# Peripheral Europe

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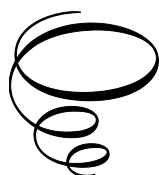## *On Transitology and Post-Crisis Discourses in Southeast Europe*

By

Ksenija Vidmar Horvat

Peripheral Europe:
On Transitology and Post-Crisis Discourses in Southeast Europe

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Peripheral Memory on the Kolpa River: A Protest by Local Inhabitants; Photo by Borut Krajnc.

Figure 5.1 Vesna Bukovec, "I am a Refugee: Haideri", *Delo*, 29 February 2016.

Figure 5.2 Borut Krajnc, "The Path"—Exhibited in a Local Church; Author's Photo.

# FOREWORD

*Peripheral Europe* is the result of several years of research on European integration after the end of the Cold War. It is a revised and updated version of the first edition of the book which was originally published in the Slovene language (Faculty of Arts Publishing, 2018) and reprinted in a Croatian edition (Sandorf, 2019). Most of the chapters have been partly presented before at various conferences. The starting points for the concept of European periphery were first presented as the following papers: "Re-bordering Europe: Border Images and Memories of Borders post-1989" at the conference *A Borderless Europe?* (30 September–2 October 2010, University of Southern, Denmark); "European Public Sphere in a Postnational Era: Some Critical Thoughts on Habermas" at the symposium *Small Nations and the European Public Sphere* (Embassy of Finland, Ljubljana, 11–12 March 2011); "Border as a Memory Project: Reconstruction of Space and Identity after the Collapse of the Iron Curtain" at the international workshop *Visual Cognition, Space, Memory: The Sense of Place between Experience and Culture* (Università degli studi di Bologna, Dipartimento di discipline della comunicazione, Scuola superiore di studi umanistici, 29 June 2011); "Periphery between Theoretical Paradigms and Geopolitical Space: A Critical Re-examination" at the international conference CEECOM *Critique of/at/on Periphery?* in the summer of 2017 in Ljubljana. A shorter version of the third chapter was originally published as a paper entitled "The Balkan Road and the Guarding of Europe: The Refugee Crisis on the Borders of Slovenia" (*Two Homelands*, 2017, 45, 105–119). The chapter on intellectuals is a redacted text of the paper "Rebordering the Perspective on the EU: A View from the Slovenian Periphery" (*Javnost*, 2014, 21/3, 93–108). The fifth chapter merges two previously published papers: "Remembering Dissidents: Cosmopolitan Challenges in Post-Socialist Slovenia" was originally published in Tamara Caraus (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism and the Legacies of Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2014, 49–66), while "Memory as a Transnational Heritage of Europe: A Critical Evaluation of Slovenia's 70th Second World War Commemoration" was first published in Katarzyna Kącka and Ralph Schattkowsky (eds), *History and Politics: Remembrance as Legitimation* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 85–100). Parts of the chapter "Peripheral Stranger" appear in

"Visualisation of the 'Balkan Road': Media Representations of the Refugee Crisis at the Periphery of Europe" in *Culture, Practice & Europeanization* (2020, 5/1).

The greater part of the book was translated into English by Jaka Andrej Vojevec.

# INTRODUCTION:
## AN EU-ROPEAN POSTSCRIPTUM

Europe is in crisis. In fact, Europe has just been through three crises: the financial (2007–08), refugee (2015–) and the one related to the pro-Brexit vote. The tremor which each of them caused seems to be an unfortunate outcome of contingent and unrelated developments stemming from global financial markets, regional wars of the Global South and the actions of cunning populists in individual member states. Indeed, the crises have had diverse causes, different political backgrounds and contentious ideological anatomies. They are clearly disassociated from each other regarding their impact on the lives and fortunes of EU citizens. The financial crisis hit mainly the southern fringes of the European Union: Spain, Portugal, Italy, Cyprus and Greece. The refugee crisis has been felt most along the southeastern stretch of the Schengen border: in Greece, Hungary and Slovenia. Brexit will have an impact across the European Union, but it is currently manifesting its direct effects in the United Kingdom itself. Yet despite their various backgrounds, the crises have a common feature, which can best be captured by language that has come directly from the manufacturers of the European project: "European values". The dispersed locations and sites of impact of each of the crises are connected by a binding thread comprising the state and the condition in which claims to a particular set of values—a stand-in descriptor for the European Union itself—have been made.

The Eurozone has been considered the engine of Europeanisation and European integration, with the Euro paraded at the front as a token of monetary as well as symbolic bonding. The gloomy scenario of austerity that would have seemed incomprehensible prior to 2007–08 single-handedly destroyed the value of "justice". Article A of the Treaty states that the Union's task "shall be to organize, in a manner demonstrating consistency and solidarity, relations between the Member States and between their peoples". When national governments began to print out austerity measures for their citizens on one side of the bank counters while implementing measures for bailing out financial speculators on the other side, the idea of prosperity for all ended abruptly. For many the contemporary

European Union appears as a space of unequally distributed feelings of humiliation, desperation and broken promises.

The refugee crisis broke the value of "solidarity". Article J.a states that, "The objectives of the common foreign and security policy shall be … to safeguard the common values." The first pages of the document define value policy as "attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law". While the globally expelled were stopped on the external, razor-fenced borders of the European Union, the management of their lives as a "security threat" was slowly replacing the image of Europe as an island of global humanism. For the Europeans within it, the financial crisis had created an "eternal now", a constellation of indebted and expropriated people waiting to reclaim what once had been considered to be their thriving, and rightful, pass to the future. For the refugees, too, Europe has become a time zone of waiting. The great narrative of Europe striding confidently towards the humanist paradise has withered away.

The effect on the progress of Europeanisation of Brexit and the rise of far right nationalism across the continent is yet to be determined. It can, however, be observed that the populist machine that started its open march roughly a decade ago, and began to portray its warriors as protectors of national interests (against the political multiculturalism of the European Union) and justice guerrillas undermining the hegemony of (pro-EU) national elites, throws into the open the fate of Maastricht values of cultural diversity, tolerance and humanism. This threatens to undermine the European project at its very core—the idea of cross-border and transnational cooperation among the member states, born from values of diversity, intercultural dialogue and solidarity. It appears that the long journey towards European reunification that begun after the collapse of the Berlin Wall faces its own relapse into a time of uncertainty, division and competing views about the meaning of Europe.

## A Fading Image

"Europe as we used to know it is disappearing in front of our very eyes," a Slovenian journalist commented.[1] Yet the current crisis in Europe is not the result of either of the above-mentioned crises. Indeed, things would be simpler if this were the case. We would just need to wait out the crises—and the most acute phases of at least two of them are mostly

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[1] https://siol.net/novice/predsedniske-volitve/drugi-krog-bo-referendum-za-ali-proti-pahorju-analiza-451862, accessed 28 October 2017.

over—for things to return to normal. The crises did not cause the current state of uncertainty; they merely exposed what should have been spelled out clearly long ago: that the European idea had been frail in its very constitution; that it too easily resided in the empty rhetoric; that its alleged strength could work only in the conditions of illusionary social solidity. The financial and the refugee crises unveiled the European project as a reactive project from its inception. Even though it was declaratively founded to prevent crises of humanity from repeating themselves, as they had historically, again the recognition came too late. Only once injustice has already happened, when tragedies have already been incited and the bonds of trust severed, can the "insecure child of anxiety … [s]hadowed by history", as Tony Judt has described this post-war assembly (Judt, in Guixé i Coromines 2016**,** 7), shyly attempt to avoid another mistake.

Able to learn only in retrospect, the European Union is a megalomaniacal postscript plan dissolving in the very shadows of the past that it is supposed to be preventing: the shadows of imperialism, racism, concentration camps. Ironically, it is this post-scriptum state that repeatedly manufactures the vision of Europe as the continent of values. Since its inception, the European Union has invoked "European values" to maintain its legitimacy and to inspire trust among its citizens—even though it never managed to pen a constitution. On their own and all aligned together, European values—until recently—represented an ultimate guarantee of citizens' loyalty, as if the values were an unquestionable connective tissue that would assure the stability of the transnational formation, its ethics and its identity.

In post-crisis Europe, it is becoming painfully clear that the values, no matter how firmly engraved in the European discourse they may have been, were but a spectral implant. They are not a mobilising force or a vehicle for decision-making; they infer no direct responsibilities and they grant no right to recall the elites in violation of the principles to which they signed their nation-states up. To many, the value-less handling of the crisis of the European Union is another name for humiliation (Smith 2013), implanted between a resurrection of fortress Europe on external borders and a new map of power in the interior. The principal post-1989 division into the European West and the (post-)socialist East has been proliferated into the divisions of centre and periphery, the Protestant North and the Catholic South, and lately the pro- and anti-immigrant blocs. In post-crisis Europe, the mismanagement of the crisis has shown itself in the growing power of extreme right-wing parties and elections won by governments

that "convinced voters [only] by closing down borders".[2] Many Europeans nowadays support policies that prioritise "our" security over the imperative of hospitality towards the exiled. Respect for others, tolerance and solidarity, which up to the time of the crisis had been recognised as core values of the European Union according to European opinion polls (Vidmar Horvat 2009), today appear quite sardonic. The political, social and moral narratives of a new, greater homeland that were leading the unification process after 1989 are today mostly gone.

## A Fragile Project

In *Upheaval, Turning Points for Nations in Crises*, Jared Diamond (2019) investigates seven modern nations on five different continents that underwent crises and resolved them successfully. In an epistemically intriguing way, he compares individual and national crises to argue that, as in personal therapy, nations facing a traumatic experience or a critical moment of existence can rely on a set of coping strategies similar to those available to the individuals in turmoil. Successful coping with crises, he argues, requires selective change. There is no point in changing completely, discarding everything and starting anew: "Individuals or nations under pressure must take honest stock of their abilities and values … Conversely, they need the courage to recognize what must be changed in order to deal with the new situation" (2019, 6–7). Usually, Diamond continues, we encounter the crises as singular moments of truth, whereas in fact they are "culmination of evolutionary changes extending over many years" (2019, 9). Among the main factors that need to be addressed in order to survive through the crisis, and hopefully make a successful U-turn towards a new life, Diamond lists core values–that is, the beliefs in ethical principles that are central to one's identity and so important that they fall into the category of "non-negotiable". Sometimes, in crises, the core values can be lost from sight, or may reveal themselves as less binding than was believed before the crisis. In either case, Diamond concludes, it is important to go through an honest and critical self-inspection. The act of self-examination can "provide clarity, a foundation of strength and certainty" (2019, 47), either to pave the way to make changes in other areas of life or to alter the list of core values.

In contrast to individuals, nations facing crises have political and economic institutions behind them. In addition, they demand group interactions and negotiations. When dealing with the crisis, EU leaders

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[2] Ibid.

could employ a similar wisdom—not in retrospect but, knowing how fragile the European Union as a supranational constitution has been, in a preventive fashion. If they proposed the list of core values, and made them appear non-negotiable—that is, as fundamental to the European identity— then one would expect that they had also crafted a toolkit to manage crises in a way that would enable the core values to remain intact.

This may sound naïve, given that in many areas the European project has been running up against one key value that stands as a historical pillar of modernity: the nation-state. When thinking in purely economic terms, the European Union is a

> regional regime of an economic nature (Single Market, four freedoms, EMU, ECB etc.), intended to "stretch" the limits of the nation state, meet the interests of the corporate world in a larger "internal market", and simultaneously protect this market from being swamped by "external" services and commodities; a supranational regulatory competition state of sorts. (Hedetoft 2019, 373)

Beck and Grande (2006, 68) emphasise the pragmatic aspect of this expansionist "force of economy": "the logic of expansion of a common market is also to open up an ever larger market for European industries and to impose uniform rules on economic competitors". This certainly explains the expansion towards the East and the inclusion of the states (Bulgaria, Romania) that met the conditions of integration at the very lowest point of the scale. When adding a social and political dimension to this, the European Union is a

> political construct with political ambitions that also transcend the nation state and compromise its traditional sovereignty, but only in so far as it can be seen and narratively constructed as a remedy for resolving the paradoxes faced by states in a globalized environment and thus for "rescuing" the European nation state from historical degradation and eventual loss of function and meaning. (Hedetoft 2019, 373)

Here, the competing force is proposed to be globalisation. On both accounts—the economic and the political—the European Union emerges as a "strangely flawed entity" (Beck and Grande 2006, 67).

The main problem faced by the European Union, as several authors note, is to secure the cooperation of the subject states. The European Union was "constituted not through fire and the sword, but through pen and ink" (Beck and Grande 2006, 66). The absence of the "power of command" may make the European Union appear to be a gentler form of political authority, but it also undermines the power to

activate the authority of the institutionalised consensus, either normative or legal, when needed in the place of gentleness. The recent backlash against the idea of multiculturalism illustrates the weakness of the consensual politics. As Hedetoft (2019, 375) explains it, political multiculturalism is "most adequately approached as an expression condensing the existential dilemma facing European nation-states riven between historical identities of cultural familiarity and contemporary forces prioritizing global contingency". Hedetoft (2019, 375) further points out that: "It symbolizes the political desire to forge value-based national cohesion within nation-states increasingly exposed to global risks of social fragmentation and ethnic diversity, and striving therefore to recreate European homogeneity in circumstances inimical to that ambition".

At the same time, he reminds us that European nation-building is based on monocultural thinking and practices. Only a year after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the commencement of the project of reunification, Anthony Smith, a leading scholar of modern nationalism, cast a genuine doubt that the European Union could successfully be composed into a supranational community. A major shortfall, in his view, is that the European Union has no common *prehistory*. In this sense, Smith (1992, 62) writes, "national identifications possess distinct advantages over the idea of a unified European identity. They are vivid, accessible, well established, long popularized and still widely believed—at least in broad outline. In each of these respects, 'Europe' is deficient both as idea and as process".

Other scholars (especially Shore 2000) also doubt that the European Union could easily compete with the long legacy of modern national thinking and override the power of nationalist loyalties. This may explain the heightened sociological interest in mapping the constitutional, cultural, political and theoretical road to the new supranational community during the period of the enlargement towards the East. To mention only the two most influential scholars, Jürgen Habermas published three books: *Postnational Constellation* (2001a), *Europe: The Faltering Project* (2009) and *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response* (2012). He also wrote an article for the *New Left Review* in 2001, entitled "Why Europe Needs a Constitution" (2001b) and in 2003, together with Jack Derrida, penned "February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together: A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy, Beginning in the Core of Europe". Ulrich Beck contributed two books: *Cosmopolitan Europe* (with Edgar Grande, 2006) and *German Europe* (2014). Both intellectuals have engaged in other public appeals to "save" the European Union by finding an alternative form of political articulation—one that would remove the project from the

incompetent EU bureaucrats and return it to the demos, either by the principle of constitutional constellation (Habermas) or through the idea of the cosmopolitan empire (Beck).

In order to avoid the pitfalls of comparing the European Union to a supranational state, Beck and Grande opt to define the new political community as empire. The authors are well aware of the incompatibility of the social and political anatomies between the state and the empire (consisting of nation-states). Both the modern state and the empire have to overlook internal and external security and material welfare; the state does this by establishing and maintaining fixed borders while the empire solves the security and welfare issues through external expansion (Beck and Grande 2006, 57). The modern state employs a fixed regime of inclusion and exclusion, whereas the "imperial logic of political authority, by contrast, is based on the logic of permanent expansion and transcendence of borders. Empires have a tendency towards comprehensiveness, even universality, not only in their practice but also in their self-understanding. Their external borders are open and flexible" (Beck and Grande 2006, 57).

Modern states endorse sociocultural homogeneity; empires are containers of sociocultural diversity. Empires control their territories through hierarchical centre–periphery relations. Modern empires are modern, Beck and Grande (2006, 58–62) conclude, because they consist of nation-states where the concept of state sovereignty still features as feature of authority, but they also "transcend the nation-state and transforms its sovereignty". This is why, for Beck and Grande (2006, 53)—who believe in the European Union as a project of a post-empire—Europe should evolve from dissolved national borders, voluntarism, consensus, transnational interdependence and the "political added value accruing from cooperation". In their view, considering Europe as a post-national empire allows for the investigation of the proximity between pre-modernity and second modernity, and hence "the extent to which the brief eternity of the national era makes us blind to the long-range historical continuities and differences within and between the various global historical forms and epochs of empire, i.e., those of the ancient world, the Middle Ages and the second modernity" (2006, 55–56).

## The European Union as a Communicative Project

Beck and Grande are two intellectuals, supported by the academic capital of philosophical and historical reason. To an ordinary European, the utopian vision of a post-imperial epoch may sound like an alienating discourse, remote from the actual lives of the here and now of the present.

To its citizens, the European Union it is primarily a reality of mind (Sassateli 2002, 436; see also Battista and Setari, 2014). It speaks to and frames the collective imagination, radiating through multiple and heterogeneous spheres of public and intimate perceptions of the enlarged community. In this sense, the European Union is above all a communicative project. In her study of the multilingualism in the European Union and its function in "communicating Europe", Ruth Wodak (2010) writes that a key task has been working out how to represent and legitimise this new and enlarged community. According to Wodak (2010, 4), "some *values* have to be established or newly created, which allows for a more explicit legitimization … Hence, the official 'Europe' has to find a *new narrative*, a new perspective or vision, perhaps some common ideologies, or even a utopia in which at least some European citizens would identify with and believe in". Wodak (2010, 3) also emphasises how different genres and discursive forms are "linked with each other through specific arguments, topics and *topoi* which are *recontextualized* from one public sphere to the other; they change and adopt meanings, lose functions and claim new ones, and together discursively construct several European public spaces".

Political elites hold the power over the ordinary people when it comes to the construction of values, but the meanings are adopted, reaffirmed and/or reconstructed according to the contexts of their reception. To illustrate, when in 2010 Angela Merkel announced the death of multiculturalism, her speech attracted major news headlines across the European Union. Although speaking primarily of Germany, and the illusion "that Germans and foreign workers could 'live happily side by side'" (*Guardian*, 17 October 2010), the words about how multiculturalism "has failed utterly" initiated a shift in the self-understanding of the political community beyond Germany's borders. Among the ordinary people, her words still resonate today. The average EU citizen may not fully comprehend the theory of multiculturalism, but to quote Merkel gives licence to repeat after her, in a mocking tone, that "multiculti" is over.

When, in 2015, Germany opened borders to one million refugees after Angela Merkel's decision to offer refuge to people fleeing Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, this stance struck a powerful echo across the EU public spheres. The German Chancellor's words of welcome sounded as if they were initiating a new ethos of hospitality. To some, this may have been interpreted as a calculated gesture, backed by real pressures of demographic challenges posed by an ageing Europe, and the competitive spirit of brain-draining the skilled but economically vulnerable labour from the Global South. Regardless, the rhetoric seemed potent enough to

send a political message about the change in attitude towards both migration and the EU labour market. However, this time the Chancellor's speech backfired elsewhere. Many Europeans on the fringes of their own social security have been convinced—with the helping hand of the regional xenophobes—that the influx of immigrants threatened their future prosperity. This was one addition too many to the list of evidence of how distant the EU elites were from the ordinary folks.

The problem of Europeanisation, to paraphrase Delanty and Rumford (2006), is that its discursive form has relied on a rhetoric that is "useful" but not fully meaningful. As they write (2006, 3): "The discourse of Europeanization is dominated by superficial metaphors suggesting a teleological project legitimated by grand EU narratives, such as "widening" and "deepening", or "ever closer union"; vague, if not inaccurate, sociological terms, such as "integration" and "inclusion", and morphological metaphors such as "multi-levelled" governance." The problem, as they see it, is the lack of a consistent theory of society that would be applicable to the making of an EU society, and the failure to provide a normative frame.

This problem can be formulated as the problem of the EU social contract. The social contract stands at the dawn of the nation-state making, transforming the bonds of belonging as defined in ancient regime into the ties of modern political community. At its inception, it is not a constitution, followed by legal sanctions if one decides not to sign in. It is an act of will supported by an accompanying social imagery of advances, provided in exchange for submission to the collective sovereign. In the first book of *The Social Contract*, Jean Jacques Rousseau describes the contract as a form of voluntary alignment: "As long as a people is constrained to obey, it does well to obey; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does still better" (Rousseau 1993, 181). The alignment emerges from men's realisation, being in the "state of nature", that their "power of resistance is greater that the resources and that preservation is at stake—having exhausted available forces they realize that they need to unite, they work by 'means of a single motive power, and cause to act in concert'" (1993, 190). The problem, Rousseau continues, is to find a formula of association which will provide a new collective existence, a common good, as well as the freedom of the individual. The social contract is the solution to this dilemma. The "act of association creates a corporate and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contain voters, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life, and its will" (1993, 192). This collective body, called the "body politic", consisting of citizens when speaking of sharing sovereign identity, and subjects when considering their submission to the

laws of the state, operates by common interest, or the general will. Herein lies the sanctity of the contract. Rousseau argues (1993, 203) that, "If the State is a corporate body whose life is in the union of its members, and if most important of its cares is the care for its own preservation, it must have a universal and compelling force." This force is equality of rights and the idea of justice: "the social compact sets up among the citizens equality of such a kind, that they all bind themselves to observe the same conditions and should therefore all enjoy the same rights" (1993, 205).

The passage of the state of nature to the civil state is circumscribed by security, protection and liberty; the gains of civil liberty outnumber the loss of natural liberty (Rousseau 1993, 195). As Rousseau also emphasises, the social order that evolves from the passage is not a matter of force, but rather of choice, engraved in an agreement. The submission of the individual power to the authority of the general will is, in effect, a consequence of a resolved existential dilemma: to act "in concert" when the conditions of life shrink in capacity to guarantee the life in its current state. The European Union can be described as one such collective subject, emerging from the existential dilemma of the nation-states, faced by forces of globalisation, deterritorialisation and diversification of the body politic. It is a sovereign entrusted with the moral and political authority to govern the nation-states out of conditions of insecurity—into a new state of endurance and prosperity. Or, to paraphrase Rousseau (1993, 192), it is an act of association, receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will.

To translate it more directly onto the project of the European Union, the integration has unfolded "through law, consensus and cooperation, based on the voluntary agreement and acceptance of European law" (Beck and Grande 2006, 66): "It is a non-hegemonic form of the exercise of political authority which does not rest, at least primarily, on a hierarchical "power of command" but on the political premium which consensus-based cooperation produces for all participants" (2006, 56).

For Beck and Grande, the Eastern enlargement was the latest clear demonstration of the principle of law and consensus. Eastern European countries have become part of the European Union, as they put it, through a "banal but highly rational act": first by making an application, which went through a procedure based on rational criteria put forward by the consensus of the member states. This was followed by a process of negotiation between the Commission and the accession states. Then, "finally, the *subjects*, that is the citizens of the accession states and the EU members states, decided on admission, in part directly in referendums, in part indirectly in parliaments" (2006, 67; italics in original).

# From Social to Cultural Contract

The EU body politic is constituted through legal commitments (such as EU conditionality), but also through a socio-cognitive bond that is imaginary and value based. As Delanty and Rumford (2006) put it, in order to be meaningful, any society needs to provide frames, imaginaries, world-views and cultural models. This is the basis upon which its members can orient and conduct their lives in accord with the general will, which is made familiar to them through social imaginaries. All societies "have a central imaginary in order to answer basic questions relating to their identity and orientation to the world" (2006, 17). Europe, they conclude, needs to be seen as one such social—or, as they call it, civilisational constellation (2006, 25).

The problem is that the EU social contract started as an economic, continued as a political and ended as a cultural contract. There was a brief phase in which a normative frame, allowing for the debate on "rights, justice, citizenship, belonging and identity" (Delanty and Rumford 2006, 5) was put forward, but it was never elaborated into a full communicative agenda—or, to be more exact, the burden to deepen an understanding of the core social and political values of the European Union was relegated onto the shoulders of "culture".

In the first decade of the new century, European project has slowly been turning into a cultural one (Delanty 2008; Mokre 2006; Sassateli 2002; Shore 2000, 2006). We read in the decision establishing the Culture 2000 program that, "If citizens give their full support to, and participate fully in, European integration, greater emphasis should be placed on their common cultural values and roots as a key element of their identity" and that, "Culture has an important intrinsic value to all people of Europe, and is an essential element of European integration".[3] More recently, a 2007 document declared, "There is a growing recognition within the EU that culture lies at the heart of the European project and has a unique and indispensable role to play."[4] Several commentators have argued that this emphasis on culture mirrors an attempt to build legitimacy, which the European project and its supporting institutions have badly lacked (Sassatelli 2002; Shore 2000, 2006). The argument is that, as a supra-political entity, the European Union has not managed to create a European demos that would either claim loyalty or see itself as a self-identifying European public. Moreover, since the 1990s, EU leaders have been facing a growing decline

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[3] Decision No. 1983/2006/EC, 30 December 2006.
[4] *Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World, COM (2007) 242 Final,* accessed 10 May 2007.

in "passive consent" for the project of political and social integration, and have now turned to the "instrumentalization of 'culture' rather than the economic or single market as the political arm of nation-building at the European level" (Shore 2006, 19).

Many critics have compared the building of the European Union to the modern nation-building and nation-states formation processes (Mokre 2006; Nederveen Pieterse 1991; Outhwaite 2008; Shore, 2000, 2006). "Within nation states, the individual citizen's sense of belonging, the creation of an identity in common, has been achieved through the institution of a common national culture" (Mokre 2006, 71). The goal of European cultural policy, too, has explicitly been "to develop a feeling of belonging to a shared culture" (European Commission, 2002, cited in Shore 2006, 7). However, in contrast to nation-building processes—which, especially via educational systems, placed culture at the onset of the homogenisation of modern imagined communities—"European culture" has only gradually and fairly recently been imported into the EU discourse. This fact is often interpreted as containing manifest evidence of the obviousness and self-explaining existence of a shared European cultural identity.

A close inspection of post-World War II documents and policies reveals that the cultural stuff from which, it is alleged, the Europeans have been collectively made was largely neglected for most of its early post-war history. Mokre (2006, 71) provides an explanation for this absence, claiming that in Europe "collective identities are traditionally understood as cultural identities. And this is precisely the reason why culture was no issue for the European Community for decades, then became an issue and is still dealt with in a very cautious way." However, this interpretation fails to provide an account of why culture suddenly became an issue at the EU level. We need to understand the triggering mechanism, demanding that what was obvious at national levels had become recognised as in need of protection and defence at the EU level. Instead of deconstructing the modern hegemonic myth of Europe as the overriding home of nations with distinct cultural identities, this kind of explanation serves to support the contemporary myth-producing machine that envisions Europe as a "mosaic of cultures" with shared "cultural roots" and a common heritage (Nederveen Pieterse 1991; Shore 2000).

Instead, our argument is that the import of culture can be explained by the contingent historical circumstances within which claims to a European culture and a shared cultural identity become recognised in their potency to produce meaningful associations. In this capacity, they could play a role in the managing of ongoing tensions of Europeanisation and

integration. As Bo Stråth notes, "The idea of Europe became, historically and sociologically, a political idea and mobilizing metaphor at the end of the twentieth century, particularly in the wake of '1989'" (Stråth 2002, 388). The absence of "culture" in the early phases of the integration process in fact testifies to the historicity of the desire to claim a shared European identity. This desire should be seen in terms of confronting the challenges of an evolving social reality, instead of being taken to simply document the ongoing but overlooked expression of a shared essence.

## The Collapse of Values

The "cultural turn" we witnessed at the turn of the century was related to the process of internal integration as well as to the desire for mobilising the integration potential of the enlargement in the international arena. The unexpected explosion of interest in a "new European identity", says Bauman (2012), stems from the endeavours to redefine the role of Europe in order for it to follow the global game of development. In this game, Bauman adds, "the rules and stakes have drastically changed and continue to change, albeit no longer as a result of European initiatives or under Europe's control, and with minimal, if any, influence by Europe itself" (2012, 3). In the background of such operations lie efforts to get Europe (as well as the world surrounding it) to identify itself with the image of a cultural continent that continues to hold the position of a beacon of global civilisation.

With the break-out of crises, the weaknesses of the cultural contract as the basis of integration were exposed in full. Particularly in relation to the refugee crisis, the roads to successful governance through it could have been much more effective and gained popular support if the EU political discourse had not been so deeply contaminated with one particular binding theme from the pre-crisis era. This theme concerns the idea of the European identity.

As Bo Stråth (2002) explains it, the idea of European identity first emerged at the Copenhagen European Summit in 1973. As he writes, the summit was embedded in concrete historical circumstances of a "global order in unexpected crisis" (2002, 387). The notion of European identity brought forward at the summit "expanded from its dollar and oil price context as an instrument to consolidate Europe's place in the international order" (2002, 389). However, a period of predominantly political discourse of integration followed, focusing on questions of legal, political and "values" foundations of unification. This was the era that led to the

Maastricht Treaty, a document that resonated in public as the principal book of EU democratic order.

From 1991 to 2008, the idea of the European identity assumed a centre stage position again. From the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to the last two enlargements, the idea that a common identity called "European identity" would be the main civic bond of the new supranational community prevailed. Instantly, contradictions emerged. To manufacture this new collective identity meant facing the predecessor, the imagined community of the nation-state. The nation-state presupposes a "congruity between culture, territory, ethnicity, and politics, between state and nation, and between citizenship, identity, language, and belonging" (Hedetoft 2019, 365). From the onset, European identity appeared as a tangible construct to compete against this legacy. Raised above the national identities, for a national community integrated into the European Union, European identity is both a binding and a competing force. In the early stages, EU officials explained the rising tensions by the fact that "Europeans were not sufficiently aware of their European identity" (Shore 2000, 25). As the quote's tautology suggests, in order for Europeans to become "true" European subjects, they first needed to undergo "Europeanisation". This, as Morley and Robins soon detected, implied a project that turned Europe into a terrain of its own colonisation (Morley and Robins 1996). The political engineering of the shared sense of belonging began; however, encapsulated into contexts of globalisation, it produced an ambiguous result.

European identity is featured as a historical heredity that was broken by the Cold War and is waiting to be reclaimed. In this sense, it appears to be a matter of the past. At the same time, it is projected as a quality yet to be appreciated and embraced as a collective possession. Soysal (2002, 265) writes that, "Europe requires Europeans. Otherwise, there is a legitimacy crisis of the very process of European integration and the European project, the argument goes." The project implies social engineering: "Europe is charged with affording subjectivities and emotions conducive to political allegiance and shared fate. Consequently, as a state of person-hood, European is envisioned to be a subject position, embodying desires and sentiments, civic constitution, loyalties, and a distinctly "European" sense and sensibility of self" (2002, 267).

European identity, in brief, becomes a brand—an object yet to be manufactured through European Union-sponsored cultural activities, realized through practices of cross-border bonding locally, and marketed globally. In this schizophrenic scenario of a rediscovery and an invention, a European contract germinated. This contract, as the individual studies in

this book demonstrate, created an atmosphere of cultural superiority in both the old and the new Europe. Most detrimentally, it left behind a political ambition to build a trans-European commitment to implement a new social contract; in its place, a cultural narrative of identity and belonging begun to tighten and spread its grip.

On a larger scale, the shift from socio-political to cultural discourse opened up as much room for the coming together as for the proliferation of distance, estrangement and conflict: "The European *Heimat* invokes the past grandeur of Europe as a bastion against future uncertainties. This is a Europe that divides those who are of the Community from those who are *extracommunitari* and, effectively, extraterrestrial" (Morley and Robins 1996, 458). With regard to the post-socialist East, the notions of common cultural identity, heritage and roots may have been proposed in good faith as motors of mutual recognition and cooperation. On the fringes of the European Union, where new member states were just getting ready to live with the new European identity, the discourse fuelled sentiments of cultural superiority. Rather than investing in building this new identity, peripheries took it for granted and instead turned in another direction—towards desolidarisation and exclusion of their internal "others" deemed to be non-European: the Roma, the migrants, the Muslims. Other groups could be added to the list at a nation's convenience, such as sexual minorities, asylum seekers, homeless people, urban subcultures and critical artists. The key argument, underlining the right to exclude, originated in the perception of a long history shared by the Europeans, which grants them the authority to manage and decide on the right of belonging and hospitality to others. European identity and cultural history become tools of legitimation by which to draw a line of demarcation between us and them, and to identify strangers who cannot claim European origin.

The cultural turn in governance quietly pushed aside the social principles of European integration. While the Maastricht values of solidarity, justice and dignity of human life turned into inevitable rhetorical decoration, their mobilising power in terms of bonding and defining the conditions of belonging faded. The European social contract changed into a cultural contract. As it was founded on the cultural idea of a shared past rather than on a social utopia of a shared future, European integration transformed from a future-oriented narrative into a commemorative one. A growing number of people from the former socialist East started to resort to nostalgia, while Europe drifted from the fantasy of being the engine of global development into a xenophobic, ethnicised retrotopia (Bauman 2017).

How could this have happened? Moreover, how could it have happened in such a brief period of time and why has there been so little attention paid to this turn away from the values of cohabitation and intercultural dialogue?

# A View from the Periphery

The path that led to the erosion of the values as the political, symbolic and ethical bond among the member states and the people of Europe could have been avoided. *Peripheral Europe* deals with the EU crisis in one specific, yet fundamental context: the integration plan and the special turn it took on after the end of the Cold War. Methodologically, it is an observational study, focusing on the specific period of the enlargement of the European Union towards the East and the hegemonic discourses that framed the process of integration. The plan that was supposed to link the post-socialist East with the "old" part of the continent and merge the post-communist bloc at the fringe with the democratic core of the West was implemented according to scenarios that were Western-centric, Eurocentric and postcolonial in their essence. These were not three separate stages of integration: the timelines coincided, occasionally overlapping and antagonising one another, often evading each another and then returning in new discursive formations. From a bird's eye perspective, however, the fundamental ideological structure of the integration plan can roughly be divided along two axes: the axis of difference and the axis of similarity. It was this dual nature of the relationship between the "old" and the "new" Europe that permeated the process of integration and, as will be argued, it pushed the entire composition of EU governance into a domain that can be described as postcolonial—with the centre implementing the policies of internal colonialism (Hechter 1999; cf. Outhwaite 2008, 25) while the periphery gradually took on the role of an imperial border. In brief, the rhetoric of European identity backfired and, instead of commitment to common values, created trans-European alliances of Eurosceptics, xenophobic nationalists and anti-immigration campaigners.

***The Western-centric Phase:*** Integration of post-communist states into the European Union was first directed in a Western-centric way. The collapse of the European socialist "empires"—the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia—opened up the possibility of reinstating the greatness of the West and its version of twentieth-century modernity. As many have noted, since the fall of the Berlin Wall the West has searched for its origins and a reinvention

of democracy in Eastern Europe (Borcila 2004, 58; see also Outhwaite 2008; Zielonka 2007). Its object of fascination was not so much the divided East itself as the mirror image it offered to the West. The image that formed in the West while observing the thawing history of European societies on the other side of the Iron Curtain inspired favourable thoughts about who won the Cold War (Forrester *et al*. 2004).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the now ex-socialist countries were invited to "again join Europe". The invitation invoked a mental geography (le Rider 2008), which relied on a line of demarcation between the two poles of Europe already drawn two centuries before. For most of the modern history of Europe, Europe proper was coterminous with the West. In order to consolidate the western hemisphere of the continent, an East was needed, which helped to contain both geo-political and cultural imaginaries of difference and belonging (Vidmar Horvat and Delanty 2008). The invention of Russia as the East, crystallised as part of the Enlightenment project (Wolff 1994), appeared to be a legacy that could be employed in different historical contexts. As Wolff (1994, 4) states, the map that darkened the lands behind the Iron Curtain is much older than Churchill's address to "these Eastern states of Europe". What made Churchill's oratorical image so powerful was the fact that "demarcation of a boundary line "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic" followed a line that was drawn and invested with meaning over two centuries. This is not only relevant when decomposing the mythologies of Europe, which rely on an essentialist notion of a shared sense of cultural unity, but it fails to account for how inventing the "others" was constitutive of forging this cultural belonging. It is relevant for the cartographies of cultural and political belonging in the time of reunification. As it will be demonstrated later, it has played a role in the formulation of the post-Cold War region as a terrain of refuge for Eastern states from both political (communist) and cultural containment within "the shadow of Easternness" (Wolff 1994, 3).

The desire to push the East out of Europe was a symptom of the struggle for European modernity, i.e., between the capitalist and the communist version of modernity. Kumar (1992, 458) suggests that, "The conflict between 'capitalism' and 'communism' in the twentieth century is of the same kind." Both sides in the conflict involve questions of inhumanity and inefficiency. They use different terms, but they "are borrowing from the same common European store" (1992, 458). Étienne Balibar (2004, 81) goes further to argue that, "The 'end of communism' in the East is also, fundamentally, the end of the political 'modernity' opened by the French Revolution and dominated by the notions that it produced."

From the philosophy of poverty in Christian theology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to egalitarianism as an aspect of the bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Balibar (2004, 86–87) writes that communist thought was integral to the "general history of European society". It shaped European political thought and the European social and institutional map of modernity. The two consequent modernities that the West and the East pursued were both expansionist. The difference was that the Soviet expansionism, in a response to Western containment, followed the path of self-containment that resulted in expansion of the kind of terror that was inward oriented—"whereas liberal capitalism, for the most part, excludes and massacres only on the *outside*" (2004, 88).

Balibar has called the European Union a phantom Europe, "the illusory Europe, the *Europe of contradictory illusions*", which after 1945 fermented in the idea of two blocs. Each bloc claimed to be the exclusive and authentic heir of modernity. While they both saw themselves as paragons of antifascist resistance, each made claims to true European identity through antagonising the other. To the West, the communist solution represented the inevitable turn to totalitarian collectivism. The East saw in the West a regression of freedom though consumerist individualism. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, other misconceptions followed, but this time almost exclusively from the direction of the West. To name some, the (Western) discourse on modernity has rarely included the fact that socialism, as a particular form of modernity, produced the world's most educated population in the region of its dominance (Forrester *et al*. 2004, 12). The West was also reluctant to acknowledge the advancement of women's social and political rights. Immediately after the fall of communism, the discursive production of the "East European woman" started. Western feminists were implicit in the project: "While former socialist countries modestly 'solved' the question, feminists in Western societies have at times believed that Eastern European women must immediately be rescued from their subordinate status" (2004, 15; see also Einhorn 1993). In fact, women in the East enjoyed more rights than the women in the West, were considered more equal by the socialist state than in the West and were treated with more concern by the socialist state regarding their integration and full participation in political and economic life. Igor Štiks (2015, 14) sums this up concisely, stating that while "socialist dictatorship performed badly when it came to *political* and *civic* rights, it performed quite progressively as concerns *social* rights, women's rights and *cultural* rights for ethnonational groups".

Forrester *et al*. (2004, 12–13) describe the situation:

The Fall (and the fall) of communism inaugurated the post-Soviet and post-Empire millennial moment in a "globalized" era without clear-cut enemies, a period of change and flux that affects whole nations as well as gendered, sexed, and racially and ethnically marked bodies. It has also marked a profound redefinition of the space in which these bodies and their representations are constructed and articulated.

They argue (2004, 10) that the nations and peoples of Eastern Europe could be imagined "as a faceless (though almost entirely white) bloc and unproblematically used by the West both to justify Cold War ideology (See how they are oppressed by the Soviets!) and to idealise Western ideals of capitalist richness ad variety (See how they crave our political system and lifestyle!)". The fantasy revolved around the idea that the West came to help defrost the countries on the other side of the Cold War divide, confirming their historical advantage and superiority (Borcila, 2004; Forrester et al., 2004). Borcila (2004, 54) writes about the newly discovered Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall appearing "murky", "opaque", "immobile", indicating a territory of newly assembled yet still incomprehensible sites—at once leaving behind once-monochrome Cold War history yet maintaining its symbolic inflection. This projection was in the function of a displacement of anxieties and frustrations that begun to emerge underneath a more profound global boundary between North and South (Forrester et al. 2004, 17): "It feels more 'civilized' to maintain a simple us-and-them of political difference within Europe with its assumed, mythical, racial homogeneity." The idea of defrosting the East carried within itself not only a desire to situate the West as the winner of the Cold War, but also a more genuine impetus of racial marking of the victory as the sign of the vitality of the "old Europe".

***The Eurocentric Phase:*** After the initial wave of Western-centric fascination with the East, the Eurocentric stage followed. This book argues that it was this moment that planted the seeds for the birth of post-crisis Europe. The "revolutions of 1989", during which the European public sphere was still taking shape as far as the dilemmas of democratic development and legal and political challenges connected with the transnational project were concerned, became reduced to mere cultural narrative at the turn of the century. To the European integration machine, aspiring to full membership was equal to achieving an acceptable level of democratic standards in the politically backward East—and the right moment to take the step from governing by politics to governing by culture. European identity, including its heritage, memories and traditions, became the way and method of European post-millennial governance,

multiplying ideas about cultural (re)integration of Central and Eastern Europe and ignoring political realities. Similarities, rather than differences, were being emphasised.

The notion of European identity was the engine driving this search for familial relatedness. At first, the post-socialist East took up the initiative to look for its own "Western" identity by itself. After 2000, the drive for cultural integration was taken over by the West. The cultural discourse of European identity grew stronger, especially in the periods prior to the enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Concepts such as "intercultural dialogue", "European memory" and "European heritage" produced the image of a new European subject that emerged from a shared past. Revived mythologies from the nineteenth century, such as "shared roots", a common birth in the ancient "Greek cradle" and a common cultural heritage rooted in Renaissance and humanist art and philosophy, grew afresh side by side with the ideas of "a cultural mosaic" and cultural diversity as fundamental European values (Pieterse 1991; Sassateli 2002; Shore 2006). As Cris Shore (2006) notes, these grandiose cultural conceptions were emerging in the context of the process of social engineering of a collective European consciousness that would offer a basis to legitimise common European politics. The outcome of this engineering was a conceited conception of a great historical civilisation that had been in the forefront of global modernisation—one that would enlighten global capitals all over the world as well as culturally educate the peoples of its former colonies on the fringe.

As late as 2007, such aspirations were displayed without reserve. The *Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World*, for instance, starts off with thoughts by Dario Fo, reiterating that "even before Europe was united in an economic level or was conceived at the level of economic interests and trade, it was culture that united all the countries of Europe. The arts, literature, music are the connecting link of Europe".[5] The cultural diversity of Europe, the agenda reads, "is inspiring and has inspired many countries across the world". The text goes on to elaborate the "cultural mission" of the European Union in the context of globalisation, pointing out the strategic goals of ensuring "progress, solidarity and security, while ensuring a stronger presence on the international scene" (cited in Vidmar Horvat 2009, 76).

At least two major consequences followed from this clearly Eurocentric discourse. The first was the translation of values into cultural

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[6] *Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalizing world, COM (2007) 242 final*, accessed 10 May 2007.

bonds. The ideas of the shared "great values in common", the "core values" and the "shared legacy of classical civilization" assumed a prime stage of political focus (Shore 2006, 13). The intent, as Shore writes, was to "help forge a collective European consciousness and identity by 'Europeanizing' the cultural sector" (2006, 14). Numerous projects and a panoply of ideas were launched in this period, including Europeanisation of university teaching, "European Months", "European Years", "Europe Day", "European City of Culture" and the Jean Monnet Awards. Behind these ambitions rested the drive to "reconfigure the public imagination by Europeanizing some of the fundamental categories of thought" (2006, 15).

In 2006 the EU Parliament and the Council of Europe adopted a document that launched 2008 as the "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue". The introduction of "intercultural dialogue" marked a new era of embracing cultural diversity as a feature of European identity. Intercultural dialogue as promoted by EU documents was proposed as a way to better understand cultural differences in the member states and to gain insight into how the member states addressed this diversity. The fact of the European Union becoming increasingly multicultural was acknowledged. However, in contrast to previous notions of the "diverse" patchwork cultural field of a shared European heritage as a given, now "intercultural competences" became part of the plan to launch strategic priorities of the European Union, such as "respecting and promoting cultural diversity"; "supporting the EU's commitment to solidarity, social justice … and greater cohesion"; "enabling the EU to make its voice better heard in the world and to forge effective partnerships with countries in its neighbourhood". In brief, in addition to connoting national, local and regional richness of European cultures, cultural diversity now took on a new flavour. It became recognised as part of a strategic plan to redefine and reinforce the EU's presence on the global map. By being placed on the intercultural dialogue's agenda of combating the rise of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, the notion of cultural diversity was reformulated into a political tool for furthering social solidarity and cohesion on the home front.

The legacy of this cultural turn was felt as late as 2016. In the *Cultural Awareness and Expression Handbook* (2016), a reference textbook for the implementation of workplans for the European Agenda of Culture 2014–2019, one reads of the value and importance of acknowledging cultural competence as a key competence of lifelong learning: "In today's world, assailed as we are by an abundance of images, by permanent and rapid change, and by a strong need for self-determination and identity, cultural awareness and expression is rightly called a *key* competence. It is

difficult to overestimate the importance of this competence in a period in which openness, optimism and tolerance are placed under such strain in Europe" (2016, 1). The document then observes:

> In recent years, Europe has witnessed serious attacks on the idea of the open society … All nations in Europe have become aware of the concrete consequences of all kinds of radicalization, such as dehumanization and deadly violence. This is a time to stand up for the shared European values of freedom of speech and expression, as well as for respect for cultural diversity. The refugee tragedy of 2015 is another test of Europe's capacity to uphold its ideals of solidarity and freedom … Training in cultural awareness and expression can help to overcome feelings of fear and distrust, and to nurture our human capacity to understand others and ourselves. (2016, 8)

European discourse selects four key virtues as the common bond among the Europeans: (1) Roman law; (2) the ethics of solidarity (derived from Christianity and humanism); (3) democracy; and (4) the Enlightenment rationality (Amin 2004). The four virtues constitute a backbone of the ideal that is supposed to represent Europe. As Ash Amin (2004, 5) notes, though, it is questionable whether these constituents can function as a connecting tissue:

> At face value, there seems nothing objectionable about these lofty principles. Indeed, they seem to be no more than a synthesis of what counts as being modern, aligned to a global standard of freedom, equality and justice established by the Old Continent and mobilized by both liberal and socialist orders around the world against tyrannies and inequalities based on prejudice, fear and gross violation of human rights. However, many, increasingly informed by a global consciousness that to be modern is not necessarily to be European (or American) and that the universals of Europe are just as constructed and ethno-culturally circumscribed as any other faith system, might well object.

In other words, the European project reproduces an implicit chauvinism of the nationalist project. By providing grounds for the expansion of the symbolic terrains of the nation-states, it creates a new shared field from where "masses could be easily invited to history", as Thomas Nair (cited in Shore 2000, 33) puts it; however, it is also bound to recycle old forms of exclusions. Often this implies ordering multiplex social, cultural and historic realms within the selective and privileged visions of the continent and its past. Although different, the *peoples* of Europe share "a history which gives Europe its place in the world and