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Europe: A Cultural Border, or a Geo-cultural Archipelago

Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie

Abstract: *The image of the European culture is given by the association of the concepts people – culture – history – territory, which provides certain local features. From this relation, we identify a cultural area with local, regional and national features beyond a certain European culture. Thus, we identify at least two cultural identity constructions on the European level: a culture of cultures, that is a cultural area with a particular, local, regional and national strong identity, or a cultural archipelago, that is a common yet disrupted cultural area. Whatever the perspective, the existence of a European cultural area cannot be denied, although one may speak of diversity or of "disrupted continuity".*

The paper is a survey on the European cultural space in two aspects: 1. Europe with internal cultural border areas; 2. Europe as external cultural-identity border area. From a methodological point of view, we have to point out that despite the two-levelled approach the two conceptual constructions do not exclude each other: the concept of "culture of cultures" designs both a particular and a general identity area. The specific of the European culture is provided precisely by diversity and multiculturalism as means of expression on local, regional, or national levels. Consequently, the European cultural area is an area with a strong identity on both particular and general levels.

Keywords: *culture, border, diversity, Europe, identity, globalisation, interculturality*

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 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, 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, 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):

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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".

What is the place of cultural borders from such conceptual perspective? We are going to attempt a double approach: 1. Europe with internal border areas; 2. Europe as an area with external cultural-identity borders. From a methodological point of view, we have to point out that despite the two-levelled approach the two conceptual constructions do not exclude each other: the concept of "culture of cultures" designates both a particular and a general identity area.

I. Europe – an area of cultural borders

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.

I.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 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).

I.2. Cultural border versus political border/cultural identity

From this perspective, Europe seems a structure made up of cultural areas delimited by cultural "borders" overlapping more or less on national states' borders. The border defined by the *Dictionnaire de géographie* (Baud, Bourgeat, 1995) as a "limit separating two areas, two states", a disruption "between two types of space organisation, communication networks, societies, often different and sometimes opposed" (Wackermann, 2003: 11), represents the "interface of territorial discontinuities" (Wackermann, 2003: 10). Borders show the limits of jurisprudence, sovereignty and political systems. Thus, they can have the role of lines, "barriers" or "landmarks". On the

other hand, they show the typology of political construction. The relation border – political system is interestingly seized by Jean-Baptiste Haurguindéguy, who sees the "border as a limit of the political" and "the political as a limit of the border" (Haurguindéguy, 2007: 154).

As compared to political border, cultural border is not seen exclusively in connection with the idea of state; this image can also be seen as compared to the international context, international political system and international bodies. However, everything can be connected with the relation between the political area and the border through "democracy". Just like democracy, culture is not, and should not be, the exclusive means of political structures. Intergovernmental bodies established after WWII have repeatedly stated their interest in "cultural democracy", "cultural rights" and the promotion of coherent policies in the cultural field (La culture au cœur, 1998: 37). Besides these desiderata, national states have been directly involved in promoting cultural policies to "develop national identity". Several European states allow an important part of their cultural budget to preserve and protect a material cultural patrimony standing for the joint heritage of Europe in its entirety. The rich Roman or Renaissance cultural heritage contribute to more than strengthening the European culture, as it is also overlapped on the Italian political desiderata to develop the identity of the Italian nation and state (La culture au cœur, 1998: 44).

Cultural policy is more than building and renovating cultural buildings; it stands for a whole set of measures in the cultural field (Bennett, 200: 55-62). Promoting cultural identity and culture, favouring creativity and active participation in the cultural field are four fundamental objectives of the European cultural policies. The importance deriving from such policy is the foundation of establishing identities and states in several regions of the European continent. Tracing political borders, as well as claims of any nature are supported more often than not by cultural and identity arguments. It is a topical perspective even in the context of European integration and globalisation nowadays: the process is associated with current trends to local and regional elements, which brings about the strengthening of identity significance and cultural heritage (Wackermann, 2003: 39; O'Dowd, Wilson, 1996:237).

Cultural identity (represented by encoded behaviour and communication, such as language, customs, traditions, clothes, traditional structures, institutions, religion, arts, etc.) is the specific element providing national cohesion and continuity of generations. Identity is plural, as each individual is defined in an effective or potential manner through a multiple appurtenance: either immediate surroundings (family and close friends), or the first levels of ethnic, religious, social or local appurtenance take shape (La culture au cœur, 1998: 52). Several individuals or groups of individuals cannot identify themselves with such identity structures, which generates the search for new references, that is, new systems of values. In Western Europe, crises of the provident state, unemployment, immigration or exclusion have a deep influence on society. On the other hand, in Central and Eastern Europe, the road to democracy has proved to be painful in many countries. The return to nationalism has been a mere expression of a reality leading to creating or strengthening cultural identities. Thus, in many European countries, one of the cultural policies objectives is "favouring (re)discoveries or (re)assertion of identities" (La culture au cœur, 1998: 53).

Dictionaries of cultural geography define borders as basic spatial structures having the role of geopolitical disruption and marking or landmark acting on three levels: real, symbolic and imaginary. The symbolic refers to the appurtenance to a community anchored in their own territory thus making reference to identity. Anthropologists insist on

the founding role of the symbolic in establishing collective or individual identities through delimitations. Borders always trigger strong marks of identity leaving its imprint on cultural relationships on an inhabited territory (Spiridon, 2006). The tradition of geo-historical research initiated by the French school of *Annales* has insisted on the significant equation border – identity. Lucien Febvre has analysed the semantic evolution of the notion of border as a sign of the mutation of historical reality in parallel with the establishment of nation-states. The couple border – identity is present in the ideas expressed by Fernand Braudel in *L'identité de la France*. To Braudel, the border is the place where autonomous yet interdependent plans are articulated – on the one hand, real geopolitical borders and, on the other hand, their intellectual, ideological and symbolic projections. The ideas mentioned above hold true in the spatial delimitation of Europe and the perceptions of European identity, particularly as the idea of "European cultural identity" refers to offcut and delimitation: geopolitical, ideological or symbolic, and to unstable borders sometimes traced in a paradoxical manner and generating confusions (Spiridon, 2006).

I.3. Cultural borders, foundation of current geopolitics

Nowadays, the great attempt for European unification is the third great attempt of the kind. After the forceful attempts of Napoleon and Hitler, who did not succeed in an imperialist manner, the process of European construction has acquired an ever greater consistency through a progressive integrating policy based on the ideals of peace and welfare (La culture au cœur, 1998: 77).

The process of integration through successive stages has enabled the passage from the European Economic Community to the European Community, then the European Union. Despite the first failed attempts to settle a "political community", the integrating process has continued to become stronger. This equation makes room to geopolitical factors as expressions of cultural differences beyond economic factors, such as stability, growth potential, a good market, or the presence of qualified labour force. In the process of building an "enlarged family" of democratic societies, the partisans of integration hope for a progressive reduction of nation-states power despite nationalist remainders shattering some former communist countries in Europe. After the fall of communism, many Central and Eastern European countries have found their existence connected to their own cultural awareness: "a culture cannot survive without tradition, and a tradition cannot live without minimum continuity" (La culture au cœur, 1998: 80). Cultural differences associated with linguistic, ethnic, religious or migration divisions have contributed to exponential increase of xenophobia and intolerance in several European regions. We can add to the examples in the Balkans and the Caucasus area the discrimination against immigrants in certain Western European countries or the exacerbation of tensions between majorities and minorities from the point of view of building and preserving a strong identity for each ethno-linguistic group. A recent example raising again an older issue is the intention of the Fidesz Government in Budapest to grant Hungarian citizenship to Hungarian ethnics living in neighbouring countries as of January 2011. The measure envisages about 3.5 million Hungarian ethnics living in countries neighbouring Hungary: Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, Croatia, and Austria. This matter has increased the tensioned relations with Bratislava and other countries neighbouring Hungary. After calling back the ambassador in Budapest, the Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico stated on Monday, 17 May, that he would further a law to withdraw the Slovak citizenship to any individual requesting Hungarian citizenship (Cochino, 2010). This dispute raises not only a regional

issue involving either the disappearance of the Hungarian minority in Southern Slovakia or the secession of the regions, but also an issue of stability within the EU and NATO.

On the matter of settling the geopolitical identity of Europe, an important element is the relations between the EU and Russia. The following pattern can be identified: the countries of the "New Europe" – Eastern European states in post-communist time have been in a tough Russophobia and joined a Euro-Atlantic orientation. The situation has a long history: Eastern Europe has ceaselessly been a war area between Europe and Russia. An example in point is the moment when the United Kingdom deliberately used the region as a "tieback" to prevent a possible alliance between Russia and Germany that would facilitate the end of the Anglo-Saxon domination in the world in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It is the same situation now. The only difference is that stress is laid on energetic projects in the "tieback" countries defending the argument according to which it is a payback for the "Soviet occupation" in the 20th century. "New arguments, old geopolitics" (Dugin, 2010). Besides this approach, another geopolitical project has been introduced – the "Eurasia project". This project involves settling two geopolitical units in Northern Eurasia that would be "great areas" – European and Russian. In this context, Europe is conceived as a centre, as a civilisation. The most important moment in a multipolar architecture is eliminating the "tieback", this bone of contention controlled by the Anglo-Saxons that disagrees either with Europe, or with Russia (Dugin, 2010). "Consequently, these countries and people that objectively tend to build the New Europe will have to redefine their geopolitical identity. This identity must be based on a main rule: together with Europe and Russia at the same time. The European integration and friendly relations with Russia – these are the elements bridging the two poles of a multipolar world" (Dugin, 2010).

Beyond the opinions of the Russian politologist quoted above, the geopolitical construction around centres such as the United States of America, the continental Europe, or Russia have some slight variations. The western world (the Americas, the EU Member States, Australia, South-Eastern Asia and countries such as Japan, Israel and South Africa) is a complex economic, political and cultural entity showing that it has the resources to overcome conflicts between local, regional and national cultures (La culture au cœur, 1998: 82-83). This reality does not involve the disappearance of cultural identities and borders. Moreover, when facing the process of globalisation, there is an acceleration of local cultural production/request. This process does not involve exclusivity and intolerance towards other cultures; it involves the positioning in a general structure built on a geopolitical support referring to an integrationist phenomenon in certain situations.

II. Europe – a geo-cultural archipelago

Irrespective of the approaches on diversity and multiple identities from a cultural point of view, Europe can be conceived as an organic cultural structure despite disruptions that may occur between the elements making up its complex structure. Considering this approach, the European culture is built on an intricate system of common values characterising the European cultural area. Just like isles making up an archipelago, despite some areas delimitating it, the European cultural area is made up of elements that can be characterised as organic structures with a certain composition in point of shape and expression. The areas limiting these "insular" cultural areas interpreted as cultural borders from the perspective of our approach are disruptions within an organic cultural system: Europe. This cultural area is organic and has specific relations with the neighbouring cultural areas.

II.1. 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? It is a difficult issue entailing debates not only on the character and typology of the border, but also on aspects introduced by the fact that the European Union does not have a border from within which is can see outside. 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.

II.2. Numerical revolution and the society of communication: between diversity and homogeneity

Due to technical development in the field of reproducing and broadcasting information through numerical encoding, distances between different parts of the world have greatly diminished nowadays. The new free practices with access to networks and

numerical content of information provide the opportunity to have quick access to a lot of information. For example, due to different internet programmes, people in any part of the world can communicate in real time for free. The new technologies change production and cultural consumption due to the fact that cultural content belonging to a wide cultural range is at our disposal. Between culture, communication and new technologies there is a natural relation leading to outlining a communicational society within which cultural production and consumption is specific, yet shallow (La culture au cœur, 1998: 318).

Specific cultural programmes can be broadcast within the new context not only in a limited space; they are available in diasporas areas (Tardif, Farchy, 2006: 166-167). Distance communication between communities belonging to the same cultural area is facilitated and settles the premise of developing a borderless cultural area. Thus, emigrant communities in the diasporas can keep in touch with the cultural area of origin and succeed to preserve their identity. The internet provides a great chance to small cultures and threatened linguistic communities. Universalisation should not be understood as a means of uniformity, but as a chance to cultural identity... integration in the universal value circuit (Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 2006: 2).

This opportunity to promote the particularity and preservation of identity of small groups under the pressure of assimilation is accompanied by a similar process in a reversed direction: cultural elements specific to cultural "homogeneity" resulting from globalisation are more easily offered to cultural environment including small cultural communities. Another result is "relocating cultural consumption" as the new technologies of information and communication reduce distances and compress time (La culture au cœur, 1998: 120). This reality puts aside local and provincial constraints although there is an "invasion" of the universal. The European cultural area as a whole acquires a more consistent form in this context, as its elements are more connected and related through interculturality. Cultural diversity acquires a consistency through several models provided. The choice undoubtedly leads to homogeneity. There is the same process in the European area. Beyond any infusion from the outside, particularly the American area and the Islamic area, it preserves its own cultural specific (La culture au cœur, 1998: 117-133).

II.3. Network culture – a new type of cultural border

The multiplication of education, research and cooperation opportunities in the cultural field has been carried out due to international "workshops" and the development of transnational networks. The role of these networks is to accelerate cultural actions and promote common values (La culture au cœur, 1998: 321). Thematic networks aim at settling research, development and knowledge actions on common interests identified on regional, interregional and transnational levels. Technically, the network is made up of a group of institutions with resembling aims identifying a common need in their field of action. Joining under an organisation can be formal or informal, as communication between members and sharing joint objectives of the networks are essential for it to work.

Thus, a network is defined by sharing information and idea, learning from the experience of others, expertise and large perspective on approaches in the field of cultural patrimony marketing and management. "Networks make us become familiar with the new artistic and cultural expressions, new methods of management and provide consistency to the partnership between public institutions and civil society" (Lujanschi, Neamu, 2005: 4). In the new European cultural configuration, networks make up the expression of a different form of cooperation as compared to the classic system. They have the role to favour, simplify and rush the implementation of joint cultural projects. Networks are

useful as they allow reaching international level without going through the national institutional framework (Pehn, 1999: 47).

Networks have a core role both for professionals' *mobility* and acquiring a European *cohesion*. Cultural exchange and cooperation greatly contributes to Europe's integration and cohesion. The European Union encourages long-term cooperation leading to networks interconnecting cultural institutions. Networks provide a wide range of public information and increasing interest in culture by developing the ability for communication, collaboration and diversity understanding (Lujanschi, Neamu, 2005: 7).

The *Manifesto of the European Cultural Networks* adopted in Brussels on 21 September 1997 by the Forum of European Cultural Networks considers that "European cultural networks contribute to European cohesion, facilitate mobility of operators and cultural products, facilitate trans-cultural communication, fights xenophobia and racism, and provides practice in inter-cultural understanding, strengthens the cultural dimension of development that is not produced by purely economic factors" (Lujanschi, Neamu, 2005: 3).

More often than not, these networks are considered unofficial organised groups attempting to focus information and putting pressure on decision-makers. Some analysts even consider them exclusivist groups established around institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg (La culture au cœur, 1998: 321). More or less formal, these networks are often used by the European institutions in decision-making. Thus, networks become interlocutors acquiring regional, national or European recognition. Yet, their recognition is not related to a certain financial support. It is a certain legitimacy, that is, a new manner of working on an institutional level.

No matter their role relating to the European institutions, as petitioners or partners, European cultural networks have become important transnational vectors to stimulate cooperation in the cultural field. Intercultural dialogue is facilitated by formal or informal connection of specialists or representatives of organisations in the European area. Thus, the European cultural area acquires a new approach as regards its structure: cultural "small isles" interconnected through a transnational relational system. "The process of '*networking'* is a long-term process of a deep and subjective nature that is difficult to quantify and judge" (Pehn, 1999: 49).

Conclusions

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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