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From East Europeans to Europeans: shifting collective identities and symbolic boundaries in the New Europe*

PIOTR SZTOMPKA

Institute of Sociology, Jagellonian University, Grodzka 52, 31–044 Cracow, Poland. E-mail: ussztomp@cyf-kr.edu.pl

On 1 May 2004, Europe changed. This date marks both a beginning and an end. The enlargement of the European Union signals the beginning of a new phase in the history of Western Europe, and, for the new members from Eastern Europe, the end of a long period of exclusion and separation. Commentaries on this epochal event usually focus on 'hard' institutional factors such as political rearrangements, legal coordination and economic readjustments, etc. I will focus more on the 'soft' cultural and human factors; what I consider to be the intangibles and imponderables of a new, emerging Europe. I am convinced that culture really matters in social life.

Introduction

When sociologists speak of culture, they have in mind a much wider category than that used in the vernacular. They are talking about what Emile Durkheim, the French 'father' of the discipline, called 'societal facts'. These facts are supra-individual phenomena that do not derive from individual mental states but emerge from the collective consciousness. They are shared by the majority of the people and exert external pressures and constraints on each member of society. They include social values and norms, beliefs and convictions, symbolic meanings, half-conscious 'habits of the heart' – to borrow a phrase from yet another of sociology's founding fathers, Alexis de Tocqueville. Culture, to a great extent, determines what people, as members of collectivities, think and do; it shapes their actual social practices, their life-ways.

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The various components of a culture – whether axiomatic, cognitive, or symbolic – all come together to form the self-definitions that people construct of themselves, i.e. their collective identities. This will be my narrower focus. I will examine how accession to the European Union can affect the collective identities of peoples from the former communist countries. I will look at how this process may help erase the current somewhat peculiar and crippled East-European identity and clear the way for a fully-fledged and proud European identity. I also believe that the revolutions of 1989 will not have been completed until such transformations of identity have come to a successful conclusion. Being invited to enter the 'European house' does not necessarily mean automatically 'feeling at home' or that newcomers will necessarily be treated as 'one of us' by the current tenants. This metaphor is useful for grasping the opposition of hard institutional arrangements and soft cultural orientations. 'House' means the architecture, 'home' means solidarity, loyalties, attachments, trust. To reside in the house does not necessarily means to consider it one's home.

Rudiments of the theory of identity

First, however, let us look at some general theoretical considerations. Human society is the product of a dynamic process in which society continually reconstructs itself; society is constantly 'becoming'; it is never simply 'being'. It is a process rather than a substance.[1] This process is driven by societal agencies that refer to the potential of a society to transform itself effectively. A crucial component of a societal agency is collective identity, which is simultaneously both a prerequisite for the future collective social practices as well as the outcome of those social practices, with accumulated marks of past experience. Collective identity must be distinguished both from personal identity and mass identity. Personal identity is the individual's self-defined concept in terms of belonging to a specific social group or organization, one's status or societal role, etc. Thus, I consider myself: a Pole, a Krakowian, a Catholic, an academic, a male. Mass identity, on the other hand, is the sum of specific individual identities found in a particular collectivity. As such it is an artefact: a statistical average devoid of ontological 'hard' reality. It tells us only that there are a certain number of individuals with a particular type of personal identity. In contrast, collective identity can only be produced by the exchange of meanings through, for example, public debate, artistic expression, conversations, arguments and the media; what is sometimes referred to as the 'meaning industry'. It emerges in interpersonal interactions as a record of common social experiences. It is created not so much as a result of individual biography, but rather in the course of societal history. In a way, collective identity can be seen as sedimentary rock built up of layers of social practices and traditions.

Collective identity – like all other components of societal agency – emerges as the combined product of two categories of determinants. On the one hand, the individual endowment of the actors: their motivations, beliefs, convictions, competencies, and on the other hand the cultural, political, legal, economic and geopolitical institutional structures in which the social actors are involved. The emergence of identity only becomes real when both of these two interacting determinants are ascribed a specific meaning through interpersonal discourse in the public space. This meaning specifies both what we want to achieve and what we realistically can achieve, given our personal limitations, and received, inherited institutional environment. The Durkheimian, societal, quality of collective identity has three characteristics: first, it is shared by the whole of society, second it is external with respect to each individual (not personally devised, or freely chosen) and third, it is constraining, normatively binding and determines the way individuals feel about themselves and about society.

Closer analysis reveals that there are two divergent aspects of collective identity: the forging of bonds and the defining of boundaries.[2] Collective identity means belonging to one group and differing from another. Thus the first, affirmative aspect of collective identity is the definition of '*we*': who we are, who we resemble, who we share with, who we trust, who we are loyal to and with whom we feel solidarity. This sense of 'we' is apparent through the presence of moral bonds, such as trust, loyalty, solidarity, reciprocity and empathy among its members. The foundations for such bonds can be found at four different levels. First, there are the primordial commonalities of territory, landscape and environment (e.g. village vs. city, mountains vs. seaside, desert vs. agricultural lands). Second, there are historical commonalities of past experiences, traditions, collective memories, emblematic heroes, common ancestors – whether real or mythical. Third, there are cultural commonalities of language, religion, customs, ways of life, and life style. Fourth, there are ideological commonalities of *Weltanschauung*, positive visions of a special mission, a calling, a role in the wider world, or negative visions of particular oppression, exploitation, dependence, pain and suffering. At this last level the typical forms of ideological articulation are positive or negative auto-stereotypes: idealization of self, aggrandizement, superiority complex, or the opposite – self-flagellation, self-victimization, inferiority complex and sacrifice.

The second, negative aspect of collective identity is the definition of '*them*': the 'others', from whom we differ, who we oppose, who threaten us, and against whom we must defend ourselves. This definition of 'them' or the 'others' is formulated on a scale of 'otherness'. Sometimes others are perceived as different in the sense of being special, a new experience, something exotic with a particular kind of worth. We call this a positive tolerance. However, the 'others' may also be perceived as strange, a necessary and unavoidable burden that has

to be endured. This is still tolerance but with a different, negative overtone, hence referred to as a negative tolerance. Further along the scale, the 'others' are seen as 'alien': unacceptable, repulsive, to be avoided and rejected. This would be referred to as intolerance. The most destructive concept of otherness is when 'others' are perceived as the 'enemy': as threatening embodiments of evil, polluting poison, illegitimate encroachments on our well-being, something to be defended against, and ultimately to be destroyed, even exterminated.

With 'others' we tend not to forge bonds but are more likely to construct boundaries. Sometimes these boundaries are quite tangible such as, for instance, barbed-wire fences, checkpoints, walls – the Berlin Wall and the recently erected wall dividing the Israeli settlements from Palestinian territories, etc. However, less obvious, more symbolic and even virtual boundaries can also separate us from the supposedly polluting influence of 'others'. Examples include, separate seating on buses for racial minorities, restricted places of entertainment under the conditions of apartheid, the Star of David on the arms of persecuted Jews, or in a much less significant area – remote corners for smokers at airports. From the perspective of a given society, boundaries most often face outwards; that is, borders ward off outsiders – tribes, ethnic groups, nations, civilizations. But people also erect internal boundaries within their own society, keeping other races, ethnicities, immigrants and refugees at a distance.

Images of 'others' are also articulated by means of stereotypes. Racial, national and ethnic prejudices give rise to practices of segregation, discrimination or persecution. It has been shown that negative stereotypes initiate vicious circles involving isolation, hostility, conflict and wars. On the other hand, positive stereotypes strengthen moral bonds and, thus, initiate behaviour patterns that encourage contact and enhance relationships that lead to mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. They act as self-fulfilling prophecies affirmed by the putative truth of their effects. Stereotypes also enter cycles of dialectic reciprocity: the more we are disliked the more we dislike, and vice versa – the more we are liked, the more we like. The crucial factor in shaping our auto-stereotypes and the stereotypes of the 'others' is the way we are treated or, perceive to be treated by the others. This famous mechanism, described by C. H. Cooley for individual cases as 'the looking-glass self', operates also on a collective scale in shaping collective identities. So much for general theory. Let us now move on to consider two historical illustrations of collective identity: the European and East-European identity.

The European identity

Not only was Europe one of the first areas to develop a continental-wide, strong feeling of unity, but was also perhaps the only continent to produce an identity

of this kind. Francis Bacon already referred to 'nos Europai', 'we the Europeans' in 1623. This kind of continent-related collective reference does not seem to occur in the other continents. Admittedly, it could be argued that it currently occurs in America. However, it seems to me that in the case of the US it resembles more the traditional forms of nationalism (loyalty to the 'New Nation' of immigrants), or 'constitutional patriotism' (Habermas, 1994) (the strong allegiance to the Constitution of the US, the anthem and the flag), than identity with the whole North American continent. European exceptionalism in this regard is emphasized by the contemporary commentator, Anthony Pagden: 'Europeans are, I suspect, unusual in sharing in this way a sense that it might be possible to belong to something larger than the family, the tribe, the community, or the nation yet smaller and more culturally specific than "humanity" '.[3]

The foundation of the European identity is built on paradoxes. To begin at the primordial level, Europe is merely a vulnerable peninsula of the huge Asian or Eurasian continent; its Eastern borders tentatively holding back the vast steppes of the Orient. As the British historian Norman Davies puts it in his monumental *Europe: a History*: 'All there was, for five million years, was a long, sinuous peninsula with no name, set like the figurehead of a ship on the prow of the world's largest land mass'.[4] The Eastern limits of Europe have always been contentious, which is best demonstrated by its historically changing definitions, with the gradual expansion of the idea of Europe apparently now brought to a halt at the Ural mountains. The unity or homogeneity of the continent is also problematic, in view of the tremendous diversity of landscape, climate, environment, as well as of states and other political units. Paradoxically this diversity has often been treated as a common, unifying feature of Europe, as its unique value, or richness, as illustrated by Bertold Brecht's proud proclamation: 'We Europeans cross borders as often as others change their shoes'.

The more obvious foundation of the European identity is its common history. As is widely recognized, Europe has its origins in three great traditions. The first pillar of Europe is ancient Greece, with its tradition of art, philosophy, science, cultivation of the body and first delineation of democracy. The second pillar is ancient Rome, with its tradition of law and a legal culture, as well as an efficient administration of the state. There is no doubt that the third pillar, in spite of all the reservations raised by the fanatics of 'political correctness', is Judaism and Christianity with their concept of human dignity and their ideas of freedom, liberation, emancipation, as well as of linear progress. But even in the domain of history we discover a paradox. For although Europe's history has been characterized by numerous dividing and disruptive conflicts, struggles and wars, the memories of such calamities accompanied by the dreams of peaceful order and stability, have become strong unifying factors. As we know, the political project of a European Community, and later of a European Union, is

legitimized precisely by the effort to escape from a conflict-permeated and war-ridden past.

But perhaps the most important foundation of the European identity is cultural. As Vaclav Havel once put it: 'Europe is a domain of our common thoughts, values and ideals'. Many other authors and politicians have emphasized a common pool of values. For example Norman Davies mentions 'religious tolerance, human rights, democratic government, the rule of law, the scientific tradition, social modernization, cultural pluralism, a free market economy and the supreme Christian virtues such as compassion, charity, and respect for the individual'[4] as values Europeans share. The most comprehensive 'official' list, however, is to be found in Article 2 of the project of the European Constitution, in which values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, pluralism, tolerance, justice and solidarity have been mentioned. Significantly, such an apology for common values corresponds with the recognition of Europe's rich diversity of languages, lifestyles and customs, which are to be preserved in everyday life.

Rather more problematic is the fourth foundation of unity, the Euro-centric ideology claiming that Europe is the cradle of the expanding West (including the US). According to this ideology, the West is considered synonymous with the most dynamic, developed and progressive civilization. It assumes, somewhat in line with Spencerian social evolutionism, that there is only one scenario for social development and only one road leading to modernity and beyond, which all societies have to follow, as if we were all riding one giant escalator, with the more privileged people at the top, and the less fortunate down at the 'backward' bottom. By implication Europe was said to be entrusted with the civilizing mission of pulling up the laggards, through its domination across many continents. The geopolitical consequence of such a theory has been European imperial expansion and colonialism. In 1800, 35% of the landmass of the world was controlled by European powers. This rose to 67% in 1878, and finally, to 84%, in 1914. Such an absolute view of the European path to modernity is presently challenged by the notion of 'multiple modernities', put forward by scholars such as Shmuel Eisenstadt, Bjorn Wittrock, Johan Arnason and others.

In spite of all these commonalities, Europe has always raised numerous boundaries, both internal and external. Internal dividing lines have separated its core from the peripheries. There have been various types of divisions, such as: barbaricum versus civilization; the North (as defined by Voltaire to include Scandinavia, the Baltic countries, and Poland) versus the Mediterranean South, the cradle of Europe; Western Christendom (Catholic, Protestant) versus Byzantine culture and Orthodox religion; the economic backyard or under-developed areas versus the developed, highly industrialized and urbanized countries; urbanized areas versus rural areas; the former centres of empires or imperial states

(Britain, France, the Netherlands) versus small states; communist countries versus the 'free Europe', or – in different terms – Western versus Eastern Europe; EU countries versus others; recently acceded countries versus the rest within the EU, and potentially, the 'two-speed' future development of the EU, with the core countries versus the rest.

The external boundaries of Europe have also always been resistant to other areas of the world, to other continents and civilizations. The earliest fault line separated it from the Orient. As Edward Said puts it: 'The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies (…) its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other'.[5] A more recent fault line is the opposition toward Islam, prophetically described by Samuel Huntington as: 'the war of civilizations'[6]. The most recent boundary emerging after the collapse of communism is the one erected against the US (as opposition to American hegemony in a no-longer bipolar, globalizing world). It raises the spectre of age-old anti-American sentiments, expressed for example in 1900 in the statement describing Americans as: 'Clients of Europe which have become its rivals'.[7]

The East-European identity

I claim that specific historical circumstances in the Eastern part of Europe have led to the emergence of a particular type of collective identity, which can be called the East-European identity. After a period of considerable economic and political success and influence under the Byzantine and Ottoman empires in the southern flanks of the region (the Balkans, Hungary), and under strong monarchies in the northern part (Poland, Lithuania, the Czech lands), which lasted until the end of the 17th century, the region lost its importance faced with the birth and expansion of modern capitalism in Western Europe. Ever since, it has retained its peripheral status vis-à-vis Western Europe. There are many reasons for this. First, the geographical shape of the European peninsula made the Eastern part into a kind of residual area for Europe without any obvious geographical boundary from Asia. Second, the region has been economically underdeveloped and become backward in its civilization and technology. This underdevelopment has resulted in a relatively large proportion of rural settlements with relatively rare and small urban centres, and a dominant rural population. The region was often conquered and politically dominated by Western powers (e.g. in the case of Poland's partitions throughout the whole 19th century, or the Nazi occupation in the 20th century). After the Second World War it became politically isolated from the West, and lost its sovereignty as it was incorporated into the communist bloc. (The complicity of Western powers in such a division, often referred in Eastern Europe as the 'Yalta treason', led to the erection of an additional barrier of distrust, and suspicion

concerning the West's political intentions.) For a considerable time – as if to support this suspicion – it was excluded and kept outside of the emerging European Community or European Union. Even with the present expansion of the EU toward the East, there are still a number of Eastern European countries that will remain outside the politically united Europe, at least for the time being.

These were the historical factors that bred Western stereotypes of Eastern Europe, which in turn were reflected in the auto-stereotypes of the East Europeans. Already in the 18th century, 'Europeans as they travelled beyond Germany into Catholic Poland, Orthodox Russia, and the still Ottoman Balkan peninsula, felt themselves to have entered an alien and archaic world of vast distances, serf-peasantries, and brutal petty officials – a world that corresponded all too easily to their received notions of oriental despotism'.[8]

As a result, two cultural syndromes were born. One with deep historical roots, which I will call the early East-European syndrome, and another of much more recent origin, which is variously called the 'satellite mentality', the 'bloc culture', or the 'Homo Sovieticus'. The early East-European syndrome was marked by several characteristics, by insecurity and unclear self-definition, wavering between 'being European' and 'being other than European', by an inferiority complex towards the West, compensated by a superiority complex towards societies further East, and also by an idealization of the West with its political freedoms and economic affluence, resulting in negative stereotypes of societies further East and further by xenophobia and strong defensive attitudes toward neighbouring countries. This syndrome was influenced and maintained by various Slavic solidarity movements and myths, such as pan-Slavism and folklore emphasizing Slavic suffering and heroism.

The opportunity to escape from this early East-European identity has been reserved for a long time for cosmopolitan elites or emigrants. Aristocratic circles close to the royal courts had intensive international contacts via diplomacy, regional markets and fairs, festivities, common leisure patterns, similar lifestyles and the use of Latin (and then French) as a common language. The intellectual and academic elites connected with the universities took part in regular international exchanges, travelled widely, and participated in the cross-European exhibitions and demonstrations of art, science, philosophy and high culture. Finally, there was a large diaspora of East Europeans in the West, the immigrant communities in Western countries, who kept in touch with home and transmitted the influence of Western ideas, ways of life and values, contributing greatly to what sociologists call 'the demonstration effect' of Western superiority.

The later variety of the East-European syndrome – 'the satellite mentality', or 'bloc culture' ('Homo Sovieticus') – developed as a result of the last political and military division of Europe after the Second World War. One of the effects of the communist takeover was the imposition of a cultural ideas radically opposed to

those of the West, and hence isolating Eastern Europe mentally and culturally from the rest of Europe. The 'wall in their heads' was erected – to use the phrase from one of the first reports on the 1989 revolutions by Andrew Nagorski, *Newsweek* correspondent for Eastern Europe at that time – and was perhaps even more solid than the Berlin Wall itself. It was created in two different ways: first, through direct indoctrination, anti-Western propaganda, and the socializing impact of non-Western institutions, such as autocratic politics, a centrally planned economy, and a controlled and restricted circulation of thought and cultural expression, and secondly, as an adaptive reaction to this institutional framework and to dire living-conditions, which in reality had little to do with the declared communist ideology. Some examples of such adaptations include: 'parasitic innovativeness' (e.g. talent for finding loopholes and beating the system), the evasion of laws, claimant attitudes toward the state, opportunism, nepotism, favouritism and clientelism, camouflage and double moral standards.

It was this subjectively constructed amalgamation of the 'Homo Sovieticus' syndrome combined with an idealized image of the West that contributed to the emergence of the crippled, inferior, deficient and defensive identity of 'incomplete Europeans'. This, in turn, was enhanced by the patronizing, mistrusting and condescending attitudes of Westerners. These attitudes were not only customary in political contacts and economic exchanges, but also at a most crucial level of everyday life starting from extended visa procedures, thorough and humiliating security and customs checks at border points, the demand of extra financial guarantees at hotels or shops, discriminatory practices at employment agencies, etc. Being treated as second-rate persons always contributes to the development of a deficient self-identity. (Allow me an aside. Lecturing often at Western universities, both in Europe and in the US, I have always been aware of a certain guardedness among my students and an initial suspicion of 'that professor from Eastern Europe'; it takes a lecture or two to convince them that I am not a polar bear that drinks vodka.)

The slow 'return to Europe' at the level of a collective identity started with the birth of a democratic opposition and various forms of opposition against the existing communist regime. The slow erosion of the communist bloc culminated in the 'revolutions of 1989', which brought about the collapse of communism. The main aim of the revolution was to escape from the grip of Asia and move toward Western Europe, and finally to realize old pro-Western aspirations and ambitions.[9] This aim is best expressed by the concept of 'rectifying revolutions' proposed by Jürgen Habermas.[10] The immediate result of the revolution was twofold: it changed the boundaries, both the tangible and the symbolic borders separating Eastern Europe from Western Europe, and it changed the content of the value-system with which the people had identified.

The main symbolic boundary disappeared with the destruction of the Berlin

Wall. The metaphor of the Iron Curtain lost its physical representation, and hence any validity in social consciousness. The free flow of persons, goods, cultural products, mass-media began soon after. The next step was the incorporation into Western institutions and supranational structures: World Bank, IMF, OECD, NATO. However, the final confirmation of a European status came in May 2004, with the accession of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic States to the European Union. A likely prospect for the future is the elimination of the last symbolic signs of difference: border checkpoints and a separate currency. These changes will hopefully take place with the incorporation of Eastern Europe into the Schengen area and 'Euroland'.

However, while old boundaries were being taken down, new boundaries emerged or became strengthened. First, a stronger dividing line appeared from the East, separating East and Central Europe from the former Soviet republics. Borders were sealed off, and visas introduced. At a symbolic level, old resentments were dug out, dormant historical enmities reawakened and the memories of Soviet domination and oppression brought to the fore in public debates. A new boundary also appeared between the traditionally most pro-Western, and most developed countries of Eastern Europe – Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia – and those lagging behind. The most visible indication of this division was the invitation of only some, selected countries to join the EU, with the accession of others indefinitely delayed. There is also the disturbing prospect of yet another boundary arising in the 'two-speed' European Union, one between the old members and the newcomers. This would mean a re-emergence of the division between the core and peripheries in a new guise, but this time within the confines of the Union. And finally, by entering Europe, former socialist countries automatically inherit all of Europe's external boundaries. These include the more traditional ones, such as the boundaries separating Europe from the Orient and, in particular, Islam, but also the relatively new boundary set up against the US and its hegemony. The latter has generated loyalty conflicts, as for many East-European societies it is the US that was the traditional ally and idealized hero, the symbol of freedom, democracy and prosperity. It has also been a dream-land for massive waves of emigrants, which, in the case of Polish immigrants, reached more than four million. Their personal contacts with their home country, their families, and local communities, – through letters, mutual visits, homecomings after retirement, but also through flows of money and investments – have created a kind of bridge with America, over and above Western Europe. Of course, there are enclaves of Polish emigrants in many countries of Western Europe as well, but they are usually better assimilated to their recipient countries, cutting their links with a homeland more easily. Moreover, as they are also widely dispersed among the various European countries, they do not exert the same measure of

influence, as the relatively badly assimilated masses of my compatriots in America, who still have strong imagined links with their mother country.

Immediately after the revolutions of 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the communist system, the rules, values, norms and expectations of the new regimes were shaped by two different forces: first by the rejection of the 'Homo Sovieticus', as a backlash against the old way of life, complete at the ideological level, but meeting with some resistance and inertia at the level of common practices, and second by the uncritical embracing of a highly idealized and in many ways anachronistic image of Western culture, economics and politics. The West was perceived as a kingdom of freedom and prosperity, and its dominant rules were modelled after a vision of 19th-century capitalism, of free markets, rampant individualism, ruthless competition, robber barons, and 'rags to riches' kind of careers. In some countries, notably Poland – due to the large diaspora of Polish emigrants and strong cultural contacts with America – this simplistic image of the West was enhanced by the special influence of the United States, with the result that 'Western ways' have often become synonymous with 'American Creed'. The predominance of a neo-liberalist ideology in the years immediately after the revolution was a result of this way of thinking.

In effect, the divergence between the East and the West has become polarized in the social consciousness of East-Europeans and has been defined in dualistic terms. Thus, the value system of the 'Homo Sovieticus', which was deeply embedded in the mentality of communist society, and somewhat resistant to change, was perceived to be in direct opposition to Western culture.[11] This conflict may be best described using the following nine oppositions:

- collectivism as opposed to individualism;
- the emphasis on security as opposed to taking risks;
- acceptance of status stability as opposed to personal career and success;
- expectation of conformity as opposed to the imperative of innovativeness;
- seeking state protection and raising claims against the state as opposed to self-reliance;
- blaming the system for personal failures as opposed to self-blame;
- privatization of life, rejection of a public sphere as opposed to public participation;
- demand for egalitarian distribution of wealth and income as opposed to meritocracy;
- dogmatism and intolerance (in thought) as opposed to the recognition of pluralism and tolerance.

The ideal types of the opposite systems, one with attached negative connotations, and another with positive associations, were taken as realities. The enthusiasm for

new values, and the radical rejection of old values, led to exaggerated hopes for the future, which was expected to bring freedom and affluence almost immediately. But the dismantling of the old system turned out to be a quite arduous and protracted job. As the famous 'three clocks' hypothesis of Ralf Dahrendorf postulated, the 'Clock of politics' was running fast, the 'clock of economics' much slower, but the 'clock of civil society' only runs in the rhythm of generations.[12] It is not easy radically to rebuild institutions. But it is even less easy to eradicate old 'habits of the heart', mental frames and attitudes. A certain measure of disorientation, normative chaos, or what Emile Durkheim would have labelled as 'anomie', became characteristic for the period immediately after the revolutions of 1989. However, very soon, the anachronistic quality of the picture of values ascribed to the West became unravelled, adding to the disorientation and producing 'cultural trauma'.[13] In the same way that 'real socialism' differed from the ideal type of communism, 'real capitalism' proved to be different from the ideal type of capitalism.

The anachronistic quality of these oppositions to the West derives from the fact that, after 1989, Eastern Europe was confronted with a Western Europe that had already been transformed by more than a century of its own development. Paradoxically, the West came closer in many ways to socialist or communitarian values, and further from Max Weber's 'spirit of capitalism', than the people in former communist countries were aware of. The emphasis on collectivism has long been visible in certain countries of Latin Europe, (e.g. France, Italy, Belgium and Greece), while other values and adaptations to political conditions typical of communist societies, such as egalitarian distribution, the mistrust of politics and the public sphere, and the raising of social claims against the state, have become characteristic of several Western countries, as manifested by the principles of social democracy, or the welfare state, as well as the problems of democratic governance and disillusionment with politics. Thus, the image of the West held by people in post-communist societies was, to a considerable extent, already obsolete. But one of the fundamental truths discovered by sociologists is that people act on beliefs, images and convictions – and not necessarily on realities. As the American social psychologist, W. I. Thomas, put it: 'If people believe something to be real, it is real in its consequences'[14].

However, the content of the value systems changes not only due to changing imaginations, but also due to some more tangible factors, namely institutional pressure. Once the democratic and market system is in place, the content of value-systems change under the impact of newly established institutions. These institutions exert a strong socializing (or should one say re-socializing) influence, slowly eliminating the old communist patterns that had lost their practical usefulness and ideological validity when confronted with democratic politics, a capitalist market economy and a free and pluralistic culture. As a result, the 'Homo

Sovieticus' syndrome is slowly disappearing and a new cultural syndrome has emerged, especially among the younger generation, which is a replica of the idealized West-European image built around such values as individualism, risk-taking, personal success, self-reliance, self-blame, public concern, meritocracy, pluralism and tolerance. This is enhanced by trans-European institutions, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice, becoming salient and significant actors in the politics of each post-communist society. In effect, at least for the time being, we have become more capitalist than the capitalists, and more Western than the West. The pendulum has swung to another extreme and some balance is needed.

A better visibility and first-hand experience of West-European life styles, values, concerns, beliefs – whether direct or mediated – (the earlier-mentioned 'demonstration effect') exerts such a moderating influence. Already under the communist regime there was an inevitable flow of texts and images (and consequently of creeds, styles, fashions, etc) via TV, film, Internet, the press, and this flow of information has only become greater. No wall can hold back communication in our globalizing world. Presently, this process has been strengthened by increased personal contact, travel and tourism. It leads to the eradication of negative stereotypes and stops the vicious circle of hate and suspicion, clearing the way for an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual trust. One may also notice on the positive side the erosion of the naive idealization of the West, and a growing critical recognition of some of the weaknesses of Western democracy, such as its ungovernability, the non-viability of the welfare state, the degrading effects of rampant consumerism, etc. In this way, Eastern Europeans are no longer just ardent fans of the West, but have become equal partners in all-European debates dealing with the future shape of European institutions and ways of life.

The new landscape of identities

The collapse of the communist bloc has had a double effect on the collective identities of East-European societies. The first effect we focused on was the slow fading away of the East-European identity and the incorporation of East-European societies into a wider continental European identity. But at the same time new boundaries emerged and a growing diversity was now visible within the former Soviet bloc. In this second development we witness the reappearance and reaffirmation of old, temporarily latent national, ethnic, religious and cultural differences and identities, which unfortunately in some cases, as in the Balkans, or post-Soviet republics, have tragically led to destructive wars.

Although they might at first sight appear so, both tendencies are not necessarily contradictory. In this late modern period, identity has become multi-dimensional,

multi-layered, differentiated. It is produced as a personal construction built of multiple repertoires of options. People 'craft themselves', rather then receiving themselves ready-made. Transnational, continental, or even global identities appear as new additional options, but do not necessarily eliminate other identities or orientations linked to region, nation, ethics, religion, occupation, gender, sexual preference, life styles, consumer communities, fashion-communities, leisure-communities, etc. Multiple identities imply the enrichment of bonds, social networks and opportunities for experience and expression.

The best way to ensure the development of a balanced and 'trouble-free' identity is to break up the age-old unity of national (tribal, ethnic) identities and citizenship.[15] Since the birth of the nation-state, as a hyphenated notion, both these identities have been unconditionally united. Attachment to the nation was considered synonymous with loyalty and allegiance to the state, and vice versa. This need not be the case. Citizenship, defined as the set of rights and obligations making one a competent member of a political community,[16] may be detached from nationhood, as is the set of allegiances to the heritage, language and customs of ethnic community. One's identity should no longer be tainted with exclusion, but rather become inclusive. The emergence of what David Held calls 'cosmopolitan citizenship'[17] is imminent, expedited by both institutional and ideological factors. The institutional factor is the globalization of politics and the various forms of political integration across the borders of states, of which the EU is certainly the most salient case. The ideological factor is the birth and dissemination of the idea of human rights, creating moral bonds and obligations not only with members of one's own tribe, ethnic group or nation, but with all human beings on the planet. Nationalism, when detached from citizenship, and ethnic belonging, when separated from state membership, need not be divisive, nor breed hatred, conflicts and wars. These 'national' qualifications may become an important addition to a transnational citizenship, giving it the special quality of local attachment and loyalty. Thus, with their incorporation into the European Union, the societies of Eastern Europe will join in the ongoing project of creating a single European-wide citizenship. They will help shape a citizenship that befits the plurality of peaceful, cooperative and solidly European nations; a citizenship that belongs to one Europe of many homelands and to one 'European house' of many tenants making it their 'home'.

Let me end on a personal note. I do not find anything self-contradictory in my being a sociologist, a Catholic, a Krakowian, a Pole, and becoming – together with my compatriots – a full fledged European. I am simply freely participating in the 'concentric order of allegiances, from the family to the nation, from the nation to Europe, from Europe to the world'.[18] My being a Pole does not stand in the way of transnational loyalties and solidarities, whether it be belonging to a cosmopolitan community of scholars, or to an ecumenical community of

Christendom, or even to the economic, juridical and political community of the European Union. But, by the same token, my transnational loyalties do not stand in the way of local and particularistic attachments: to a Polish heritage and tradition, to Polish national heroes, to my flag, my anthem and my national holidays, to a local cuisine and to folk customs, and even to the Polish landscape. These multiple identities give me the feeling of personal richness and a more complete, more full self-realization. Unity and distinction may be two sides of the same human fate, its perennial and irrevocable duality.

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About the Author

Piotr Sztompka is Professor of Theoretical Sociology at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, and Visiting Professor at the College of Europe at Bruges. In 1995 he was the recipient of the New Europe Prize, and is a Member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Academia Europaea and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2002 he became President of the International Sociological Association (ISA). His books include *System and Function* (1974), *Sociological Dilemmas* (1979), *Robert K. Merton: an Intellectual Profile* (1986), *Society in Action* (1991), *The Sociology of Social Change* (1993), *Trust: a Sociological Theory* (1999), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (with J. Alexander, N. Smelser *et al.*) (2004).