Cultural identity, diversity and European integration: introductory study

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CULTURAL IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. INTRODUCTORY STUDY

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Abstract. *European cultural identity reflects both the image of homogeneity and that of cultural diversity. This double perspective gives the integration process a complex dimension which makes us take into consideration not only the European unitary ensemble but also the local, regional, or national structures. "Identity revenge", "the feeling of return to historic, national and cultural identity" are terms that ask for redefining the national and European identity space that was forced to open to the new geo-political, historical and cultural configurations. Beyond any approach, the image of the European culture is provided by the association of the concepts people – culture – history – territory. They confer a certain local specificity due to their characteristics. From this point of view, we can identify besides a European culture, a cultural area of local, regional and national specifics. Thus, we identify at least two cultural identity constructions on the European level: a culture of cultures, that is a cultural area with a strong identity on the particular, local, regional, or national levels, or a cultural archipelago, that is a joint yet disrupted cultural area. Irrespective of the perspective, we cannot deny the existence of a European cultural area, whether a diversity cultural area, or one of "disrupted continuity". Cultural diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism are elements specific to the European area. The European integration process is complex; it does not impose and is not conditioned by the idea of cultural unity, or the existence of a common culture including all Europeans. Specificity and diversity are precisely the means of intercultural dialogue between European peoples. Each European society has to find their own integrating solutions depending on traditions and institutions.*

Introduction

The trends expressed in the scientific environment of the European culture are either gathered around the concept of *cultural homogeneity*, a phenomenon in a strong

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causal connection with globalisation, or it designates an existing reality that cannot be denied or eliminated, that is *cultural diversity*. In the first case, we deal with universalization and uniformity of values, images and ideas broadcast by media or cultural industry. Within such construction, regional and national character suffers, as one may notice the insertion of a means of cultural "predominance" mainly issued by the United States of America, also known as "Americanisation" of world culture (La culture au cœur, 1998: 255-258). In the second case, cultural diversity involves plurality of ideas, images, values and expressions. They are all possible through a variety of expression and the presence of a great number of parallel local, regional, ethnic, national, etc. cultures. Moreover, given the context, certain authors speak of "identity revenge" and the "feeling of returning to historical, national and cultural identity", particularly in an area such as Central and Eastern Europe and at a historical time when national features and identity are compelled to be redefined by being more open to the new geopolitical, historical, or cultural configurations (David and Florea, 2007: 645-646). Beyond the relative epistemological antagonism of the approach, our debate can have slight variations. The field of cultural cooperation tends to become "multipolar", as the concept of "cultural networks" is introduced. These networks have begun to shatter old structures and support identity, communication, relationship and information (Pehn, 1999: 8). International stakeholders acquire an ever more important role; their projects, ideas, methods or structures, in other words their identity, are not only more visible (thus acquiring a multiplying effect on others); they are also more specific and particular in expression.

Is the European culture global or specific? Can we speak of cultural globalisation? Or, is the European culture going cosmopolite? Which is the place of the traditional, the ethnic, the national, the specific and the particular? The debate makes room to the equation global v local, general v particular. National and regional cultures do not disappear under the immediate acceleration of globalisation due to the increasing interest in local culture. Considered as a general process, globalisation is "characterised by multiplication, acceleration and strengthening of economic, political, social and cultural interaction between actors all over the world" (Tardif and Farchy, 2006: 107-108). If generalised, this cultural globalisation does not have the same influence throughout Europe.

In the French version of the report published in March 1998 on the issue, the *European Steering Committee on Culture and Development* of the Council of Europe starts with the question: "European culture: the corner shop, the independent trader, or the world supermarket?" The conclusions of the report are rather generalisations that can be classified as follows (La culture au cœur, 1998: 255-259): 1. There is a very strong requirement for accessible broadcast media products and other worldwide cultural services; at the same time, local cultural offer including local media arouses the interest for the particular, for ideas, images and values celebrating the community and local feelings due to interaction and local practices. Diversity is also preserved due to the support of nation-states. 2. Facing the strong trend for consolidation of "cultural continents" world (e.g. the European or the North-American one), there are autonomous "cultural islands" that are defined and preserved on local, regional and national levels by enforcing all expressions and cultural production to the local and traditional criteria of excellence/acceptance. These "cultural islands" turn into cultural museums closed against any external influence. 3. There is a strong "seduction of globalisation". From this point of view, the European culture is an economic success as it is worldwide oriented from a commercial point of view. The economic "conquest" of world markets supports cultural "export". In this equation, an important role is played by great companies in the field of

information and telecommunication, cultural production, entertainment and tourism. 4. The European area is a place for cultural mixture, for interculturality. This makes it possible that "hybrid cultures" may appear to assimilate ideas, images and values to their own cultural format. 5. If we accept the idea that all countries should act worldwide and that no culture can work in isolation, the policies adopted by governments should save local cultural production and diversity.

The European cultural perspective is also provided by the European Union's policy. "*Is there a European cultural policy?*" This is the title of a conference held in Bucharest in January 2009 by Vincent Dubois, a professor at the Institute of Political Sciences in Strasbourg and a member of the Institut Universitaire de France. The question seems to be natural and legitimate from the point of view of identifying the specific culture in the European area. The discourse begins with an apocryphal quotation by Jean Monnet (he would have never uttered this phrase!): "If I were to redo something – certainly, the European construction – I would start with culture" (Dubois, 2009). The abovementioned message considers that what we call the "Jean Monnet method", the project he built to sketch the European integration, has another direction: starting with the economic structure, there is a mechanism. Considering the production system, we grow to be interested in social issues. These interests entail Europe's cultural integration. This project, this orientation of interests has definitely had influence on the manner of designing the process of cultural integration. What cultural actions initiated by the European Union lacks, either partly or totally, is the support and claim of a cultural policy through the involved political organisations. Nevertheless, there are three important objectives of the European cultural agenda: 1. promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Yet, as far as this objective is concerned, we deal with a broad meaning of culture overriding culture in a strict sense. It concerns interethnic exchanges beyond mere promotion of cultural products; 2. promoting cultures as creative accelerators. Terms such as "art" or "culture" are not used in the documents issued by the European Union. The term "culture" is used in the wider anthropological meaning. The term they prefer is "creativity"; it designates any activity defined through innovation; 3. promoting culture as an all-important element in the European Union's external relations. We can see that the cultural objectives as such are subsumed to the ones concerning European integration in a broad sense (Dubois, 2009).

An important element is provided by the reference level: sub- or multinational, autochthonous or diasporas; last but not least, it is the European and international context (Bennett, 2001: 29-32).

Beyond any approach, the image of the European culture is provided by the association of the concepts people – culture – history – territory. They confer a certain local specificity due to their characteristics. From this point of view, we can identify besides a European culture, a cultural area of local, regional and national specifics. Thus, we identify at least two cultural identity constructions on the European level: a culture of cultures, that is a cultural area with a strong identity on the particular, local, regional, or national levels, or a cultural archipelago, that is a joint yet disrupted cultural area. Irrespective of the perspective, we cannot deny the existence of a European cultural area, whether a diversity cultural area, or one of "disrupted continuity".

1. European Identity and EU External Borders

Such a vision on the border has undoubtedly resulted from the need to characterise certain border typologies. Such a conceptual approach can be made when

attempting to characterise contemporary European space. The concept acquires new features precisely in such a community construction where regional or sectorial identities are still very powerful irrespective of their forms.

An interesting survey on the topic entitled *Border in a Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure* (Delanty, 2006: 46-58), was published by Gerard Delanty, professor of sociology at the University of Liverpool. The survey starts from the premise that societies are spatially organised through different "border" delimitations. From this perspective, each space may be characterised as open or close depending on the typology of the border delimiting it. Fabienne Maron speaks about "frontières barrières" (characterised by restrictions and visa) to design the opposite of "frontières ouvertes" whose crossing is authorised without restrictions (Maron, 2007: 115). However, in the context of the new geopolitical mutations in the European area, they all acquire a new significance under the pressure of changes generated by the process of European integration. The old borders fade away leaving room to new border structures resulting from new concepts and approaches on delimitations more or less spatial.

The debates on current European borders have often acquired the image of polemics on their place, role, shape, or consistency. Kalipso Nicolaides considers that *Eurolimes* is "un paradigme qui lie l'integration a l'interieur et a l'exterieur, les liens interultureles, interethatiques et interclasses tisses au sein de l'Union d'aujourd'hui et les liens inter-Etats tisses avec ses nouveaux membres potentials" (Nicolaides, 2007: 287). Beyond the image of national states' borders, the definition of this paradigm is carried out in the survey entitled *Why Eurolimes?* (Horga, 2006: 5-13). According to the same pattern, the *Eurolimes* paradigm designs, according to several researchers in the field, what we understand by "inclusive frontier" (Nicolaides, 2007: 275-290; Zielonka, 2002; Zielonka, 2006; Geremek and Picht, 2007), that is, the borders to which the European construction tends. The main idea of the integration process is not to settle barriers, but to attenuate them. From this perspective, internal borders become more and more *inclusive* and less visible. Security and border traffic control are transferred to external borders that become more and more *exclusive*, more restrictive if we respect the logic above. Such a theory is valid up to a point. Internal borders do not simply become more open, more *inclusive* (Delanty, 2006: 51); there is an integration process taking place in steps. On the other hand, we cannot consider as fully equal good and *inclusive/open*, or bad and *exclusive/close*. A simple example can confirm our hypothesis: in war areas, borders are relatively open to refugees (Delanty, 2006: 51). However, we cannot conclude that we have an *inclusive* border "open just for pleasure" like European borders to which community integration tends as a model.

As a methodological and conceptual approach from the perspective of the topic, surveys published in volume 4 of the Eurolimes Journal, *Europe from Exclusive Borders to Inclusive Frontiers*, are very interesting. The debate focuses on possible interpretations on typology, form and structure of the new borders in central and eastern European space after the accession of the first communist countries to the European Union in 2004. The new Europe is made up of eastern territories on the continent. The external border of the EU has been pushed to the east, to the traditional limits of Europe (Horga and Pantea, 2007: 7), which entitles us to wonder when and if this enlargement process should stop: before or after reaching these limits? European spaces and peoples might remain outside the more or less *inclusive* border. Then the European border cannot be only geographical with people living on both sides. Cultural distances between people can increase even within the community as the number of immigrants, refugees, and transnational

communities is constantly increasing (Nicolaides, 2007: 287). Moreover, immigrants' integration is mainly crossing an *inclusive* community border (Quispel, 2007: 102-110).

Beyond cultural and political perspectives, the situation in the past years has shown a new type of *inclusive* border resulting from states' economic interests, either belonging to the community or not. Business development bringing benefits to both sides has been able to provide a more flexible trend to political norms and regulations (Kundera, 2007: 69-77).

All these and others can identify a process of community transformation developing with passing from *exclusive* to *inclusive* border.

Without greatly differing from others, such a conceptual approach suggests an image of the border from several points of view. The concepts of territory, border, or frontier are historically determined constructions to a great extent. This is how administrative, military, and cultural borders as well as the market focused in territory delimited by border constructions came into being (Maier, 2002: 17-37). Yet, in time, the concept of border has been diluting. This is also due to the process of European integration and construction. In certain cases, the physical border has even disappeared, while other "borders" that are no longer superposed over national states have appeared. The globalisation process has a considerable influence on the erosion of borders and barriers crossing the European continent (Neuwahl, 2005: 24). In the European Union, there are several governing systems, cultures and administrative borders. Many of them do not coincide with national borders. At the same time, the multinational and transnational character of some organisations funded by community programmes lead to integrating huge areas devoid of barriers against communication, cooperation, working together, cross-border circulation.

In general, the concept of border is associated with the *hard* physical border, a concept related to the barrier that can be crossed provided certain special conditions and requirements (visa to enter that country is the best example of a restrictive requirement in the case of *hard* border). On the other hand, a state can have *hard* borders with a neighbouring country, while having *soft*, open borders with another neighbouring country (Neuwahl, 2005: 24). A border can be both *hard* and *soft* at the same time. A state can eliminate visas for the citizens of a state while strengthening and reinforcing requirements in border control (Potemkina, 2005: 165-182). In the European Union, community institutions suggest that Member States should have *hard* external borders and *soft* internal borders. Visa, border police control on people and goods crossing the border are characteristic of *hard* border. Unlike this type of border, the *soft* border is characteristic of a more flexible transit system with no restrictions of circulation for goods and persons (DeBardeleben, 2005: 11). There are several steps to reach this type of border. They consist of the following: eliminating visa, reducing taxes for people and goods to zero, facilitating and strengthening human contacts on both sides of the border including cultural, educational, and training programmes, etc.

The enlargement of the European Union to the east, a process materialised by integrating several former communist countries, has led to changing the view on former community borders, to pushing the external frontiers to the border of these countries. The *hard* border that would provide protection to community citizens according to European institutions has thus become the concern of the newcomers. Nevertheless, within the community there are supporters of other European states: Poland constantly supports Ukraine, Romania supports the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, Hungary or Slovenia support Croatia and the examples can continue. Despite community restrictions, these states try to develop contacts and *soft* border constructions with their partners outside the

community. These states' European integration has led to a certain isolation of Russia (associated with a *hard* type reaction), which was disturbed by the enlargement of the EU at the same time with the enlargement of NATO. They are all part of a complex process generated by community mechanism, geopolitical realities and macroeconomic strategies. Thus, European enlargement determines the outline of new models of neighbourhood relations somehow different from the former relations between nation states.

Without getting into details, we wish to show some concepts leading to the same interpretations in general lines. Besides, several authors consider that *hard, exclusive, close, sharp-edges* or *barrier* are equal. They are all associated with restrictions and strict control being characterised by the numerous conditions imposed to those intending to cross them. On the other hand, *soft, open, inclusive, porous, communicative* or *bridge* type borders remove transit restrictions by rendering traffic more flexible (DeBardeleben, 2005: 11).

From another perspective, Charles Maier identifies three possible conceptual approaches of the border (Maier, 2002: 41-43): the first, "*positive and constructive*", considered as a border providing political order and good neighbouring relationships; the second, "*negative and revolutionary*", seen as an illogical obstacle against normality, peace and unity; and the third approach, "*dialectical and evolutionary*", characterised by the dissolution of a border and the inevitable settling of another, yet not necessarily at the same level of formality.

Another approach originates in the clear separation of people, institutions and organisations as compared to the European Union. The perspective is either internal, in which case the border does not constraint community expression, or external, in which case the border interferes as a barrier, as an obstacle against freedom of circulation. Thus, the European Union is the expression of a *fortress* protecting its citizens against external perils (immigrants, imports, insecurity, etc.) (Delanty, 2006: 52-53). Such a perspective released again and doubled by the trend for world anti-terrorist fight has more and more supporters amongst political leaders of the European Union Member States. Joint or not, the security policy has provided new coordinates and even European neighbourhood policy despite the fact that many countries neighbouring the EU are not insecurity "exporters". In this context, the issue of immigration turns more and more into a security issue (Matuszewicz, 2007: 103-117; Wackermann, 2003: 63-84) that has to be managed even through a reform of the border crossing system.

2. Europe – a cultural diversity space

The concept of border has long developed as an "intolerance axis" of nationalism and racism, of neighbours' rejection (Wackermann, 2003: 28). Besides the physical frontier, irrespective of the conceptual approach, we identify other types of "borders" whether within or at the border of the European Union. We consider these frontiers symbolic or ideological since more often than not they are not palpable. From Europeanism to nationalism, from ethno-religious to cultural identities and social gaps, the wide range of approaches of these frontiers may continue in the context of implementing efficient European neighbourhood policies. The physical border at the external boundary of the European Union may "open" in time. Yet other types of borders may appear between people and communities. For instance, immigrants live within the European Union preserving their own identity and thus creating a world that "refuses integration" due to the specifics this identity develops. We can see that there is a gap between this kind of communities and the majority that may become a symbolic cultural border and turn into "external" border.

In the current context of economic-financial crisis, many European societies develop a strong "self-protection" feeling not only of economic origin. There is also a kind of preservation of their own identity, including the cultural one. Crisis or exaltation moments can easily lead to nationalist feelings diluting the "Europeanist" perception of the border. This dilution occurs at the same time with strengthening identity-community and the feeling of ethno-cultural appurtenance to a nation. There is a time when many European peoples come to the foreground and "re-find their identity" by turning to the national trend despite the "unity" and solidarity stated by the Member States officials at European institutions.

National borders established at different times and in different historical and political contexts have contributed to national and cultural economic integration of peripheries. In the current context, the integration of Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union has brought about a reversed phenomenon: disintegration of national market and administrative decentralisation have led to influencing the integration of peripheries to national and cultural systems. Currently, there are strong trends to focus on cross-border cooperation, thus eroding the idea of compact and relatively isolated national group (Muller, Schultz, 2002: 205). From the cultural point of view, we can notice the flows of exchanges without a loss of local, regional, or national features. Cultural characteristics introduce the debate on cultural border. It divides cultural areas with their own identity, thus building what we call the European cultural area of cultures.

2.1. Europe: culture of cultures

The numerous political borders tend to have a decreasing importance in the European Union area to the point of fading away. In time, the former borders turn into mere "symbols of singularity and independence" (Banus, 2007: 139). At the same time, cultural borders acquire a new ever more visible role. It is not only an internal approach, when cultural "sub-elements" specific to the European area can be identified; it is also an approach characteristic of governance external to the European Union. This cultural border makes a clear-cut distinction between Europe and non-Europe. This perspective raising the issue of the unity of the European civilisation and providing the image of a European cultural set (divided into cultural "sub-elements") is crushed by the supporters of national cultures of European peoples. The "culture of cultures" idea lays stress on cultures' specifics, yet acknowledging its unity. Basically, cultural borders are contact areas providing communication and cooperation to avoid barriers between the European peoples or cultures.

Cultural diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism are elements specific to the European area. The European integration process is complex; it does not impose and is not conditioned by the idea of cultural unity, or the existence of a common culture including all Europeans. Specificity and diversity are precisely the means of intercultural dialogue between European peoples. Each European society has to find their own integrating solutions depending on traditions and institutions. The integrating model used in Germany might not work in France. There are salient differences between the model of the French assimilation policy and the tolerance expressed in the United Kingdom. If we expand this approach to Central and Eastern European area, differences are even more striking.

European societies and cultures do not reject each other in the European construction equation. It is a time when each can learn from the experience and expertise of others. The ex-communist Eastern and Central European countries have undergone a process of transition to a democratic model after 1990. Yet, this democratic model

involves accepting diversity including the acknowledgement of national minorities' claims. In some situations, cultural expression and political responses to claims did not rise to the occasion. Unfortunately, the result was military solutions.

In Western Europe, minorities have gradually earned a long-term recognition of autonomy and equity in point of national resources (from this point of view, there are contrasts with the sudden changes in Central and Eastern Europe turning into intense manifestations due to minorities' claims and resistance of the majority). There is not the same situation in the rights of minorities originating from old European colonies. Upon their proposal, there is the issue of social status, financial means and relationship between European cultures and cultures in the regions of origin (La culture au cœur, 1998: 69).

Europeans' attitude concerning immigrants has not been steady throughout time. If in the 1970s the European countries favoured immigration and some of them, such as Federal Germany and Switzerland, even encouraged it for reasons of labour force, things have subsequently changed. At the end of the 1980s, due to the overwhelming number of immigrants and their "non-European" character, the old continent became less welcoming. However, Europe tried to favour a climate of openness and generosity. "It is fundamental to create a welcoming society and acknowledge the fact that immigration is a double meaning process supposing adaptation of both immigrants and the society assimilating them. By its nature, Europe is a pluralist society rich in social and cultural traditions that are to develop even more in the future" (Tandonnet, 2007: 50). Could this European optimism identified by Maxime Tandonnet be just a utopia? The presence of the Islam in Europe is a certitude, yet its Europeanization is still debatable. According to the French academician Gilles Kepel, "neither the bloodshed of Muslims in Northern Africa wearing French uniforms during the two world wars, nor the toil of immigrant workers living in terrible conditions and building France (and Europe) for next to nothing after 1945 did turn their children into... European citizens as such" (Leiken, 2005, 1). If Europeans can assimilate the Muslim immigrants or if there is to be a conflict of values is open to debate. Stanley Hoffman has noticed that Westerners are more and more scared that "they are invaded not by armed forces and tanks, but by immigrants speaking different languages, worshiping other Gods, belonging to other cultures and taking their jobs and lands, living far from the welfare system and menacing their lifestyle" (Stanley, 1991: 30; Huntington, 1998: 292).

Alternating negotiation and conflict, communication and doubt, Muslims build little by little an individual and collective identity "risking to be at the same time pure and hybrid, local as well as transnational" (Saint-Blancat, 2008: 42). The multiplying identity vectors contribute to the flow of symbolic borders and to individualising diasporas communities. There is a sort of gap around each Islamic community as compared to the rest of the community. This gap often turns into an internal and external border at the same time. This reality is stressed by the establishment of community models where identity features are transferred from the ethnic and national area (Turks, Magrebians, Arabs) to the religious, Muslim, Islamic one (Saint-Blancat, 2008: 44). According to the behaviourist model, we can notice several behavioural reactions of Islamic communities building up a solidarity overcoming ethnic or national differences. This reality is also determined by the discriminating attitude of the majority. Several stereotypes lead not only to a patterned image, but also to a solidarity around the Islamic values even in the case of non-believers, maybe atheists. The phenomenon can be reversed: from Islamic solidarity, they may reach ethnic solidarity. It is the case of the Pakistani Islam communities in the United Kingdom (about 750,000 people) who have ethnically regrouped (individualised on an ethnic border) due to a religious support (Pędziwiatr, 2002: 159).

Ethno-cultural borders may overlap or not over state borders: we can identify symbolic "borders" in most European states separating more or less human communities on ethnic or cultural criteria.

EU policy has an impact on national minorities' position in the Member States. One of the current objectives of the European Union is building a "neutral" area where different national cultures may find themselves and cooperate (La culture au cœur, 1998: 69). A key element of accession agreements for Central and Eastern European countries mentioned the treatment of national minorities including the management of the "border" between minorities and majorities. For example, in Estonia there was a programme funded by the state on the issue of the "Estonian society integration" (implemented in 2000-2007) together with programmes funded by the EU, UN and other Northern states whose aim was to promote interethnic dialogue and Estonian language learning by the Russian speakers (Thompson, 2001: 68). In Hungary, the government was concerned with improving the treatment of the Gipsies, which was required by the European Union during the pre-accession negotiations. The issue of the Gipsies is a general issue for the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In their reports on the accession negotiations with the countries in the region, the European Commission showed their concern on the protection of national minorities' rights. In the 1999 report on the progress of the candidate countries, the Commission stated that "the rooted prejudice in many candidate countries still results from discrimination against Gipsies in social and economic life" (Thompson, 2001: 69). There will still be difficulties despite the attempts of the European institutions to improve the situation. Some Central and Eastern European countries seek to redefine their national position after escaping the Soviet era. In such a context, national minorities have a hard time to identify with the national identity of the state. For example, according to Estonia's response to the recommendations of the Commission on minorities' protection, the Government speaks of "preserving the Estonian nation and culture" and the "development of the population loyal to the Estonian Republic" (Thompson, 2001: 69). The case of Ukraine (which is not a European Union Member State) is more eloquent due to the fact that it has a privileged relationship with the EU at its external border. Here, one can find what Samuel Huntington called the "erroneous civilisation line" – a delimitation dividing two cultures with different perceptions of the world (Thompson, 2001: 69).

Thus, the difficulties of integration are obvious. Amongst the groups of different ethnies or cultures, there are often communication barriers that often lead to gaps and entail discrimination reactions and conflict situations. On the other hand, these gaps are but expressions of elitist political trends that are difficult to seize in daily life. From this point of view, ethnic borders are spaces of mutual understanding and insertion and, from another point of view, they are spaces of divergence and exclusion (Tătar, 2003: 159).

2.2. Cultural Europe: between common values and interests

The classical criterion for cultural location connecting a cultural area to a people speaking the same language, having the same lifestyle and behaviour, etc., can be replaced by some criteria defining the common and organic cultural area of the Europeans.

We first refer to common cultural values due to which we can confirm today the existence of a cultural reality specific to the European area. In the survey entitled *The Cultural Frontiers of Europe: Our Common Values*, Rudolf Rezsöhazy develops the common values of the European cultural area on new elements conferring specificity and unity (Rezsöhazy, 2008): 1. The Greek-Roman civilisation as a basis to build the European culture and spirit; 2. The values of Christianity starting with basic notions, such

as the single and personal God, the concept of salvation and damnation of man, love, justice, solidarity and fraternity of man (all men are considered sons of the same Father); 3. Middle Ages and mediaeval civilisation; 4. Renaissance and Reform; 5. Enlightenment; 6. Political and industrial revolution; 7. Capitalism and socialism; 8. Development, progress and welfare of post-war history; 9. Family as core value of our society.

Another approach conferring unity to the European area refers to common interests of Europe. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Eastern and Western Europe have undergone a process of political, economic, military and environmental integration (Dubnička, 2007: 299). The fight against terrorism and the fear of military wars, the fear of increasing world population associated with poverty and migration to Western Europe raise the following dilemma: integration or national identity? Which is the role of the EU in this situation? The answers to these questions have to be sought in the following fields: culture, history, religion, economy and security (Dubnička, 2007: 299-309). Besides divergences separating the Europeans, the current context brings to the foreground the strong determinism recorded by the integrationist trend triggered by common interest.

An area with common values and interests is able to build and strengthen its common identity character. There is also the relation with the non-European area. From this point of view, the European cultural area takes a distinct form as compared to other cultural types and systems. Thus, there is a cultural border around cultural Europe. Such cultural border makes a clear distinction between Europe and non-Europe. Besides this theory laying stress on scepticism concerning certain projects for future enlargement of the European Union, we can notice the use of debating on the issue of the real borders of Europe, an issue approached by analysts for centuries.

Cultural perspective raises debates on the notion of the unity of the European civilisation as well as on the relation between geography and culture. Can Europe be separated from Asia on the cultural criterion of delimitation? Professor Delanty approaches the concept of Christian Europe and Europe as an heir of the Roman and Greek civilisation (Delanty, 2006: 46). Besides the line of geographical, tectonic separation of the two continents, is the European culture able to impose new borders? It is a question to which European analysts provide different answers. Visions are strongly influenced by the current geopolitical subjectivity. During Middle Ages, Europe was limited to the Catholic West clearly separated from the expanding Islamism. Through Peter the Great's endeavours, Russia was included in the European diplomatic system. Europe as a concept expanded. For the first time in 1716, in *Almanach royal* published in France, the figures of the Romanovs were amongst the European monarch families. This was mainly due to the fact that Russia joined the other powers in the European diplomatic system (Anderson, 1968: 156). Around 1715, the position of the Ottoman Empire resembled Russia from many points of view. It joined the European diplomatic arena at the end of the 15th century. The fact that the Turks joined the European relations system was mainly due to the rivalries between France and the Habsburgs (Anderson, 1968: 157). Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire did not express as a European state and did never belong to the European diplomatic system in the 18th century. To Napoleon, the European area meant the "French Europe" conceived as a space whose borders had to be settled according to the tensions against the Ottoman Empire (Delanty, 2006: 46). Further examples are available to these days. Yet, the hypothesis of cultural borders of the European area imposes certain delimitations that we often assume, whether we like it or not.

Our aim is not to trace such borders of the European area. However, we have to point out that our debate rather imposes a characterisation of the European identity as a

spatial notion that is protected like a fortress. Is Europe (we directly refer to the EU, which is more or less associated to the European area as a whole!) not only politically, but also culturally an area imposing external borders clearly determined from a territorial point of view? If we pursue the evolution of the process of European construction in time, we can conclude by answering the question with the simple fact that in the European Union external borders are more and more important (more closed!), while the internal borders are becoming formal (more open!). Thus, Europe seen as a "fortress" is more and more open, more "hospitable" from the point of view of its Member States, and more closed, more secure at the borders and less permissive from the point of view of the rest of the world. In this construction, we can identify more than the advantages of high degree of democracy and welfare that the Community citizens enjoy; there is also the exclusivity imposed to others by closing the fortress. When putting aside internal barriers, Europe (EU!) starts to become a super-state reinventing the "hard" border to protect states and politically associated people; it excludes those who have not been beneficiaries of such political decisions. Do external borders of the Community turn into expressions of the national state border in this context? There are several territories that are geographically "within" the Community, but do not belong to the European Union. The attempt to trace the Community border to (physically!) separate the "Europeans" and the "non-Europeans" is impossible from a cultural point of view. Even recent historical heritage after the Cold War imposes both borders and real barriers that cannot be surpassed from the point of view of political decisions. Borders are still closed irrespective of cultural heritage. On the other hand, the process of tracing external borders does not seem to have finished. Considering this remark, there are people and states that will belong to the "inside" in the future, although they are currently outside the borders. The hard border whose construction is more definite excludes both Europeans and non-Europeans. Consequently, the European border is either open or closed depending on the exclusivist interests and less on cultural grounds. Thus, politicians' discourse using the European cultural heritage as a reason against the integration of countries such as Turkey is mere populist action. The decision is political and the club is exclusivist. "Europe is and should remain *a house with many rooms*, rather than a culturally and racially exclusive club" (Bideleux, 2006: 62). Thus, the European Community is a territory closed on both political and identity grounds.

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Thus, we identify at least two cultural identity constructions on the European level: a culture of cultures, that is, a cultural area with a strong identity on the particular, local, regional and national levels, or a cultural archipelago, that is, a joint cultural area with disruptions. No matter the perspective, the existence of a European cultural area is not denied, whether we speak of diversity or "disrupted continuity". The European culture seen as a "house with many rooms" does not exclude the existence of the "house" or the "rooms". The natural question arising from this perspective is as follows: are specific cultures completely integrated in the general European cultural area? The answer seems natural. Our European identity supposes a basic reality. Besides, the particularity of the European culture is provided by diversity and multiculturalism as means of expression on the local, regional or national levels. Consequently, the European cultural area is an area with strong identity both particularly and generally. The phrase "culture of cultures" is appropriate from this point of view. As to identifying cultural borders, we can notice the fact that cultural contact areas belong to at least two categories: internal areas between

local, regional or national elements; external areas that impose the delimitation around what European culture is. Both approaches used in this paper do not exclude each other despite the conceptual opposition. The existence of national cultural areas does not exclude the existence of a common European cultural area. In fact, it is precisely this reality that confers the European area a special cultural identity. Europe can be conceived as a cosmopolite space, a media-cultural space where cultural security can turn into an element of preservation of a European common identity, besides the approaches we have referred to. Facing economic pressure generated by the economic policies, today's Europe responds to the whole world as a powerful common cultural area through the EU. Do peoples' identities disappear in this equation? The debate has to comprise approaches starting from the definition of the place of the national in the context of the European construction process. Can the nationalism specific to the 19th and 20th centuries Europe be extrapolated to peoples in a different concept, that of Europeanism? Besides the slight variations of the approach, "nationalism" can be European. In this case, Europe as a whole is strengthened as a structure in construction including the cultural perspective.

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