public at large. And that carries risks.

Many of the buildings and much of the self-publicity reveal self-images which are still alarmingly uncritical, and often distorted.

Moreover, the attempt to use cultural codes in visual images to instil a sense of European identity and loyalty is by no means invariably successful.

The flawed idealism provokes cynicism.

Contemporary European iconography often lacks reflection of the many ways and levels in which European societies, cultures and citizens have been and are continually changing.

It does not, I believe, reflect this dynamic and creative diversity.

In particular, its imagery does not resonate with its young people or mainstream citizens.

EU symbolism reproduces much of the Western, white, male national symbolisms, which are not only devoid of contemporary meaning for many people in Europe today, but also actually promote alienation and disengagement from the European project.

Jody Jensen

Does Europe have to imitate Washington or the Vatican in expressing its power with imposing buildings? Even the question is irrelevant.

We should rather reflect on what are the grass roots dynamics. How can they be explained, lived, organised, facilitated?

We should rather reflect on the meaning of citizenship in this particular construction of what we call Europe.

Rik Pinxten

In the EU documents and reports about education, two images appear all the time: the citizen as member of a workforce and the citizen as consumer. The socio-cultural and political vision of active citizenship is dramatically less articulated. I also noticed the recurrent idea that European citizenship is complementary to legal national citizenship.

Maybe we have to think about citizenship in another dimension, and that could indeed be the dimension of urban citizenship.

Corentin Lorand

The very idea of creating European citizenship without any reference to the nation state means empowerment without territorial binding.

Citizenship reinvents itself all the time.

Ana Cristina Aguirre Calleja

We need inclusion rather than integration. This will reflect on our quality of democracy. In terms of economy and society, it is a problem of the majority, not the problem of a minority.

Zoltán Balogh

The social question, the question of solidarity, social security, feeling secure in a society, in a community, must be part of the discussion about European citizenship.

It is one of the most important questions about (European) citizenship in the coming years:

**How will we organise solidarity?**

Ghislain Verstraete

**The Rise of the Common Good in a Chaordic-Axial Age.**  
**Global civil society in a time of transition**

Jody Jensen

*The period we live in has been characterised as the end of history, the end of empire, the end of the nation state, and the end of the world system. The period has also been described as 'civilisational crisis', 'consumer civilisation', 'business civilisation'. This underscores the emergence of new perceptions regarding the human condition. Aren't we rather living in a Chaordic Age? This concept blends characteristics of order and chaos and is neither hierarchical nor anarchic.*

The modern world system is in a structural crisis today and has entered a chaotic, transitional period which will cause the development of a new structure. The nature of the new structure has not yet been determined and cannot be predetermined. It is only in crisis, however, that actors have the most freedom of action. At moments of transition, individual and collective action become more meaningful. When a system operates smoothly, behaviour is determined by the nature of the structure. A transition period is more open to intervention and creativity. But this can also be a precarious time of great uncertainty for individuals and societies, making them vulnerable to forces of the old system, which, in the face of inevitable change, cling to waning power – too often through coercion. Paradoxically, this situation provides at the same time the potential for empowerment.

## **The Axial Age and the ethic of reciprocity**

Another conceptual framework for our period could be the Axial Age. Karl Jaspers pioneered the idea of the Axial Age, which plays a foundational and crucial role in human history leading to an emerging global unity on commonly shared values. According to Jaspers, if there is an axis in history, it must carry conviction for all people, without the support of any particular faith, and thus provide all men and women with a common historical frame of reference. He designates the spiritual process that took place between 800 and 200 BC as such an axis because extraordinary events are crowded into this period. In China, Confucius and Lao Tse gave rise to trends in Chinese philosophy; in India it was the age of the Upanishads and of the Buddha. In Persia Zoroaster put forward his challenging conception of the cosmic struggle between good and evil; in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel prophets arose: Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah; Greece produced Homer and philosophers like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

This was also the time of the great empires of antiquity (the Romans, the Macedonians, the Thracian Empires), which disseminated culture, legal frameworks, and a sense of belonging to larger communities across tribal and ethnic boundaries. Jaspers saw this period as a particularly intense time of intellectual and religious development that continues to resonate today in thought and society. The questions that the great seminal personalities of philosophy and religion tried to answer – such as the meaning and purpose of life, the meaning of suffering, how to distinguish good from evil – were of universal interest and their answers were meant for people everywhere, not just for their own clan or even just for their own time.

Many believe that the golden rule: 'One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself', came from this Axial Age, that is the ethic of reciprocity. The golden rule has its roots all over the world and is a standard many cultures use to resolve conflicts. This enormous development took place within a few centuries, independently and almost simultaneously in China, South- and Southwest Asia, Persia and the 'West'.

Today, according to several scholars, we are witnessing a Second Axial Age. Towards the end of the 20th century humankind started to experience a 'Macro-Paradigm-Shift': humanity is now understanding the world and human responsibility in global, not local terms. People understand themselves, their relationship with others differently, which in turn releases new energy and passion to work for a better world. This paradigm shift is more radical than others that have occurred in history and its profundity is compared with the shift that caused the start of the first Axial Age.

Humankind's consciousness is becoming increasingly global. Moreover, in this new age, dialogue on a global basis is now not merely a possibility but an absolute necessity. Either we engage in dialogue or we face extinction.

The second axial shift, then, represents the collision of earlier cultural spheres, each of which imposed their own monologues onto the world. This collision was replaced by globalisation, forcing the development of an ethical system for the benefit of mankind as a whole, for a unified world. This is represented, for example, by the movement for a global ethic, or in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

This move towards dialogue and away from monologue is the most important, radical shift of all and is unique in human history. Individuals are recognised as new subjects of international law with legal status (even if they possess limited legal capacity), the world being viewed as a world community, a cosmopolis. Obligations and rights are 'directly conferred on individuals by international rules'. This new and unique legal regulation is significant evidence of the growing impact of the international legal system on the action of individuals living in sovereign states.

### **The rise of the global common good**

As interdependence and interconnection on this planet become ever more apparent, new challenges and conflicts arise for personal life as well as concerning the role of government. As we have already mentioned, people's attitudes and behaviour in response to these new realities are shifting towards serving the larger common global good. On the other hand, however, shifts of an Axial Age scope clash with the long-prevailing ideology that the pursuit of *self-interest* and personal success best serves the public interest. In essence, the pursuit of greed, self-centredness and materialism have become the holy trinity of public and private conduct and this generates a growing 'social psychosis' which has taken root across our political, economic and social landscape.

In the words of Paul Hawken, 'global civil society' is striving for 'a world where there is growth without inequality, wealth without plunder and work without exploitation, a future without fear.' Hawken admits that the current wave of social psychosis may be with us for a while, but it's destined

to fade. Data from surveys, polls and research coalesce around a growing recognition of interconnection, coupled with embracing values and conduct that serve the common good. These shifts are increasingly visible in all sectors of society. It's an awareness of the interconnection of all lives on this planet, and a pull towards acting upon that reality in a range of ways. They include rethinking personal relationships, the responsibility of business to society, and the role of government and new forms of governance in an interdependent world.

The rise of the common good reflects a sense of global citizenship and an obligation to be a good ancestor to future generations who inhabit this planet. In fact, it embodies behaviour and policies that fit the needs for effective functioning – both personal and political – in our post-9/11, post-economic meltdown world. This new era, perhaps an Axial Age, of unpredictable change in a non-equilibrium world, requires great restructuring beginning with a fundamental change in our relationships – how we are linked and intertwined and how we act. I agree with Paul Hawken's formulation that when a biological system is about to fail, science tells us that the only way to heal it is to connect more of itself to itself. This can be a social or eco-system. Systems require intricate webs of connection to be healthy, vital and resilient. Humanity's immune response can be seen through the Internet, social networking and texting. Individuals and organisations are networking, associating, collaborating and reassembling into a mosaic of activities and assemblages. We network this world to see, know and re-imagine ourselves and our world.

All spheres of human activity are confronted with new challenges in each generation. In order to meet them we have to radically shift our thinking and open new lines of

enquiry. Even though we may not always get the answers we need, we must continue to examine our beliefs by questioning.

The time we live in is extraordinary. It is not just historic but civilisational with civilisational challenges, dangers and opportunities. We may be witnessing the decline of power in its current political and economic manifestations. Neo-conservatives and other populist movements are a reaction to the inevitable change that is coming. They actually may reflect the end of the ideological movements born in the 19th century, which were fought over in the 20th century, when hundreds of millions died. Ideologies breed schism, conflicts, exclusion and violence. What we are seeing today is not an ideological movement, but a movement of ideas. Ideas are inclusive. Ideas create ideas – when they work we use them, when they don't we throw them out and experiment in new ways.

The very characteristic of global civil society that many people would assess as a weakness – that there are millions of organisations that are atomised, small, and at grass-roots level, unable to stand up to power structures or affect them – is actually a strength. Global civil society, because of modern technology, can connect, collaborate and mix in ways that could not have been imagined even ten years ago. Because civil society is not part of power structures, it is much more agile, flexible, efficient, unpredictable and innovative. The true agent of change in the world is people, not institutions.

We don't know what the future will be because it will be shaped not only by technology and power, but also by the dispossessed. In the words of Saskia Sassen: 'The past shows us that history has also been made by the excluded. We can make politics even if we lack power.'

**My mother told me:  
'You should not spit on the street'.**

Some people are unhappy when others spit on the street, and the two groups exclude each other when ruling for the public as a whole. It is a real democratic problem that I can only solve by denoting a majority group and thus oppressing the other group.

How to find a way out of those contradictions?

How can you modulate these kinds of differences? They have nothing to do with theoretical debates on identity – they have to do with irreducible differences that we have to manage.

In reality, there is no 'identity', but a need for identification.

The question is: Does it matter?

Where and when it does, where and when it doesn't?

**Do we need a European identity?**

To de-dramatise the 'identity' concept,  
wouldn't it be better to speak about Europeanisation as

a project,  
a feeling, a process with multiple effects

beyond the idealised identity  
or the stereotyped difference?

Europe is the idea that stands for open borders, diversity, a particular landscape, and so on. Europe is also the idea that stands for the closure of its outer borders, in the same way as the ancient Greeks did by calling the others 'barbarians'. Today, these barbarians are often called 'refugee', and most of the time they are denoted to be 'illegal' beings.

Nevertheless, Europe is still an ideal whose dynamics are subject to articulation. In its villages, towns and cities – at very local levels – particular societal contributions are made by people giving voice to or pursuing their ideals. They take up roles that challenge the rules we are supposed to follow.

Europe as an idea that is still not fully articulated allows for constant redefinitions, mostly independent from the ones made by 'politicians'.

And, as a place of unspecified articulation, while not allowed to become visible and communicable on the national level, refugees' claims for protection can and do contribute to the idea of Europe.

National identity isn't a natural outgrowth: it has been naturalised through rhetoric of war and sacrifice, winners and losers, those responsible and victims, but also through dichotomist categories, producing 'nationals' and 'foreigners'. It was a way of unifying diversity, blind to the profound cultural differences that exist within national societies.

'European identity' is another ideological device designed as much for exclusion of Europeans' 'other'. Identity illusions are shared with those inside, while conflictive categories of differentiation are left for those outside. It's a sometimes perverse game of identification and categorisation.

*'We are what they are not.'*

The future of Europe will depend to a great extent on its ability to build pluralist societies, not in spite of differences, but through them; not juxtaposing, but sketching a common future using a language of shared feelings.

The idea of Europe has to be broadened with new narratives and reinterpretations, and what it means for other generations, and for those from outside of Europe.

***Does Europe have an inclusive answer for ALL its citizens? And for those who share a European present, but don't have a common past?***

***How can Europe's future become a common project for all its citizens?***

**Wittgenstein suggests this very interesting notion of 'family resemblances'**

He asks: 'What do games have in common?'

We speak of games without problems, and it would seem as if games – as if all games – have something in common that allows them to belong to this category of 'Game'. But he suggests that when you start looking game by game, at what the commonality between them is, you find nothing.

And what he means by this is that there is no single feature that unites them all, and yet we can still speak of games – and of a certain kind of European identity – without having commonality as a condition.

So, what if we started or increased our thinking, our work on European identity and identities in general, under this notion of 'family resemblances'?

Martin Savransky

## **What is cosmopolitanism?**

A new kind of identity?

I don't think so.

In my view, cosmopolitanism should be de-linked from identity issues.

I relate it to a more expansive mental space, to the capacity and ability to think in an enlarging way.

The shift from 'identity' to 'thought/mind' seems to me to open up better possibilities for thinking about public culture in the European space.

For ultimately, cosmopolitanism must be about the creation of a new transcultural public space.

Kevin Robins

**Cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics combined.**

**A European agora**

Rik Pinxten

Cosmopolitanism is probably unavoidable, even when it is not appreciated as desirable by most Westerners today. In the past 25 centuries we have seen a series of proposals on cosmopolitanism, mostly in the margin of local, regional or state logics. All of these cosmopolitan proposals were European, and – with hindsight – Eurocentric. Humankind was overwhelmingly conceived in European concepts: individuals with an individual conscience, rights attached to individuals exclusively, emphasising the free will and the perfectability of the latter in recent times, and so on. In the present post-Christian and post-colonial era in Europe, the old Eurocentrism is severely criticised within and outside of Europe. At the same time globalisation is influencing the mind-sets of people, and urbanisation entails a substantial multiculturalisation of the European populations and a push towards multiple and often shifting identities.

A net result of all these tendencies (decolonisation, globalisation, urbanisation) is that the cosmopolitan projects of the past are more and more rejected because of their Eurocentric perspective, while at the same time the interdependence between people on the scale of the whole planet grows.

The latter forces us to think of global answers for problems that confront us all, as inhabitants of the earth: energy shortage, pollution, poverty, climate change, demographic expansion, and so on.

## Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitan ideas and actions are now urgent and unavoidable. But first, cosmopolitanism will have to be stripped from its Eurocentric perspective in order to be recognised by all and offer the needed political platform. Sustainability and interdependence will probably be the guiding principles of negotiations that are decidedly intercultural and inclusive, instead of Eurocentric and religiously, culturally or ideologically exclusive.

Nationalism, regionalism, and religious exclusivity are all outdated when they aim at a universalistic status, as they used to. The modesty and consciousness of position, which a cosmopolitic stand entails, is on a crash course with the old and still (in Europe) very vivid attitude of exclusion of other ways of life and of societal projects in the 'religions of the book' and in the Eurocentric ideologies (nationalism and the like).

A typical feature in the Eurocentric formats is their (exclusive) structural focus. Their discourses are based on a logic of pre-established and unalterable structural units, ranging from a community (for such political parties as Christian democrats – a Christian community – and rightist parties – a cultural community) incorporating nation states, to the world as a whole.

For example, the Christian and the Islamic religions claim to offer solutions for the human species as a whole. The religious community in those perspectives would have uniform structural characteristics, which are defined by the deity in the revealed will he made known through the prophets. In this mentality, difference is excluded: it is either seen as a primitive and not yet saved' way of existence (as pre-Christian'or pre-Islamic) or as heresy

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(meaning a perversion or loss of the genuine human structure).

While nationalism supplanted this religious way of structuring life and society in Europe in the past centuries, it basically and structurally stuck to the same attitudes. With this concept, the final or most decisive reference was and is the nation state, with its presumed values, identities and habits, all of which were felt to be intrinsic and obvious such as to become second nature to the inhabitants. The wars between nation states have enabled subsequent governments for at least two centuries to ingrain this view on life and people, and to divide people by national or regional structures.

The step towards a consciousness of interdependence on a global scale and shared interests rather than enmity between groups is hampered by this history of divisiveness. In the actual search for a European identity I recognise the inertia of the past structural format: the 'government' of the EU is the Commission, composed of one commissioner from each member state. The commissioners are appointed by nation states and not elected.

The Parliament is a European body, without legislative power, and elected within the confines of nation states. There is no constituency spanning the EU as a whole, but there are political responsibilities defined for the whole complex. The structures of the national level are basic, intrinsic or somehow more 'natural' or 'real' than the transnational aims, values and needs of the population living in the broad space of the EU, for whom nevertheless the European governmental institutions are working.

At the same time, the tremendous urbanisation of recent decades (now reaching 60% of the world population, and in some areas of western Europe over 80%) has been rapidly weakening the traditional structural ties. This might suggest that their functionality is decreasing. Instead, people are starting to develop what is called 'layered' or multiple identities. With it comes a sense of the dynamic nature of religions and secular values and habits: people are adopting a dialogical self – with a vague belief in some supernatural being, combined with a Newtonian world view, spiritual adherence to some Buddhist tradition, and so on.

**When I look at the European context through this lens, I can draw some surprising conclusions about the newly emerging reality which is the EU.**

Against a historical background of factionalism, wars and religious exclusion, a peaceful but rather amorphous entity is emerging, held together by commercial interests. To a large extent, it is an open market, an open space for people and goods.

The question arises of whether this is a political entity as yet, or whether it can and should be developed further. Could this European space organically develop into a coherent and well-defined state structure, a sort of super-state or empire? Is an organic emergence of such an encompassing structure indeed growing? To my mind, no indications are found. The national structures dominate. Power is linked to electorates within these national confines. Hence, the very idea that a larger unit – in a state-like form – would emerge organically or quasi-spontaneously, runs counter to this reality.

However, the picture drawn so far is one-sided. Indeed, over the past decades, and concurrent with the founding of the EU, the traditional nation states have been drawn into a process of change, yielding what some have called 'post-sovereign states' as a result.

**That is to say, the community (nation) and the state are gradually being split from one another and evolving in different directions.**

The citizen lives within a state as a set of functions, rights and duties within a local territorial circumscription. Taxes are paid to a local structure in order to secure highways, a police force, and so on. On the other hand, the meaning of life is sought by the modern citizen in groups or communities which may be worldwide (such as a religion), or in a foreign territorial context, or in multiple identity groups which may range from a local sports club to a virtual international environment. No state can offer a comprehensive identity anymore, meaning that the 'community' aspects of the old nation state are not defined by the state anymore.

For example, religious movements and political movements in the wake of globalisation (such as the 'Porto Alegre Movement') emphasise survival and meaning-of-life issues over and above nation state boundaries; the sometimes violent clashes between nation state police and the anti- (or other-) globalists testify to that effect.

There is not one community in contemporary Europe (as there basically was in the Christian era of Europe), but there is a growing variety of them, allowing for a mixed and varied identity complex in individuals: the modern European citizen is Christian/ Buddhist/ Muslim/ atheist/ etc., and a

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'lifestyler', and a citizen of a state and of a region, and a member of a gender group, and so on.

In the wake of the emergence of post-sovereign states, communities are becoming more or less independent from the state structures. Where they were practically totally overlapping within the nation state, they are now growing apart to a considerable extent. In this process it is not yet clear what tasks or functions will remain with the state structure (taxes, defence, but also social security?) and what will be the typical focus of the many communities. In my understanding we are in the midst of a period where this reshuffling of tasks and functions is under way. My suggestion is to look at the European space as a unique new phenomenon and not reduce it to the former structures.

The new space is the sum of interactions and communications which transcend the structural formats and boundaries found at the lower levels. In other words, what emerges are transregional and transnational actions and communications.

Since the latter belong to a process rather than being merely structural, it is preferable to regard them in terms of change and temporary structures rather than as invariant and fixed structures. Politically this means that Europe could be conceptualised primarily as the sum of all such actions and communications, rather than and mostly regardless of static political structures. This view is more intrinsic and less bothersome than the old nation state view: identities can be expected to be less stable and well-anchored in a space consisting of actions and communications than in a space defined by tight borders and well-defined structural characteristics.

**This thoroughly dynamic interpretation of Europe has implications for policy makers.**

My suggestion that the nature of Europe is a complex of dynamic features implies that policy makers should recognise this dynamic nature, and rule accordingly. In practice, they should then focus more on facilitating communication and interaction, and on defining constraints which allow for and eventually invite optimal communication and interaction rather than define their inalterable nature.

An issue which is predominant now in political discussions in this part of the world is our apparent incapability to deal with diversity. After policies of assimilation, integration, green-card citizenship and so on, it is becoming clear that foreigners and immigrants are still not accepted as full human beings in Europe, notwithstanding the fact that all European states agreed to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The mentality of the citizen did not evolve in accordance with this signature. Neither did it fully adapt to the internal European space as one of mixing and difference, rather than uniformity and single value systems.

Intercultural education, exchange of people and ideas regardless of background and ideology, and promotion of programmes of collaboration and interaction seem more than ever of primary importance.

## **Colophon**

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