

## Constructing a European 'Demos' – a struggling identity with fuzzy boundaries

### Introduction:

Where are the boundaries of Europe? Geographically, we all seem to have a more or less clear-cut picture on our minds, with the Ural as the landmark of a continent otherwise walled by water. When it comes to the political definition of Europe, however, the picture starts to blur (Wallace 1990: 7-34). Controversial discussion about the enlargement of the European Union has indicated: (1) Geographical demarcations do not always translate well into political ones. (2) Different people have different visions of the boundaries of a European political entity. It is often argued that Europe's boundaries are cultural – with the Christian and secular West as a cultural unity and Turkey, for example, falling on the Muslim side of a civilisational cleavage. Cultural boundaries, however, are seldom clear-cut and subject to both controversy and change.

I want to approach this problem from the constructivist and relational perspective of phenomenological network theory. First, it is argued that the symbolic construction of Europe as a 'political community' is a crucial and necessary step towards the establishment of a European democracy. The second section sketches that identity-building is always relational, it involves the construction of an Other, and the establishment of symbolic boundaries. The European unification process can thus be viewed as the establishment of a supra-national political identity which vies for control in a complex network structured by pre-existing national identities. The third and final section is an attempt to understand the current discourse and problems through this theoretical framework. Different definitions of Europe are discussed and different visions of its geo-political spread. Particular attention is devoted to the 'Turkish question': Can Turkey as a Muslim country be included in a European political identity or not?

What follows is primarily a theoretical endeavour. It starts from the assumption that political culture has to be conceived of as the product of a complex discourse. The formation of a European identity depends on the structural features and dynamics of European political discourse. This essay tries to show possible paths to a better understanding of this discourse.

## 1. Constructing a Political Community

“E pluribus unum” – the motto of the US constitution, chosen by Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, might well stand at the heart of the European political integration, too. To consolidate integrated encompassing European institutions is only one step in this project. A necessary parallel step is the symbolic construction of a European identity. The concern about the possibility of such an identity is wide-spread (Joyce 2002). But why do we need such an identity? Why is it necessary to construct an identity where differences prevail? Could not the recognition of these differences also serve as a symbolic foundation for common political institutions?

The answer is: no. Democracy is a highly improbable arrangement with the construction of a ‘we’ as one of its necessary conditions. Democracy needs a ‘demos’ – a collective in the name of which decisions are taken and enforced (Selznick 1992). This supplies political order with the legitimacy which becomes a crucial requirement for political institutions in modernity. In medieval times, political measures were intertwined with the social, familial, religious, and economic order of feudal states and thereby enforced. With the loosening of the hierarchical feudal order, modernity features the growing differentiation of politics from the religious and economic spheres and from everyday communication networks (Luhmann 1992). Politics now has to stand on its own feet. It has to legitimise its measures which are no longer backed by feudal hierarchy and religion.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau introduced the formula to solve this problem to political theory: the ‘common good’ (1762: 40). In democratic discourse, the common good is frequently appealed to. What the common good might be is often subject to dispute. Nobody has seen such a thing yet. As with ‘justice’ and ‘scientific truth’, the common good seems to serve as a powerful image, a core idea for a particular discourse. In a way, the ‘common good’ is the god of the political system (Luhmann 2000: 118-126). Political measures are thus regarded as legitimate insofar as they are taken in the name of the common good, as a result of discourse which is (at least on the rhetorical level) not shaped primarily by particular interests but a search for ‘what is good for the country’.

This, however, presupposes that the people subject to political institutions think of themselves as parts of collective. Why should we accept political measures unfavourable to us as individuals? The answer can not only be legal enforcement – widespread disobedience to legal norms leads to the partial or total breakdown of regimes. This can be witnessed in the places where informal mafia-like networks often rule out legal arrangements. Total

breakdowns of political institutions often occur in Africa, where states encompass people who think of themselves primarily as members of tribes, not of a political community (Geertz 1963; 1971). Unsurprisingly, autocratic order has been more enduring in such societies than the fragile institutions of democracy (Horowitz 1985). What is needed, then, is a framing of political discourse in terms of a collective that is congruent with the reach of political institutions – a ‘demos’.

Karl Deutsch and David Easton have coined this the ‘political community’, or, to be more precise, the sense of political community (Deutsch 1954; Easton 1965: 177-189). The formulation and carrying through of political measures (and thus the persistence of a political order) depends on the mutual identification of the citizens as members of a collective. According to Easton, this sense of a political community is one component of his category ‘diffuse support’ for the political system. Diffuse support is primarily shaped by socialisation in the family and public education. Thus, changes in identification with the political collective are very slow and only indirectly a consequence of personal experience. If we adopt this framework, it is clear that identification with Europe can only evolve slowly and is achieved in the matter of generations. It only evolves if European institutions are able to meet the expectation of its citizens over a long time span. A second requirement for the ‘sense of a political community’ (one not discussed by Easton) is the symbolic construction of such a collective in public discourse. In other words: public discourse has to produce effective symbols of unity.

Historically, the establishment of political communities has been achieved in the Western world with the invention of ‘nations’ (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Smith 1991). The almost simultaneous advent of both democracy and the nation-state at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century is no coincidence. And no wonder that democratic regimes have only proven stable where people think of themselves as belonging to a national community. Is it possible today to invent a European nation, like the nations invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Americas and in Europe? Nations show several structural features, only some of which are attainable on the European level:

(1) National symbols like a flag and anthems and rituals like coronations and national holidays serve as effective markers of unity (Billig 1995). A European flag is already proudly waved, the European anthem chanted. And no doubt other symbols and rituals can be added without much ado.

(2) The writing of national histories suggested common experiences and a common destiny for a nation (Smith 1991: 63-70). Symbols were thus endowed with traditions (Hobsbawm / Ranger 1983). Of course it is possible today to write a 'European history' and to teach it in schools and at universities. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, was particularly prone to invent such histories. It was the time when people came to think of societies as subject to change and history (Koselleck 1979). When history was first being written, it was written in terms of *national* histories. To write a new European history would have to intertwine and overcome these separate national histories and fuse them into something new (Mikkeli 1998: 235-244). However, it will not be easy to overcome the national histories already firmly in place.

(3) Another crucial factor in the invention of nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the establishment of a common high language in public education and in the print media (Anderson 1983: 18-19, 37-46; Gellner 1983: 27-34). The formation of a common European high language – be it English or Esperanto – is rather unlikely in the near future. Europe seems to be »lost in translation« (Gubbins 2002) and a linguistic (and consequential symbolic) unification not in sight.

Both the cultural boundaries of political communities and the symbols tied to it were not prerequisites for the formation of nation-states, but at least partly a consequence of it. National languages, symbols, rituals, and identifications were the result of a restructuring of cultural meaning and social structure in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – as was the parallel invention of mass politics (Tilly 1998). The nation-state is a political-cultural unit. It has dominated politics and culture for the past 200 years. On the one hand it has set effective boundaries for the construction of cultural and political forms (and still does). On the other hand it has allowed for the improbable arrangement of democratic institutions within its confines.

The resulting national geographies were not completely random – they were partly set by pre-existing political boundaries (most European and all American countries). But another factor was the pre-existing similarity of cultural forms such as the vernaculars. Thus, multi-cultural Habsburg empire did not survive in the age of mass politics. It would have been possible to construct a Greater Germany – with Austria part of an enlarged German nation. But the construction of an Austro-Hungarian-Czech-Slovakian-Croatian nation was out of reach.

Europe today faces problems similar to those of the late Habsburg empire. It has to integrate widely differing cultures into its polity. In the historical-ideological landscape of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this would have been almost impossible. But today, with the historical experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century past, and with increasing scope of cultural flows through mass media and

mobilities, odds for a European political integration look much better. Transnational communication is facilitated to the point, where social scientists are discussing the matter of a global culture (Featherstone 1990). Charles Tilly even supposes the time of the nation-states to be over, with larger units such as the European Union taking over pre-eminence in politics (2002: 168-169, 177, 186-187). Yet, mass media and mobilities only provide the ground for a larger scope of politics. They do not substitute the construction of a 'demos' as the legitimising base for European politics (García 1993; Fuchs / Klingemann 2002). The conditions for the formation of a political community in Europe differ from those for the emerging nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence they need to be examined drawing on general theories of identity formation and on empirical data on current conditions. The following sections are devoted to the first of these tasks.

## **2. The Involution of Cultural Networks**

The formation of a European identity is a necessary step towards democratisation of European politics, as was argued in the preceding section. Literature on the salience and the possibility of a European identity is already abundant. However, these accounts lack a thorough theoretical understanding of the formation of political identities. The aim of this section is to discuss the processes of European identity formation from the perspective of relationalism or phenomenological network theory. Relational social theory is a rather new paradigm, though its roots lie in the classical works of Georg Simmel, Leopold von Wiese and Norbert Elias (Emirbayer 1997). Only in the 90s with the important contributions of Harrison White, Andrew Abbott, Mustafa Emirbayer, and Charles Tilly, it has become a serious rival to rational choice, interpretive, and systems theories.

The starting elements of network theory are transactions between sites such as human beings, organisations, or states. In the course of transactions, expectations of future transactions arise and form relations. These relations are the basic building blocks of networks and bind sites like human beings, organisations, or states to interdependence (von Wiese 1924/1929; White 1995: 705, 711-712, 719; Tilly 2002: xii, 48-49). Thus, every relation defines the identities of the sites involved in its own terms – as father, friend, colleague, or neighbour, as competitor or business partner, as enemy or friend. Identities of sites thus vary from relation to relation – and the actors involved are at pains at coordinating the expectations tied to them. This logic leads to considering identities always in their relational context: the categorical identity 'woman' is defined against the identity 'man' (de Beauvoir 1949) – and both are negotiated

in networks like the family or work organisations. Groups always construct their identity in contrast to and the exchange with other groups (Barth 1969; Tajfel 1982). The identities of states like 'Germany', 'France', 'the US' or 'Turkey' are to be understood in their relations to other states – and on the basis of institutional networks in their domain.

In many important aspects, European identity does not resemble personal identities or categories like 'man' or 'woman'. Europe is not a unitary block for which we only have to find a name and establish expectations regarding its behaviour. On the contrary, Europe (like every political or collective identity) is an identity that symbolically cuts through networks of persons and states and packs them into one symbolic entity. Thus, it resembles meso-networks like gangs, families, social movements, and corporate organisations. The unity of these phenomena is only ensured through the establishment of a boundary of meaning that separates its inner network of relations from its outside. This boundary is not a simple analytic feature of social phenomena – it constitutes these phenomena in an otherwise chaotic and entropic universe of social relations (Abbott 1995).

Boundaries make for the establishment and persistence of polities, gangs, families, social movements and corporate organisations in several ways:

(a) They serve as starting points for the construction of network identities. Claims of identity are always claims of difference, too. Thus, to draw a symbolic boundary around nodes and relations means also to claim similarity and unity within (Fuchs 2001: 272ff). Intertwined with the construction of identity is the construction of an Other – an Outgroup against which the Ingroup defines itself (Sumner 1906: 12-13). Once established, boundary and identity are referred to and continuously redrawn by symbols of unity and difference, such as flags, uniforms, names, etc..

(b) Boundary and identity serve as focal points for communication. The collective or political identity becomes an address for communication. The identity can be addressed both by members of the collective and by other actors from outside. Based on experiences and on normative claims, expectations on the behaviour of the collective emerge. Thus, the identity is established as an actor in a wider network insofar as its behaviour seems both coherent and impenetrable to observers.

(c) The boundary excludes others from its domain. The unity of a political identity is based on the exclusion of others, usually by means of categorical exclusion, membership or, in the case of states, of citizenship. This always introduces a measure of asymmetry and inequality between those inside and those outside (Tilly 1998b).

(d) Expectations and norms of conduct are attached to the boundary, specifying both the behaviour within the network and that at its boundary. Thus, gangs feature a special code of honour with norms concerning behaviour between gang members, to outsiders and to members of rival gangs (Horowitz 1983).

(e) Through all of this, boundary and identity establish means of control on two levels: claims of unity and difference increasingly constrain relations within the network. Furthermore, the capacity to act as a collective or polity in a broader network of other collectives or polities depends on the consistency and efficiency of its internal regime. Thus, identity and control are twin concepts, one relying on the other (White 1992).

Following Harrison White, this has to be understood as the “involution” of a network (1992: 35, 75; Fuhse 2003: 15ff). This means: a network establishes its own unity and structures through the symbolic construction of symbolic boundaries and identity. An involution makes for inward orientation and self-similarity of a network – it even pushes towards homogenisation within. Involution creates structure and regularity in an otherwise unordered social universe. Involutions can be observed in organisations. These use identity and boundedness to achieve a high level of hierarchy and formal procedures. But it is also at work in the amorph and more egalitarian structures of social movements and gangs. Here, leadership is usually charismatic rather than formalised. Markets and states, too, have their foundations in inward orientation and symbolically constructed self-similarity.

The larger the scope of such a structure, the more it depends on the *generalisation* of its identity and the norms attached to it. Generalisation means: large social structures have to become independent of the particular nodes (actors) involved in order to ensure their persistence. States, for example, feature a high level of generalisation of their boundaries and identities, whereas families do not. Social movements and gangs are located on an intermediate level of generality. Organisations like firms show a much higher level of generality than would be expected if only looking at their scope. They achieve this level through formal procedures that govern their decisions and access to membership and positions. Thus, formal procedures are an important factor for the generalisation of identities and boundaries.

Depending on the level of formality, involution not only creates an inside and an outside in a network, but also a centre and a periphery (Fuchs 2001: 281ff). This can easily be observed in gangs and in social movements. Here leaders show a high level of commitment to the collective, demand the same from others, and define the identity of the whole through their

actions. Followers, in contrast, are often subject to cross-pressures and influence from outside. Thus, the centre defines and reproduces the identity. The periphery, in contrast, takes up irritations from the network environment and is responsible for variation and adaptation. This is true for cultural networks as it is for social movements, gangs, and states (Hannerz 1996: 70ff).

Obviously these general points on the involution of networks apply to the constitution of a European identity:

(a) As a number of observers have noted, a clear defined boundary is a necessary precondition for the formation of a European identity (Fuchs / Klingemann 2002: 19ff; Schlesinger 1989: 194ff). Only if a sharp dividing line is drawn, the European 'demos' can be symbolically installed as the collective of those inside as opposed to those outside. The 'other' necessary for this is mainly found in the East: with Russia and Islam (Turkey in particular) often used as negative reference points (Neumann 1999).

(b) At its institutional core, Europe can be addressed by both citizens and other political entities. Appeals can be made to it, but 'Europe' also appears as a symbolic identity in the name of which political demands are formulated. The importance of such an imaginary political community has been stressed in the first section. Without it, democratic discourse lacks an address for demands and support.

(c) The issue of exclusion seems to pose special problems in the case of Europe. It is often depicted as a fortress in which opportunities and riches are hoarded. Thus, the coupling of its boundary with material inequality makes this boundary a matter of severe conflict, as in Norbert Elias's and John Scotson's *The Established and the Outsiders* (1965). The introduction of a European citizenship is one further step in this direction, without entirely solving problems resulting from citizens of one member state residing in another (Neveu 2000).

(d) Expectations and norms of conduct appear in two forms in the European domain: Formalised norms comprise European law and regulations. Perhaps as important are norms of cooperation in the network, applying to the negotiations of just these regulations. During the negotiations of a European constitution, Spain and especially Poland had to face informal pressures after taking an uncompromising stand.

(e) One of Europe's main tasks is to establish a certain amount of control within its institutional domain as in international politics. Countries like Great Britain still insist on the primacy of their sovereignty. And in international affairs, member states are often eager

to pursue their own ideas and interests, unwilling to succumb to compromises. Thus, Europe is an identity still struggling to become an actor in its own right and to gain control in its own domain and in international politics. A thorough generalisation and delegation of power to the European level is all but accomplished.

The involution of a European network is thus on its way, but far from achieved. Obstacles are to be found on different levels: European culture is marked by heterogeneity (Lützel 2001). Political discourse is still mainly organised on the level of the nation state (Gerhards 1993; Grimm 1995). The same is true for the mass media, where attempts to form a European public have been fruitless (Hjarvard 1993; Schlesinger 1993). Consequently, European matters are often discussed in terms of national interests rather than in the name of the common (European) good. In Easton's terms: a sense of political community is still mainly national, rather than European (Scheuer 1999; Duchesne / Frogner 1995). From this perspective, the British idea of a 'European family of nations' (Thatcher 1989) deserves more credit than it usually gets. Politics is still articulated and organised on the level of the nation state. Centralisation not only brings opportunities of better coordination. It also carries risks of domination by particular interests, often coined in national terms. But does it have to be this way? Do we not witness a changing discourse, with Europe becoming an ever more important core idea?

### **3. Where are the Boundaries of Europe?**

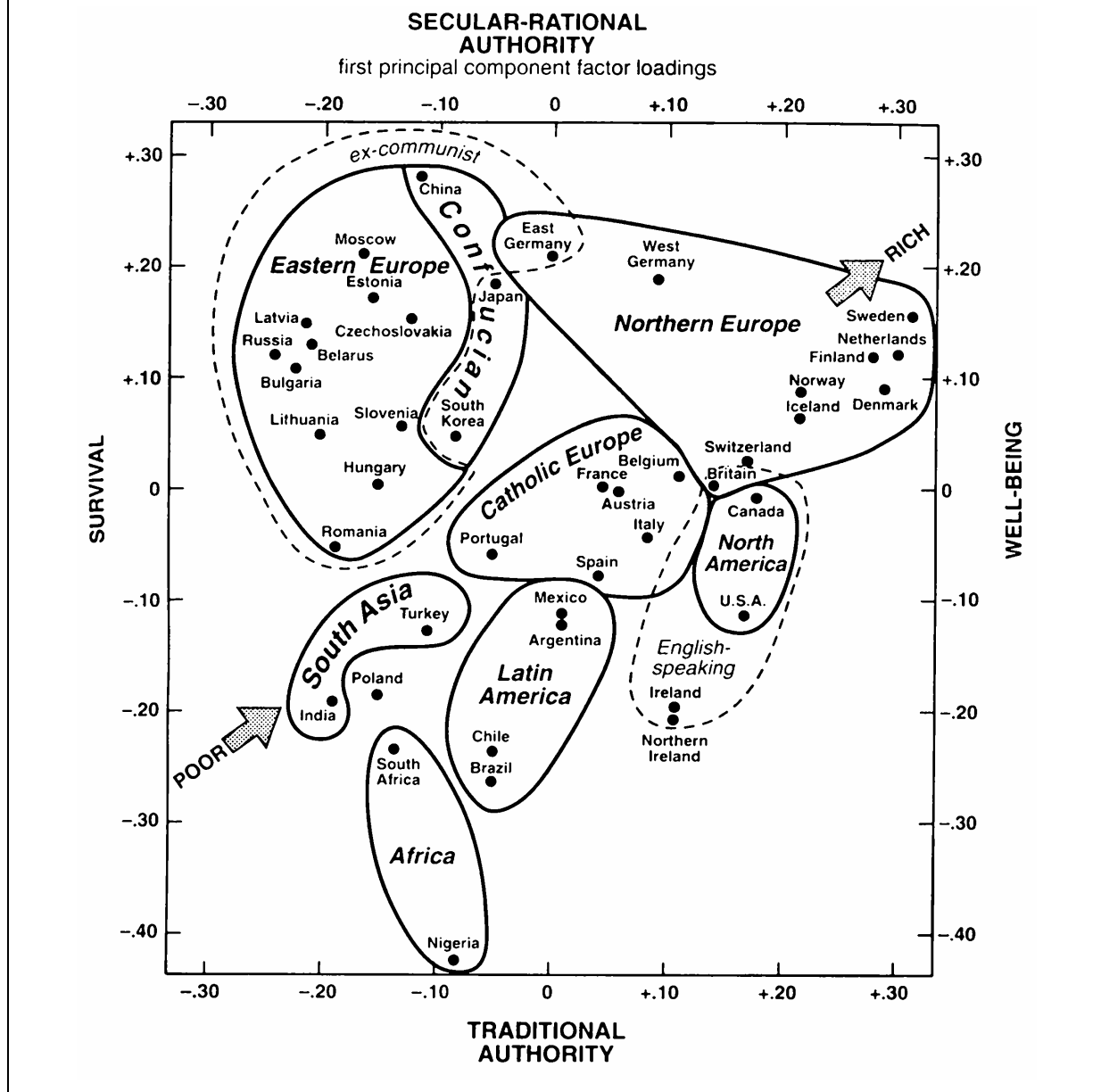
The second section discussed the determinants of a European identity formation on a very general and abstract level. The definition of a boundary was identified as one of the most important steps towards a European identity. In this section, I want to discuss this issue in more detail in order to have a look at the practical implications of the theoretical account sketched above. There are various possible ways to define the boundaries of Europe: as has been argued, geographical and political boundaries in themselves do not suffice to bring forth a sense of political community. Rather, we need to infuse these geo-political boundaries with meaning. What Europe needs is a cultural boundary which carries a meaningful distinction from its outside. This distinction may be religious, ideological, or built on other aspects of culture.

Perhaps the most powerful argument on the matter comes from Samuel Huntington. But he only articulated a position hidden in much reasoning on Europe. Huntington saw Europe as part of a Western civilisation, marked by its "defining historical phenomena ... : Roman

Catholicism, feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, overseas expansion and colonization, the Enlightenment, and the emergence of the nation state” (1996: 139). According to Huntington: “Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin ... between Central Europe or *Mitteleuropa* and Eastern Europe proper.” (1996: 158). Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, the Baltic countries and Finland thus fall on the Western side of Huntingtons divide, with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey on its Eastern side. Following Huntington, the admission of Greece to the European Union was already a mistake, Turkey is out of question (1996: 162f). And apart from Switzerland, Norway, and Catholic Croatia, no further candidates should be included in the European Union. Huntington’s division is mainly built on religious differences. But it is doubtful whether religion matches with other aspects of culture. Religion may be a useful marker of a boundary, but it is by no means the only possible one.

Values are another important aspect of culture (van Deth / Scarbrough 1995). Often Europe is defined in terms of the values of the enlightenment. In this view, support for – broadly speaking – Western values like individuality, democracy, tolerance and the separation of political from religious matters distinguish Europe from non-Western societies (Havel 1996). Since tolerance would be one of Europe’s defining features, religious differences lose much of their weight. In contrast to Huntington’s religious definition of Europe, this definition is more focused on ideology and civic traditions. The most encompassing attempt to measure differences and similarities in ideology and values is the World Values Survey, last conducted in 2000/01. Ronald Inglehart’s analysis of the data from the early 90s yielded a two-dimensional mapping of cultural orientations in 43 societies (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Inglehart's cultural geography of the world by value orientations (1997: 93)



Fortunately, this map nicely clumps Northern Europe, English speaking countries, Catholic Europe, South Asia (with India and Turkey), Africa, Confucian societies, and Eastern Europe respectively. Europe's boundaries, however, are not easy to establish on this map. Orthodox Russia, Belarus, and Bulgaria place between the new member states of Latvia and Lithuania. The Confucian countries seem to lie in the centre of Europe. And Turkey, often claimed as Islamic and Asian rather than European and Western, is conveniently located between Poland and Portugal. Methodological problems of this approach aside, Poland seems to pose the biggest problems for a cultural unification of Europe. And even without this black sheep, Europe does not seem to be a bounded culture area. To be sure: this empirical evidence runs counter to Huntington's religious account, too. Values are supposed to spring from religious

traditions. But how explain the dispersion of the Catholic countries in Central Europe, Southern Europe, and in Latin America?

Frank Ninkovich may be right when he claims: “To be blunt: Europe does not and cannot have a common culture.” (2001: 16) Perhaps he is also right in claiming that a common European culture is not the crucial question for the European political integration. Up to now, I have followed a model of an encompassing unitary culture in the tradition of Clifford Geertz and Talcott Parsons. According to this view, a culture imposes inescapable modes of thinking and acting on human subjects. Such a culture is definitely out of reach on the European level, with languages, discourses, and symbols firmly rooted on the national (or even regional) level. Sociology has given up this unitary and encompassing conception of culture in the past twenty years. Culture is now conceived of as a ‘tool-kit’ which provides models of thinking and acting – but it does not prescribe them (Swidler 1986; DiMaggio 1997). Such a modular view on culture allows for the existence of various cultural levels. Turkey, for example, can be thought of as both Islamic and Western (to a certain extent; Güvenç 1997). David Laitlin has argued for the co-existence of one to three cultural levels in linguistic matters and in popular culture in the European Union (2002).

Another important step in our thinking about culture is away from bounded units such as societies and nations. In the age of global mass media and increased mobility (of people, cultural forms, and commodities), symbolic meaning is no longer confined by territory, tribes, or nation-states (Hannerz 1992; Urry 2000). Instead we find complex cultural configuration, overlapping and without clear boundaries. One sign of this is the differentiation of cultural networks in cores and peripheries (see above). Cores are easily identified. But where does the periphery of one cultural network end and the periphery of the next one begin? According to Samuel Huntington, France and Germany form the core of the European Union, with an ‘inner grouping’ of Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg (1996: 135, 157). Here political power is concentrated and the European identity is defined. This pattern is confirmed by empirical research on identification with Europe: European identifiers figure most prominently in the six oldest members (France, Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Germany, and – with the highest level – Italy; Scheuer 1999: 35).<sup>1</sup> The boundaries of such a network involution, in contrast, are difficult to establish. Even Huntington claims: “Civilizations have no clear-cut boundaries and no precise beginning and endings.” (1996:

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<sup>1</sup> This may of course also be explained in Easton’s terms (see above, 1.): In the old member states, people have been subject to European institutions for several decades – enough time to develop a diffuse support for the political community.

43) When analysing cultural configurations, we should acknowledge their fluid, multilayered and dynamic nature. The same applies to identities: Identifications with Europe and with a nation are not mutually exclusive. Identities are multiple – not unitary – and situational rather than ever-salient (Smith 1992: 58ff).

The imagination of a clear-cut identity and boundaries, though, lies at the heart of involution processes and of political identities. Boundaries, thus, have to be invented and envisioned. Current debates show how difficult it is to establish a consensual definition of Europe and its limits. Part of the reason is that the political boundary of European Union is coupled to exclusion from its perceived wealth. This material inequality tied to the European / non-European divide makes for its strongly contested nature. Cultural arguments and economic interests are often mingled and conflated. Important though the economic dimension may be, we have to understand the cultural arguments in their own logics.

Much reasoning on Europe and its boundaries implicitly assumes the logics of ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’ as broad and stable cultural entities as depicted in Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*. Why is Turkey not part of Europe – because of Islamic religion and socio-economic backwardness? On the level of political culture, Turkey indeed seems to be only coming to terms with itself, with its inner contradictions between Islamic religion and Western orientation, between backward Anatolia and cosmopolitan Istanbul (Rouleau 1993). Much of current polemics, however, is not rooted in empirical observation, but in stereotypes. As has been noted by Edward Said, the West has developed a distorted view on Arabic societies based on myths and sagas (1978). The Orient (and Turkey as one part of it) has served as a counterimage to ‘civilised’ Europe, as its Other. Now this Other is an important part of Europe’s identity. Keeping it would mean to deny Turkey access to the European Union on the basis of stereotypes. Shedding it aside would mean to abolish a crucial feature of European self-definition. Both options carry severe risks.

Enlargement of the European Union to including both Orthodox countries and Turkey could suspend the formation of European demos. As every other claim of identity, a European identity would have to entail distorted claims of similarity inside and difference to the outside (Hogg / Abrams 1988). A concept of Europe as open to non-Christian countries like Turkey lacks a clear-cut defining boundary. Tolerance and Openness as defining features alone may not suffice to establish a European political community. Restricting access to the fortress Europe in the name of ill-conceived pictures of the Orient, on the other hand, could deepen the already dangerous divide between Islamic countries and the West. We face here

the complex dynamics of recognition of political identities (Pizzorno 1993: 24-27; Tilly 2002: 10ff, 61ff): In more than 70 years of Kemalism, Turkey has struggled to become Western and be recognised as such. As Huntington notes, the transition to become part of the Western civilisation was mainly blocked by the Western countries' (especially German) unwillingness to admit Turkey into their circle (1996: 144-149).

This does not mean, that Huntington's diagnosis of the 'clash of civilizations' is right. It is only right insofar as political actors (politicians, intellectuals, terrorists) believe in it and act accordingly. The 'clash of civilizations' may be a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1948). Denying Turkey entry into the European Union on the grounds that it is Islamic and not European could strengthen anti-Western forces in Turkey and the rest of the Arab world. It would be another step in the hardening of civilisational boundaries between the West and the Islamic world. In Huntington's view, this is a necessary and logical step. But cultural networks are not clear-cut stable entities – they are fuzzy and dynamic. In the case of Turkey, the fluidity of culture is supported by the large-scale migration to the European Union and back. We witness here the creation of little transnational bridges between Turkey and especially Germany (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Mandel / Wilpert 1994). Symbolic forms are exchanged and both are tied to each other economically as well as in cultural flows. Turkey as a distant and incomprehensibly different country is long past – it is our neighbour and we are tied to it more than we think. The problem we face now is how to come to terms with it.

### **Conclusion:**

Europe today is in the middle of a complex process of cultural transition and reconfiguration. We have only started to understand its dynamics and the consequences of our actions. The aim of this essay was to shed light on some of the dynamics and structural features of the restructuring of the symbolic level of European politics. First it was argued that the formation of a European political identity is a necessary step towards democracy on the European level. The imaginary of a 'political community' is a core idea of democratic discourse. Democracy needs this core idea in order to prevent particular loyalties (be they national or ethnic) from dominating political decisions. The second section sketched the European polity as a network involution with the necessary definition of a boundary, with the institution of an identity as an address for communication, with the introduction of inequality at its boundary, with a centre and a periphery, and with specific expectations towards its members. The definition of a boundary poses a special problem for the European network involution, as the

third section shows. Different visions of its geopolitical spread were discussed, with Turkey perhaps the most problematic landmark. We may have several options in defining Europe. But all of them show specific opportunities as well as risks. Whatever the bases of our beliefs and visions – we should better look for possible ambivalent consequences of our choices.

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