Europe and Culture
Anthropological Perspectives on the Process of European Integration[1]

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Abstract

After the fall of the Iron Curtain a new concept of Europe as a socially relevant object of study emerged in the social sciences challenging the model of Europe as historical entity, or a philosophical or literary concept. This concept provoked an upsurge of interest in the study of European identity among anthropologists who began to study how Europeanness is constructed and articulated both by the architects of the EU themselves and at a grass-root level. Drawing on notions of European culture and identity, this text examines the image of Europe/the EU in post-communist Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, from two different perspectives. First, how the institutionalisation of Europe as a cultural idea is viewed by some of the Czech political commentators, and second, from an ethnographically grounded anthropological perspective, focusing on how and at what levels a Czech local community identifies with Europe and the EU. Drawing on a broad range of data, the text attempts to provide new insights into the pitfalls of collective European identity in the making, with the emphasis on its cultural dimension in the post-communist Czech Republic.

Keywords

anthropology of Europe, cultural integration, cultural deficit, culture, Czech local community, European identity, Europeanisation

Introduction

In this article I will first attempt to analyse key terms – Europe and culture – and their relation with regard to anthropology of Europe. Then I will outline key theses concerning the newly emerging cultural politics and policies

Anthropological Journal of European Cultures
doi: 10.3167/ajec.2009.180202

within the European Union (EU) and their application to national agendas on European cultural integration in Central and Eastern Europe. The next part of the text will be devoted to the analysis of selected studies of European cultural integration by Czech political commentators and social scientists, which will be compared with the outcomes of anthropological research on European identity-in-the-making in a Czech local community. It will conclude with a critique of the current European identity project.

Europe as an Anthropological Concept: Theoretical and Methodological Implications

The concept of Europe has recently undergone a profound scrutiny in the social sciences and humanities. In the field of socio-cultural anthropology there has been a shift from anthropology *in* Europe to anthropology *of* Europe. A landmark in the development of an anthropology of Europe was the 'invention' of the Mediterranean in the 1960s (Goddard et al. 1996: 4). These studies focused primarily on rural communities and on the values of honour and shame.

The 1970s are associated with the emergence of 'Europe' as a distinctive category of anthropological inquiry (see Wallace 1990). This era can be said to commence with Boissevain's essay 'Towards a Social Anthropology of Europe' (1976), which was the first systematic attempt to define an agenda for the newly emerging sub-discipline. Boissevain rejected the community model and proposed a new framework for situating local events and processes in a wider regional, national and historical context. He equally refused any attempts to reify Europe as a particular culture area (Goddard et al. 1996: 13–15).

The 1980s witnessed a turn in social anthropology with respect to theory and methodology – anthropology returned home (cf. Cole 1977). The urge to do research in one's own culture found its expression in one of the ASA monographs, *Anthropology at Home* (Jackson 1985). Old 'positivist' approaches (structural-functionalism, structuralism, neo-Marxism) were largely on the wane, and new paradigms emerged under the rubric of postmodernism, feminism and 'thirdworldism'. 'Culture' in the form of collective identity merged with politics and produced identity politics and the politics of recognition, informed by multiculturalist discourse. The idea of an anthropology of Mediterranean Europe conceived as a single, uniform cultural area was retreating, being replaced by the concept of Europe as a united whole. The model of

Europe as a unit *sui generis* – in its plurality and diversity – provoked a new scientific quest for the roots of 'Europeanness' in history, religious studies and social sciences (Shore and Black 1996).

Anthropologists were faced with two sets of tasks. Firstly, they needed to conceptualise Europe, and secondly, they aimed to set up Europe as a meaningful object of anthropological enquiry (Goddard 1996: 23). The former task is where the trouble starts since the question 'What is Europe?' inevitably leads to problematic issues of classification. Fundamentally ambivalent discourse on Europe contains both inclusion and exclusion: both unity and the construction of difference. The dichotomy between Self and Other has been pivotal in the making of European identity. If the concept of collective identity entails inclusion, somebody must be excluded and classified as an outsider. European culture, equated with 'Western Civilisation', is quite commonly opposed to 'African barbarism' (cf. Chabal and Daloz 1999), or 'Oriental despotism', compared to which the idea of Europe became a universalistic notion of Civilisation, constructed in opposition to the Orient (Delanty 1995: 14).

As many anthropologists assert, Europe means different things to different people in different contexts (Delanty 1995: 3). How many definitions of Europe can one have at one's disposal? Instead of a consensus, the recent debate over the nature of Europe was controversial. On the one hand, primordialists argue about European unity in terms of its cultural and religious roots stemming from the common Judeo-Christian base. The primordialist stance focused on cultural exclusivity is very close to the 'Fortress Europe' project that was examined by Delanty (1995). On the other hand, for modernists contemplating Europe as a whole, European identity is an active process in the making that takes place through a series of encounters, dialogues and negotiations that are related to the 'outcome', namely European identity. Such a relational identity does not assume the existence of a ready-made European community; more likely, it concentrates on reconfiguration and redefining processes that can be called Common Europe (Novotná 2005: 177).

The 1990s brought new challenges that have spurred further anthropological inquiry into the meaning of Europe. New external conditions brought about radical, unprecedented changes. The European Commission and Parliament's turn towards 'culture' was borne from the need to address fundamental problems of legitimacy, including the deplored European democratic deficit, growing distance between EU institutions/elites and the citizens of

Europe, and the lack of a European *demos* and public space (cf. Weiler 2002; Shore 2006). In 1993, the Treaty of Maastricht, which brought a notion of Citizens' Europe as a legal concept, came into force, and provoked an upsurge of interest in the study of collective European identity among anthropologists. 'European culture' as an object of anthropological study emerged in the influential article by Cole (1977). Later works included Delanty (1995), Goddard et al. (1996), Shore (2000), and Skalník (1999, 2005b); also more history-oriented and semiotic perspectives, such as Malmborg and Stråth (2002), and institution-oriented research by, for example, Bellier and Wilson (2000).

Shore's *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (2000) was devoted to the cultural dimension of the EU enlargement, particularly to the cultural politics aimed at forging European awareness among the public in the member states. It reflected the recent EU resolution aimed at cementing the loyalty between Europe and the member states with an awareness of common European culture and identity. As Shore pointed out, since the 1980s European integration has been predominantly seen as a cultural process. Culture is to serve as a political instrument for furthering the construction process (Shore 2000: 1). If Europe is a cultural construct, social scientists have to ask who constructs it and for what purposes. According to Shore, cultural integration can take place in two ways: it can be either a spontaneous transition which will 'pay well', or it can take an active form through intervention which supports the European idea by means of advertising campaigns to strengthen European identity, values and its cultural heritage. According to the neo-functionalist theory there was a presumption of spontaneous, dynamic transition to integration; 'an irresistible wave of Europeanisation' was debated (Shore 2000). Moreover, the term 'Europeanisation' was also anthropologically assessed in an article of Borneman and Fowler from 1997. As Shore showed in his book, new forms of the support of the idea of Europe emerged – ranging from 'People's Europe' Campaign focused on inventing new symbols, new European logo, flag and anthem, to attempts to establish European passports and reorganise a calendar with the aim of enclosing thematic 'European Years', and organising local festivals of the 'European Week', or the annual holiday 'Europe Day' (on 9 May). Among other activities featured, 'Television without Frontiers Directive' aimed at setting up pan-European television as a means to support political integration; last but not least, there appeared new awards for literature, architecture, sports and so on, sponsored by the EU.

One of the most significant initiatives looking at the study of Europe predominantly from an anthropological perspective is Barrera-González's project 'Towards an Anthropology of Europe' (2005), which attempted to introduce a teaching course and co-ordinated research agenda on the Anthropology *of* Europe. There were two international meetings of anthropologists that proved invaluable for the emergence of Barrera-González's project: the workshop 'Anthropology of Europe: Teaching and Research' that took place in the East Bohemian village of Dolní Roveň, 17–19 October 2004, and the workshop 'Towards an Anthropology of Europe' sponsored by the European Science Foundation that took place on 1–5 September 2004 in Litomyšl, a picturesque town in eastern Bohemia (both Czech Republic). The first event led to the publication of the book edited by Peter Skalník, *Anthropology of Europe: Teaching and Research* (2005b), the Litomyšl papers still await publication (Barrera-González and Skalník, f.c.). Dealing with the essential question – what is Europe? – Barrera-González's project covers a whole host of approaches, ranging from Europe as a metaphysical reality via a geographical entity to an imagined, cultural reality epitomised in one of the items of his proposal, 'The new Europe in the making: the cultural dimension' (Barrera-González 2005: 21–22). Concerning the other key issue whether Europe can become an adequate object for anthropological study, he claims that there is 'sufficient ground for Anthropology of Europe' (ibid.: 17) on condition that such a study is based on a broad, open-ended, comparative project in which other social sciences and humanities can participate (history, sociology or political science), and provided that a thematic, problem-oriented approach is preferred to Europe as a 'culture area' (Niedermüller and Stocklund 2001).

Recent times are characteristic of the EU's increasing activities in the area of promotion and advertising of 'Europe': Europe is coming close to people. For example, in 2004, the European Commission published a leaflet entitled *Many Tongues, One Family* under the motto *Europe on the Move: Languages in the EU.* Similarly, the recent initiative entitled *United in Diversity,* resembling the American *E pluribus Unum,* or the South African *Unity in Diversity,* communicates the message that though (cultural) unity is an obvious political goal of the EU, it should not question existing cultural diversity within Europe's nation-states. Readers are assured that although the EU has committed itself to integration, it nevertheless supports language and cultural diversity of all citizens in the member states. Hence, contemporary ambitions of the EU are radically different from the past efforts, which focused on the EU as a guaran-

tor of essential values such as peace and solidarity. What matters today is a process of building Europe that respects the freedom and identity of all people who are its part. The message is put in no uncertain terms: only through the unification of its entire people will Europe be able to control its fate and develop its positive role in the world. People should feel at home in Europe ('European Home') while they can preserve their specific values, customs and languages. Another illustrative case in point is a campaign towards 'ever closer Europe'. Information leaflets *We live, work and study in another country of the EU* (published by the European Commission), containing an overview of rights in the EU, are nicely wrapped up in the product called *Your Europe,* which includes references in all the languages of the EU.

This brings us to the question: is the integration process within the European Union meant to serve as a catalyst to greater cultural homogeneity within Europe? Can Europe ever become a distinctive cultural entity united by shared values, culture and identity? In this respect, it is appropriate to mention Llobera's interesting remark on the universalism of the Enlightenment and the idea of universal fraternity that requires the homogenisation of languages, religions, political systems and so on, with respect to the recent attempts of the EU bureaucrats to forge the idea of shared European culture. He poignantly refers to van Gennep's assertion that only an evil empire can successfully accomplish such a task – the Bolsheviks were the ideal candidates to try to achieve it (Llobera 1996: 98). Equally, Goody reminds us that Europe as a valid unit of study should be challenged and assumptions of its uniqueness avoided (Goody 1991). Hann (2006) follows Goody and suggests studying Eurasia instead. Europe must be studied as a cultural construction; it cannot be regarded as a self-evident entity. That means it is a highly ambitious task to place European societies within a wider context of study while 'bringing Europe into the anthropological universe' (Goddard 1996: 86).

Europe and Culture

The other keyword of this article – culture – is even more challenging than 'Europe', both theoretically and methodologically. A terminological hotchpotch is well known among social scientists, including anthropologists. For some, culture means values, motives and ethical rules that are part of a social system. For others, such a definition is not enough; they view culture as the whole set of institutions by which people live. Some anthropologists

conceive of culture as a set of learned ways of thinking and behaving, while others stress genetic influences on cultural traits. Another contradiction resides in the question where culture is 'stored': for some, culture is located in the minds of human beings (ideational perspective), whereas others are dissatisfied with such a narrow limitation and add the ingredient of human behaviour (phenomenal conception of culture). The absence of consensus has far-reaching consequences for both the *etic* and *emic* conceptualisation of culture in and of Europe. As for the former approach, there are diverse ways of studying 'culture', ranging from those defying the scientific approach, to those that support it. The latter perspective is equally ambiguous.

What idea of culture do the European politicians have in mind when speaking about cultural integration: the normative view of culture as a standard of perfection (Arnold 1971), or a classic anthropological conception of culture as a particular way of life of a people? One has to admit the preference for the continuing meaning of culture as a 'way of life' derived from colonial contexts even though there is a certain move away from the view that cultures can be described as fixed and separate entities – apparent in terms such as cultural hybridity, transculturation, cross-cultural dialogue and cultural in-betweenness (Bennett 2005: 68) – even in the folk models. Such notions, however, make a scientific enquiry even more difficult as they express the fluidity of cultural distinctions and relationships.

The relation between Europe and 'culture' is even more complex than the inquiry into each of these terms separately. Throughout its modern history, Europe always emerged as a product of 'culture', whether scientific-technological, bourgeois high culture or the present-day European official culture. As Delanty (1995) pointed out, Europe can be viewed as both an exclusivist notion and normative space of universal validity in which a privileged 'We' matches a belief in the universality of Western norms and values (Delanty 1995: 13). Europe has become a mirror for the interpretation of the world. European modernity is seen as the culmination of history and the apotheosis of civilisation. European identity is very closely linked with racial myths of civilisational superiority (Delanty 1995: 14). An overlap between culture and civilisation is evident because the logic of culture is bounded and limited to the West: formerly, the West had civilisation, and culture was affiliated to the Other who lacked civilisation.

It is no coincidence that the EU elites in Brussels started to 'think Europe' in cultural dimensions only in postmodern times when the term 'culture'

regained its intellectual currency, and the notion of cultural difference was endowed with moral and political values. Culture has entered the political project of Europe. Moreover, the attempts to institutionalise Europe as a cultural idea are made into a polity that is primarily shaped by economic interests.

The Image of Europe/the EU in Post-communist Europe

The redefinition of Europe compelled by the end of a bipolar world and the subsequent formation of the geopolitical vacuum in which ex-communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe existed after 1989 brought about new definitions and conceptions of Europe. A cultural reference model of the West was abandoned and replaced by an increased emphasis on 'Europe' in the post-Cold War period. New thematic options emerged (cf. Delanty 1995; Skalník 1999; Barrera-González 2005), such as the revival of Central Europe (so-called Mitteleuropa) as a political programme and ideal; new conceptions of Europeanism in the former Eastern Europe; a new polarity between North and South, a renewed notion of 'Fortress Europe', this time aimed against Islam and the Third World, and the like.

The rebirth of the concept of Mitteleuropa is associated with the collapse of the idea of Europe. It is predominantly conceptualised as a rival, or antithesis to Europe, namely to the EU. Delanty argues that behind this notion of Europeanism, different from that of the EU, is a defensive project based on the demand that They (Westerners) should take Us (Easterners) seriously (Delanty 1995: 131). He claims that Mitteleuropa is a mere utopia for the future, a nostalgia for an imagined past. Moreover, it can have a potentially dangerous ambition, manifesting itself in 'nationalist and obscurantist undercurrents that seek to distort democratic reformism' (Delanty 1995: 137). The term 'Central Europe' is widely used today, but until 1989 it was employed very little outside the region itself. As the Czech-Italian philosopher Václav Bělohradský remarks (1991), this concept gained world-wide recognition thanks to the Czech-French writer Milan Kundera. He used it to fight against the alleged arrogance and lazy narrow-mindedness of Western readers who placed his works in 'Eastern Europe' and read them 'politically' as an account of life 'behind the Iron Curtain under Communism'. Kundera told the Western readership that Eastern Europe is merely a military concept and has no historical legitimacy. In the article entitled 'Milan Kundera jako

Homo Politicus' [Milan Kundera as Homo Politicus], Czech journalist Karel Hvížďala (2004) argues that Kundera's Central Europe reminds one of a kidnapped West (Kundera 1984a). Kundera (1984b) makes an attempt to give a vivid picture of this term, and to assert a political and intellectual alternative to the 'grey' Soviet Eastern Europe by placing emphasis on its uniqueness, difference and ambivalence. However, as Hvížďala asserts, such a Europe existed only before the Great War. In the wake of the Second World War, after the borders of Poland were altered, the destruction of Jews in the Holocaust and the mass deportation of Germans and Hungarians from the East to Germany, the image of Europe radically changed.

What meaning do the new conceptions of Europeanism have for the former Eastern Europeans? The Europe they largely aspire to is that of the metropolitan cores of Western Europe, which is, as Delanty argues, 'an idealized kind of Europe' (1995: 135). The promulgated ideal to catch up with the most advanced Western countries has been aired in the Eastern European public space by politicians and the mass media since the fall of communism. However, as the ex-communist countries still visibly 'lag behind' measurable development in the West, the idea of Eastern Europe as a 'disadvantaged periphery of the West' gained ground in the 1990s (Delanty 1995: 140). A chance to upgrade their positions within Europe came with the invitation of the EU for them to become member-states. Again, motivations to be part of the EU varied as Europe does not mean the same for everyone. While the Central Europe project was viewed as a means of 're-Europeanisation' and reintroducing some of the values eliminated by the communist Soviet system (Delanty 1995: 137), eastern Europeans, for example former Czechoslovak and Czech President Václav Havel, largely cherished the idea of a 'Return to Europe.'

Hence, Europeanism has become one of the underlying issues on the political agenda of most of the former communist countries. In the Czech Republic, the issue centred round a host of topics. I shall briefly comment upon some of those that have been reflected in newspaper articles, public debates and academic circles. The selection is rather arbitrary, and it covers the time period 2003 to 2008, varying in intensity of interest. Drawing on Philip Schlesinger's theoretical notion of Europe as 'new cultural battlefield' (1994), I would like to develop the argument that Europeanisation is an unfinished business whose final trajectory is unknown.

'Going back to Europe' became the major topic on the political and public agenda debated in the mass media. Numerous articles dealt with the new

process of self-identification. Europe was being interpreted as the EU. A united European community was promoted in order to bring about changes in public attitudes towards Europe and Europeanness. The EU emerged as the panacea for the ailing Czech economy and welfare, and a young, underdeveloped liberal democracy. Czechs were portrayed in Western Europe as 'poor cousins'. The idea of belonging to Europe also served as a means of distinguishing the Czech Republic from Slovakia, illustrated by Czech President Klaus's initiative to bring the country into the EU sooner than Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. It went hand in hand with his unwillingness to promote the Visegrád project.[2] He even withdrew funds from the Central European University (CEU) in Prague so that the university had to move to Warsaw and Budapest.

And what does the term Europeanisation mean in the Czech context? There are two underlying myths: Czechs will either melt in the EU like a lump of sugar in tea, or the EU will bring law and order at last. Hence, Brussels and the EU are seen as a cargo cult (see Skalník 2000), since Czechs (and also Poles) believe in the cultivation of public culture, effective judiciary and the like. Both myths give evidence of very low national and civic self-confidence. However, as Vladimír Kučera asserted in newspaper article entitled 'Co jsou Češi zač? Takoví voříšci Evropy' [What are Czechs like? Such Mongrels of Europe] (2003), Czechs were able to avoid the two obstacles. In their approach to the EU they have shown a great deal of rationality epitomised by their firmly entrenched passive positions *vis-à-vis* public life (also visible in relation to domestic politics). An overwhelmingly pragmatic Czech view of the EU is illustrated in the political scientist Bohumil Doležal's newspaper article (2004) entitled 'Jalové nadšení ani brblání nad osudem nestačí' [Neither Sterile Enthusiasm nor Grumbling about Bad Luck is Enough]. He claims that Czechs seem to be extremely realistic in that they do not expect anything great, thus they do not risk disappointment, unlike the Poles who expect the improvement of moral values and standards. The approach to the EU of a typical Czech, as media and domestic politics construct him/her, is as follows: the EU is no miracle; it is a powerful bloc with a considerable democratic deficit in decision-making processes. However, membership of the Czech Republic in the EU enables it to tap the wealth of the EU. What is not being emphasised, claims Doležal, is the fact that no human society has ever got rich by the mere accession to a certain institution, no matter how well-off it may be.

Identification with Europe only on the rational level is at the core of the newspaper article 'Hledá se politický národ' [In Search for Political Nation] (2005) by Alexandr Vondra, the former Czech Vice-Minister for European Affairs. He claims that a process of intensifying integration corresponds with a certain counter-reaction. Europe is not a political nation, for this requires emotional identification. There is no reason to think that it will become one in the near future. Thus, people regard the EU as if it was a corporation – they are interested in it, and by becoming members states are buying its shares.

The common view that Czechs are Europeans only partially, 'quarter-heartedly, and what is more, according to momentary needs' (Kučera 2003) has given rise to numerous surveys and polls examining the relationship of Czechs to the EU. One year after the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU, a survey under the title 'Kdo jsem' [Who am I] was presented by the Czech daily *MF Dnes* (2005). As one of the *MF Dnes* reporters Robert Čásenský shows in the homonymous article (2005), some seven thousand Czechs were asked about their allegiance to the state, their town or village, or to Europe. According to the survey, only every seventh Czech felt more European than Czech or local patriot.

A growing gap between *vox populi* and the discourse of the political elites was a topic of a Czech political scientist Václav Nekvapil's newspaper article 'Veřejné mínění tváří v tvář rozšíření' [Public Opinion *vis-à-vis* the EU Enlargement] (2004). He commented on another public opinion poll carried out by the sociologist Ivan Gabal that investigated the alleged costs and benefits associated with entry to the EU among the Czechs. The resulting concept of 'Euro-factor' revealed a specific mixture of opinions and emotions, involving anguish, hope and expectations of systemic changes, a better life, and also fear of foreigners. Nekvapil asserted that the outcomes were not greatly different from the answers of other Europeans who 'like their Europe' but do not feel that they are Europeans. By accentuating similar roots among all European nations, they do feel a great degree of affiliation with so-called European cultural space. A more distressing interpretation of the research outcomes, however, suggests both echoes of the cargo cult and the idea of Fortress Europe. It is interesting to compare the 'Czech' symbolic map of Europe with the results of Bulgarian anthropologist Magdalena Elchinova's study among Bulgarian students, which shows that, for instance, it is predominantly the countries from the ex-Soviet bloc that are outside 'Europe'. Her research has shown

that Europe is still more about exclusion and division than about inclusion and unity. A 'Berlin wall' still exists in the minds, perceptions, evaluations and behaviour of the inhabitants in Europe (Elchinova 2005).

Nekvapil also elaborated on the collection of studies by groups of political scientists and sociologists, *Les Européens face à l'elargissement* [Europeans Facing the Enlargement] edited by the well-known French political scientist Jacques Rupnik (2004a), which provided plenty of data from the polls on European public opinion (particularly Euro-barometer). Nekvapil does not comment on the results because he claims that they are only true for those who are responsible for building Europe, and they give little evidence about the real possibilities or aspirations of the people of the EU to become Europeans. Similarly, Rupnik claimed in his newspaper article 'Stejné výrazy, různé významy' [Same Terms, Different Meanings] (2004b) that politicians in Europe have emancipated themselves from their voters.

Hence, European public opinion reveals the cleavages not among European citizens but among political elites. What are the issues that unite Europeans, and which issues tend to divide them? To facilitate the contemporary process of European unification, there have been many attempts to identify common cultural denominators which might serve both as a basis to define common European identity, and as an exclusion principle supporting arbitrary decision-making concerning further enlargement (Novotná 2005: 177). As Kateřina Šafaříková, a Czech reporter based in Brussels, argues in the text 'Novodobým Adenauerům nepřeje doba' [Our Time Does not Favour Modern Adenauers] (2007), the slight interest in European affairs among the public is associated with the absence of common denominators. Europe lacks a strong topic that would be shared by the public. Moreover, today's Europe lacks strong leaders such as Churchill, Adenauer, Monnet or Schuman. The EU stars would need legitimacy at home and respect outside. There is no shared consensus on what the most important narrative of Europe should be: indeed the very need of such narrative is a matter of debate. For instance, Sharon Macdonald (2000) claims that in order not to repeat the mistakes of nation-states, the EU should avoid a unificatory narrative. Similarly, Luisa Passerini (2002) maintains that there should be an 'ironic identity' for Europe – a postmodern one as opposed to modern national identities.

The Czech Jewish writer, journalist and diplomat Leo Pavlát raises the issue of an exclusivist notion of Europe. In his article 'Raději chmury teď, než pozdě' [Glooms Rather Now than Late] (2004), he warns against the tempta-

tion to define a new identity for Europe on the basis of anti-Americanism and anti-Israelism: this would be a step towards European destruction. He claims that most of Europe is blind to its own history and unwilling to sacrifice its illusionary good, and sees a contradiction between humanistic proclamations of official EU documents and pathetic appeals of their representatives to fight terrorism on the one hand, and the concrete attitudes and behaviour of most the EU countries on the other. Today's internally fragmentised Europe facing a grave value crisis and inner spiritual and political erosion is thus predisposed to the growth of anti-Semitism among young white Europeans. Moreover, a Europe susceptible to defeatist attitudes is an easy prey for external and internal totalitarian-fundamentalist tendencies.

Despite the proclamations and wishes of many Europhiles, the unity of the EU still rests on a national basis, argues the Czech journalist Viliam Buchert in the article 'Náš hlas by měl znít v EU hlasitěji' [Our Voice Should be Heard Louder in the EU] (2005). He reminds his readers that the EU as a product of French–German reconciliation came to terms with the outcome of the Second World War, and that its driving force was the need to overcome the destructive aspirations of nation-states. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, new zones emerged: Polish-German, German-Czech and the like. Buchert raises questions about whether integration will result in reconciliation, as in the post-war phase. He doubts it for many reasons. First, the EU still uses the terms and notions that were in use when nation-states were emerging in the nineteenth century – nationality, nation – which have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore there are diverse ideas and images of the EU in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

The present Czech President Václav Klaus, the most vociferous critic of the 'undemocratic' principles of the EU who in November 2008 turned into an overt dissenter after he met with the instigator of the Irish 'no' to the Treaty of Lisbon, Declan Ganley. Klaus expressed his doubts as to the existence of a European identity that transcends the national identity of the member states of the EU or is directly superior to it in the newspaper article 'Kde stojí Unie před summitem. Úskalí evropské identity' [Where is the Union before its Summit: The Pitfalls of European Identity] (2005). Observing that European identity is understood either in a normative sense (what kind of identity there should be) or in a descriptive sense (European identity simply *is*), Klaus points out that there is no empirical evidence that such identity ever existed in the past, nor that anything like European identity exists today. As for the

future, he is sceptical about the need to have one. Another issue he raises is whether European identity can be enforced out of the abstract doctrine of human rights and other abstract values, which he considers impossible. Identity is, he argues, the outcome of history; it is not a product of laboratory experiments, complicated international agreements and Brussels seminars. On the other hand, the new initiatives of Brussels bureaucrats in the field of culture and identity bring about irresolvable dilemmas that can even damage the whole European project because the weakening of national identities and the lack of meaningful substitutes creates a state without identity. It is bad for so-called old-timers; it is even worse and definitely more dangerous for immigrants who (will) come to live in Europe, concludes Klaus.

The above newspaper articles and sociological surveys concerning the relation between the Czechs and Europe/the EU support, among other things, the anthropological assumption that Europe – just like 'the 'West', 'Mitteleuropa', 'the Orient', or 'the Third World' – is a cultural construct, defined symbolically. Europe is an imagined area emerging in people's minds, opinions and beliefs (Niedermüller and Stocklund 2001). Such a statement has clear implications for social scientists, particularly anthropologists. If Europe is a cultural construct, they should study who or what stands behind its 'creation' (Shore 2000), and how Europeanness is understood at a grass-root level. Therefore, the last part of the text will present some of the outcomes of the research that took place between 2002 and 2007 in the Czech rural community of Dolní Roveň.

Emic Conceptualisation of the Process of Europeanisation: An Anthropological Perspective

This research is part of the recent endeavour of social anthropologists to restudy the communities that have already been investigated at other times (Skalník 2005c). It aims to explore what accession to the European Union means for the communities under study. The underlying methodological assumption is that social anthropology through participant observation is a prerequisite for an in-depth analysis of social processes in numerically limited communities where a researcher can make several relationships with both ordinary and exceptional individuals. Hence, the aim of anthropology of Europe is to look for differences and similarities (common denominators) in a newly emerging European political, economic and socio-cultural space based

on the research of genuine relations. It means that a researcher must not build his or her hypotheses on the assumption that the relationship to Europe is automatically given.

Research in Dolní Roveň focused on a comparative analysis of global and local factors in this rural community in relation to European identity. This research was part of the comprehensive study in which a number of Czech and other European anthropologists and sociologists participated (see Novotná 2004; Skalník 2004, 2005a; Kusimba 2005). It was motivated by Shore's book *Building Europe* (2000), which examines the project of constructing European identity within the EU institutions under the provocative slogan 'Europe has been created; now we must create the Europeans'. The emphasis was placed on the study of how cultural dimensions of the EU enlargement are viewed by the local people – in their everyday lives, leisure time and in their community life. The aim was to make a kind of 'swot' analysis to identify all the factors that either impede or promote the main objective of the EU planners, the creation of *Homo Europaeus,* in the local setting (Horáková 2007).

The research results indicate an ambiguous relationship to Europe and the EU among villagers. Prior to the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU (2004) and immediately afterwards, most villagers tended to view the situation both with moderate optimism and positive expectations, and with anxiety and pessimism. On the one hand, some villagers expected economic prosperity and saw the Czech Republic as the next Ireland (at that time, Ireland served as a noted EU success story). They looked forward to the arrival of fairer European law which would be an improvement of Czech law. On the other hand, others feared economic decline and political chaos. The prevailing pessimistic concerns dealt predominantly with the agricultural policies of the Czech government that had to be adapted and transformed to meet the EU regulations in this sphere. Such concerns appeared rational, given that in the past Dolní Roveň was a community endowed with an above-average potential for agricultural prosperity. However, in the course of time, largely due to the forced removals of large farmers (so-called *kulaks,* according to communist ideology) from the village in the 1950s, the agricultural potential of the village had been substantially undermined. At present, its agrarian sphere, once the most salient characteristic of this rural community, is almost irrelevant: in Dolní Roveň only 2.7 per cent are now active farmers (Skalník 2004). Such a dramatic decline in the number of active village farmers does not, however, automatically mean that agriculture as the major source

of food ceases to be an attractive topic to discuss. As many ethnographic accounts prove (see, for example, Hall 2003; Passmore and Passmore 2003), Czech food plays a key role in national identity. Food for Czechs has been a 'historical and creative disengagement from the unsettling and overpowering movement of great forces that have shaped Czech history', be that the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Nazi occupation or Soviet domination (Passmore and Passmore 2003: 40). With the advent of the European Union, many villagers articulated fears, discussed frequently in the media, that the EU would outlaw Czech national dishes. *Guláš* (goulash), beer, *olomoucké tvarůžky* (a small round strong-flavoured curd cheese), *utopenci* (pickled sausages), *nakládaný hermelín* (brie-type cheese marinated in oil with other flavourings) and *sekaná* (slices of forcemeat) were among those that were particularly endangered because the traditional method of preparation and storage might violate EU food safety standards and regulations. For instance, most villagers asserted that to achieve the best taste of goulash one has to store it several days before serving. Similarly, both marinated foods must be kept at room temperature, which violates the EU regulation on food preservation (refrigeration). These 'emblems of Czech national identity' (Hall 2003: 109) were viewed as essential to the survival of Czech culture *vis-à-vis* a distant power represented by the EU. Thus, for many villagers, irrespective of their socio-economic positions, the EU represented a potential threat to one of the key pillars of Czech culture.

The EU is predominantly viewed by the villagers as an economic entity: 'where money is sitting, perhaps where it is going' – in the former case the idea is how to obtain money from the EU, and those who are capable of doing that are highly appreciated. This concerns even those who are able to outwit the EU institutions, which can be viewed as one of the reminders of national ideology under socialism when it was a common strategy to fool the state with the aim to ensure a better living standard, or just for fun, to prove that it *is* possible (Horáková 2007). These outcomes tend to prove J.-F. Bayart's thesis that the EU is doomed to remain a political enterprise that is *sui generis* and incomplete, evolving in accord with a sequence of pragmatic compromises (Bayart 2005: 64). Hence, the process of Europeanisation embedded in the macro-political concept of European identity remains a public, highly rhetoric discourse, aimed at achieving a wide European identity which would serve as cohesion in the political union. It is a normative project which comes from the administrative centre of the EU and – ideally – moves towards the

periphery. As Hans van den Broek suggests in a speech on 'The Challenge of a Wider Europe', delivered to the Institute for European Studies, Brussels, on 17 March 1994, European identity has to crystallise. Europeans have to increase the feeling of belonging together, sharing a destiny and the like. Otherwise the threat of dissolution will come from both inside and outside (Delgado-Moreira 1997).

What has been done in this respect in Dolní Roveň? How was such European identity promoted or sought? From a social constructionist perspective, identity is a fluid concept that bundles together complex social processes, and the emphasis is placed on the process of making and claiming identities (cf. Delanty 2000). In other words, identities are not attributes that people have but resources that people use (Jamieson 2002). As is evident from the empirical data, in some social contexts and for some individuals, being or feeling European is a declaration of a sense of membership of a group, while for others it remains an abstract classification. The empirical reality of the villagers reveals both cases. European identity is invoked only occasionally, under specific social circumstances, while being out-of-mind in everyday interactions or having little immediate relevance much of the time. Some young people living in the village feel particularly enthusiastic about the opportunities the EU offers in terms of rights to travel and work across Europe (save for Austria and Germany, which have not yet lifted the strict measures on work permits). However, for those whose horizons and ambitions do not go beyond their local milieu, close social relationships remain the most important sources of identity, more important than being European. On the whole, most villagers do not share the alleged cultural deficit, vividly reflected in the absence of a European public by European elites and scholars (Horáková 2007). They simply view Europe as *cratos* – power, without *demos* – people, but it does not seem to be their concern.

Conclusion: The Cultural Deficit of Europe

As many social scientists, journalists and commentators assert, so far, there is no European identity or awareness that could compete with nationalism or ethnicity, or at least local identities, and which could offer an alternative base for cohesion and solidarity. Despite its rhetoric of transnationalism, Europe only reinvents nationalism that has become reified as European tradition. The way the European elite perceive the term culture is similar to the out-

moded anthropological view of a bounded unit. The problem is that cultural factors such as shared history, historical memory, religion, language or myths are instrumental in separating fellow Europeans, rather than uniting them (cf. McDonald 1996). And as there are serious deficiencies in the cultural field, there are sceptical voices forecasting a failure in creating European culture and identity. As A. D. Smith (1992) indicates, it is a utopian dream of intellectuals and idealists with little chance of mobilising mass consciousness.

European integration has remained in the realm of elite ideology, condemned by the masses (Horáková 2007: 115). As this paper has shown, contemporary debates over the concepts of European identity seem very far away from the 'new' European *demos* (cf. Novotná 2005; Horáková 2007). How serious is the lack of legitimacy in the field of culture? There is a widely held assumption that recognition of shared cultural values is the basis of political legitimacy and stability (cf. Gellner 1997). Europe lacks a shared culture around which Europeans could unite; the shared culture is necessary for legitimising political ambitions of the EU, for the sense of cohesion among the divided nations of Europe. The EU is a state without nation; it aspires to become a democracy but it does not have its *demos,* its people, who could identify with it.

Anthropological research into the actual extent of popular identification with the EU remains an urgent need if we are to find out whether Jean Monnet's vision of 'a union among people' can be translated into a lived reality (Shore and Black 1996: 295) or, conversely, deconstruct the myth of the unity of European culture (Delanty 1995: 13). Anthropologists should keep asking disturbing questions: is a real unity of Europe desirable or is it only the fantasy of hypocritical elites? Can European identity ever be created? And if so, is it possible to create it via social engineering? They should strive to work on a new definition of Europeanism that does not exclude the stranger, and keep on studying what role culture plays in the process of European integration. Europe should not be viewed as a fixed, bounded entity and culture but as a fluid space with moveable boundaries and uncertain contents.

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Notes

1. This text summarises research results reached during the last decade. I thank the guest editors – Andrés Barrera-González and Anna Horolets – for their useful recommendations, and Peter Skalník for his comments at two stages of the preparation of the manuscript. I also thank Andrew Roberts for the English language revision, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. The responsibility for the final product is however entirely mine.

2. The Visegrád Group is a grouping of four Central European states – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary – established on 15 February 1991 for the purpose of co-operation and furthering their European integration. All four members of the Visegrád Group became part of the EU on 1 May 2004.

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