

# Cultural Diversity and Democracy in Post-Enlargement Europe

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**Abstract.** The ‘return to Europe’ of the new member states of the European Union is widely seen as a reunification of the ‘European family’. In this, the profound processes of transformation that these societies are experiencing are mostly understood as a continent-wide process of convergence. But such far-reaching processes of change have equally shown to involve forms of differentiation, in particular in terms of political and cultural diversity. Such differentiation has significance for the European project as such, but its implications are often not sufficiently acknowledged, neither in theory nor in praxis. The enlargement shows the limits of a conception of Europe as either a homogeneous ‘Fortress Europe’ or a ‘Europe of the nations’. The paper focuses in the first part on multiple forms of cultural diversity that have gained significance in the post-communist era. In the second part, a number of normative approaches to democracy in the European setting will be reviewed in order to assess to what extent these recognize and engage with the multiple collective identities outlined in the first part. On the one hand, cultural diversity will be analysed in the light of a common European identity, in as far as such a shared identity is deemed necessary for a European democratic order. On the other hand, their potential for the de-essentialization of national identities, and the recognition, participation, and accommodation of multiple cultural identities in European democracy is looked at. In the concluding section, it will be argued that both ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ approaches to a European identity and cultural diversity are unsatisfactory and that instead a more pluralized approach seems possible.

## Introduction

The ‘return to Europe’ of the new member states of the European Union (EU) is widely seen as a reunification of the ‘European family’. In this, the profound processes of transformation that these societies are experiencing are mostly understood in terms of a ‘banality of transition’ (Outhwaite 2006) and are basically perceived as part of a continent-wide process of convergence. But the far-reaching processes of European integration have equally shown to involve forms of differentiation, in particular in terms of cultural diversity. Such differentiation has significance for the European project as such, but its implications are often not sufficiently acknowledged, neither in theory nor in praxis. The processes of transformation in which the Central and Eastern European countries are still involved do not only affect these societies internally, for instance regarding different collective self-identifications, understandings of the public role of religion, or in dealing with the past, but in many ways also influence the rationale, shape, and identity-in-construction of the European project. The enlargement shows the limits of a conception of Europe as either a homogeneous ‘Fortress Europe’ or a ‘Europe of the Nations’.

The paper focuses in the first part on multiple layers of cultural diversity that have gained significance in the post-communist and, currently, post-enlargement era, distinguishing between civilizational, transnational/regional, national, and sub-national

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collective identities. The question will be posed to what extent national identities can be still seen as the primary forms of collective allegiance in post-enlargement Europe, and whether the triangular relation between politics, identity and culture is in transformation (Hedetoft 1999). It will be concluded that in particular with post-communist transformation and European enlargement, identities are articulated and politicized on multiple levels rather than exclusively in the form of national identities.

In the second part it will be asked to what extent a European democratic order is possible in the context of complex and multi-layered identities. Two strands of normative approaches to democracy in the European setting will be reviewed as to how these envisage the relation between European democracy and collective identity, and as to what extent these recognize and engage with multiple layers of collective identity. In the concluding section, it will be argued that both 'communitarian' and 'post-nationalist' approaches to a European identity and cultural diversity are unsatisfactory and that instead a pluralized and intercultural approach is more convincing.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Cultural Pluralism in Post-Enlargement Europe**

The post-1989 trajectories of the Central and Eastern European countries have almost without exception been characterized by a widespread political consensus on the 'return to Europe'. Even if it cannot be argued that the understanding of Europe is identical in the perceptions of the main participants, in general the new member states were driven by both the desire to obtain the economic and security benefits of membership, as well as by an aspiration to strengthen their cultural and geopolitical identities (Rogowski and Turner 2006: 3). Thus, arguments of identity were as important for aspirations to membership as economic and political ones.

The debate on identity in Central and Eastern Europe has primarily focused on the unforeseen 'return of the repressed' or what is generally referred to as the 'new nationalisms'. This revival of nationalism in the wake of the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe has often provoked the re-emergence of a conventional theoretical distinction between civic and ethnic forms of nationalism in the debate on democratization and collective identity-formation (cf. Blokker 2005; Kuzio 2005). This distinction is meant to imply that the Western European trajectory to modern democracy and the modern nation-state involved the gradual extension of civil, political, and social rights in the context of a relatively consolidated and implicit collective identity, while the distinctive feature of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe is considered to be its historically explicit role in defining and promoting an ethno-culturally based collective identity in late-modernizing societies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It might be good to emphasize here that the argument regarding forms of cultural diversity is not an attempt to underline cultural-determinist approaches such as Samuel Huntington's thesis of a presumed 'clash of civilizations', which point to the incompatibility of distinct cultures with democracy. To the contrary, the argument is one of 'multiple identities' and 'multiple democracies' in that it is claimed that democracy can co-habitate with multiple historical legacies, collective identities, and forms of social solidarity (often, but not necessarily based on ethno-cultural forms). It is further argued that the quest for a universally valid democratic model seems to lead to either the negligence or the suppression of significant diversity.

<sup>2</sup> The re-appearing nationalisms in the former communist countries can be partially related to the consequence of the formal suppression of manifestations of nationalism during communism. Such a reading, however, foregoes the role of nationalism in the contestation of 'international communism' in a number of countries, in particular Poland (cf. Kubik 2003), or, alternatively, in its syncretism with communism, as in the case of, for instance, Romania (cf. Verdery 1991).

The most significant implication for the discussion of diversity here is that it is supposed that in Eastern European nationalisms the ethno-cultural component of collective identities has historically been dominant, and that such ethno-cultural nationalisms have been a dominant model of collective identity building in the post-1989 context as well. One consequence of this seems to have been explosive inter-ethnic conflict, in particular in former Yugoslavia but also elsewhere. Moreover, 'unresolved' national identity issues have been understood as an impediment to democratization in these societies (Harris 2003; Spohn 2002: 200; Spohn 2005). It has been argued that while Western European countries are steadily moving towards a post-national form of polity (Habermas 1998), the former communist countries are in a way still struggling with the intricacies and entanglements of nation-building and the formation of national identities, as attested by a strong emphasis on national sovereignty in democratization and constitutionalization processes, on the one hand, and the emergence of radical nationalist and populist movements, on the other (Blokker 2005). In the wider European context, then, the suggestion that is often made is that the former communist countries need to adopt a Europeanized, civic or 'thin' form of nationalism (cf. Habermas 1990; Kymlicka and Opalski 2001).

The reading of post-enlargement European integration as based on a trajectory of convergence of the Central and Eastern European countries from an ethno-culturally defined national identity to a Europeanized national identity, and ultimately, post-national form of collective identification is, however, problematic in at least two ways. First of all, even if the notion of a 'return to Europe' seems to indicate a trajectory towards the membership of a political community with an allegedly rather well-defined collective identity, no such common identification can be presupposed (cf. Strath 2003). In reality, a singular definition of Europe is problematic in the light of multiple forms of identification, including civilizational identities. Second, multiple forms of collective identity construction have emerged in post-communist Europe (cf. Harris 2005), pointing to the fact that the Europeanization of post-communist societies might not be only about the 'thinning' of ethno-cultural nationalism but also about the recognition of various other collective identities and forms of identification. Multiple identities (Europe, the nation, the region) are sometimes mutually exclusive, but are often also overlapping, entangled, or nested.

Thus, with regard to the first point, rather than assuming the return of the former communist societies to a Europe with a clearly defined identity, it might be argued that a singular civilizational identity of post-enlargement Europe is untenable in the post-enlargement European Union. It was not least the constitutionalization process of Europe that commenced with the Convention on the Future of Europe that brought the question of a common European identity on the political agenda. And while in the debate over the European Constitution a singular European civilizational background is often invoked (based on Roman and Judeo-Christian heritages, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution), it cannot be denied that post-enlargement Europe is based on a multiple civilizational background. Gerard Delanty thus argues for an understanding of post-enlargement Europe as 'post-Western' (Delanty 2003), in that it has become increasingly difficult to ground a common European identity in the notion of a singular civilizational background of a Western European civilization that has characterized and underpinned European integration until 2004. In the post-enlargement order, it has to be recognised that the member states that make up the European order represent different

trajectories to modernity, have experienced different civilizational influences (Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian), all of which might be seen as European in various ways, and that the European historical legacy is composed of diverse civilizational influences and encounters. From this perspective, it might make sense to speak of multiple Europes rather than Europe in the singular (Delanty 2006a; Strath 2000).

Post-enlargement Europe can thus be neither seen as the 'home of civilization' (Strath 2000: 69-71), nor as the inheritor of a more or less singular civilizational background in the form of Ancient Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian origins, and a set of European values (democracy, the constitutional state and the rule of law). Rather, Europe needs to confront multiple cultural and religious legacies, related forms of belonging and identification, as well as distinct experiences with modernity that inform collective identities, political cultures, and forms of democracy. While these multiple civilizational identities problematize a singular European identity in terms of a *longue durée* reading of Europe, various other - including supranational and subnational identities - also question such an identity if it is to mean a homogeneous identity and a singular set of shared norms and values in, let us say, a Durkheimian kind of 'conscience collective'.

Regarding the second point, while ethno-cultural understandings of national identity have generally been seen as constituting the dominant mode of collective identification and societal integration in the post-communist area, in reality developments after 1989 have shown the proliferation of multiple collective identifications, which points to wider and more complex processes of collective identity construction (Batt 2002). In this sense, European integration and the enlargement to include the former communist societies can only be understood by using a 'multi-layered constellation model', in which Europeanized identities, as well as civilizational, transnational, national, and regional identities are understood as interlinked (cf. Spohn 2005: 4; Ichijo and Spohn 2005).

In post-enlargement Europe, constructions of collective identities can be observed on various 'relational or spatial dimensions' (Ichijo and Spohn 2005: 5), including sub- and transnational levels, thereby contradicting an 'evolutionary' reading of European integration from ethno-national to civic-national to post-national identifications (cf. Batt 2002). On a transnational, regional level, cross-border regional identities are reconstructed that are sometimes in tension with national identities, and which are based on historical regions that were once part of an empire, and are now divided between various nation-states as a result of the collapse of these empires (e.g., the Banat is divided between Hungary, Romania and Serbia, while the Bukovina is divided between the Ukraine and Romania).<sup>3</sup> On a wider geographical level one finds transnational meso-regions or what in historiography is often called 'historical regions' (see Troebst 2003). These meso-regions comprise various states and are invoked to group families of societies sharing a number of similar features and historical experiences.<sup>4</sup> On the

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<sup>3</sup> In the context of European integration, it is interesting to observe that in some cases the national states to which these regions formally belong are bypassed by regional movements in favour of the European Union, which is seen as more sensitive to issues of regional autonomy and interregional collaboration (see Wolczuk 2002; see also Cordell and Wolff 2004). Cross-border regional identities can in some cases be the basis of clear defiance of a majoritarian national state while demanding some form of regional autonomy, but can also constitute a different layer to national identity.

<sup>4</sup> In the post-communist context, perhaps the most well-known of such meso-regions is 'Central Europe'. Central European identity is often seen as based on a common historical experience of a number of small nations with the Habsburg empire, from which a distinct Central-European culture

subnational level, minorities invoke subnational and local identities, in concomitance with claims for (limited) autonomy vis-à-vis national states. As a result of late state-formation and nation-building in the Central and Eastern European region, and the emergence of many of the precursors of the current nation-states or their successors out of the collapsed Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian empires after the First World War, one finds a relatively high number of minority groups<sup>5</sup> of which some do not consider themselves as belonging to their 'host' state (or, at least, according to their elites) (Brubaker 1996; Cordell and Wolff 2004; Culic 2007).<sup>6</sup>

The current EU is then not only dealing with the integration of nation-states, which can politically be dealt with by means of some kind of intergovernmentalism, but more and more also with cultural integration and the politics of identity.<sup>7</sup> Cultural integration in Europe not only touches upon questions of rights and democratic governance, for instance regarding the inclusion of minority as well as regional groups, but also upon the problématique of a common European identity, the alleged need for a set of common European values, and their relation with multiple identities, 'united in diversity'.

The most significant question concerns how the European integration project is to deal with democracy and pan-European social solidarity in a post-national European order based on complex, multi-level cultural diversity. It is argued in this paper that this question cannot relate to the construction of a European common identity as the substitution of a European identity for various collective identities, but that a post-national political order needs to find a democratic way to take into account both national and other identities as well (cf. Brighenti 2007). The questions that arise in such a context are that of the balance between a European identity and various other identities (national, regional), the relation between identity and democracy, and the possibility of a pluralized European identity or an identity based on dialogue.

## 2. Cultural Diversity and Political Theory

Even if the above-sketched forms of cultural diversity in post-enlargement Europe are widely acknowledged, they are mostly regarded as falling within the 'parameters' of

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and mode of co-habitation is derived (see Blokker *forthcoming*). Another example regards the Balkans, situated in South-Eastern Europe, a regional denomination that has clearly acquired a number of distinct negative connotations, not least related to its civilizational past (see Todorova 1997), and is often imposed on the region, rather than being a form of self-identification. What makes meso-regional identities salient for a discussion of diversity and European integration is that in a number of instances such regional ideas have been instrumentalized as a means of differentiation in the accession process (cf. Blokker 2006, *forthcoming*; Neumann 2001; Todorova 1997). Most prominently, such differentiation has been created between 'Central Europe', on the one hand, and 'South-Eastern Europe' or the Balkans, and 'Eastern Europe' proper, on the other. Such differentiation has not necessarily supported a common European project, but rather involved exclusivist notions of a Central Europe closer to an ideal of European civilization (Kuus 2004). Regional identities can thus underpin conflictive and exclusivist visions of European identity and of what European integration is about, although such identities might similarly inform more open and tolerant understandings of Europe, as in a 'multi-cultural' or 'cosmopolitan' reading of the notion of a Central European identity (Betz 1990; Blokker *forthcoming*; Delanty 1996).

<sup>5</sup> As Toggenburg (2006) argues, the Eastern Enlargement was a 'primordial catalyst' in putting minority rights protection on the European agenda.

<sup>6</sup> Brubaker distinguishes between those minorities that have a neighbouring kinstate (such as the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and Romania) and national minorities (Brubaker 1996).

<sup>7</sup> The Preamble of the European Draft Constitution refers indeed to peoples rather than states.

already existing diversity, and are mostly not deemed a fundamental challenge to the direction of the European project itself (cf. Outhwaite 2006). The idea that the enlargement does not change the conditions and call for a redefinition of the European project seems, however, inattentive of at least some of the manifestations of diversity mentioned above. The incorporation of the Central and Eastern European societies, of multiple forms of identity (majority, minority, subnational, transnational) and of various historical experiences, implies that the European project reinvestigates its *finalité* and acknowledges a complex constellation of cultural diversity as a structural element of Europe (cf. Rogowski and Turner 2006).<sup>8</sup>

Cultural diversity in its various manifestations and implications have hardly been at the centre of attention of European policy-makers (even if there is an increasing attention for minority protection and regionalism, see Toggenburg 2004) nor, so it seems, of those implicated with the study of the emerging European order. Among the first one can find both the evolutionary optimism of those that adhere to functionalist and federalist visions of Europe, which is to result in an 'ever closer union', and the scepticism of those who tend to confine diversity mostly to the national level, therefore understood as without implications for Europe as such ('Europe of the Nations').

The ever-growing scholarly community that studies Europe has largely taken two different views of integration. Many approaches ultimately take a conventional statist or 'Westphalian' vision of Europe and seem to have difficulty in incorporating other than national manifestations of diversity (cf. Kraus 2003). A second reading, most promising in Habermas's cosmopolitan idea of a post-national European polity, goes quite some way in recognizing and accommodating various forms of diversity. Nevertheless, as I will argue, also Habermas's post-national democracy ultimately seems too restrictive to be able to deal satisfactorily with the cultural diversity of post-enlargement Europe.

In most political theoretical approaches that analyze the European project, the nation-state looms large as the primary unit of the European order. The statist vision, in one of its most diffused guises, consists of the idea that Europe is ultimately based on a union of nation-states, in which the former is structurally incapable of assuming the political and democratic competences of the latter. Statist approaches thus analyze the European project in close analogy with the Westphalian nation-state (cf. Kraus 2003).

The normative equation of democracy with the nation-state form is mostly accompanied by a number of assumptions derived from the historical experience of the West-European nation-state. In statist readings, the EU would need to live up to the political and democratic achievements of the nation-state in order to be viable and legitimate. Significant examples of this are the ideas that a European order can only be legitimate when a European people or demos is formed which shares a common language and a set of commonly held values, or when a sufficient level of social trust between European citizens has developed.<sup>9</sup> Dieter Grimm has, for instance, argued that

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<sup>8</sup> As Gabriel Toggenburg has argued, '[t]hrough enlargement, the European Union will find itself in direct contact with new neighbours such as Russia, Ukraine or Byelorussia, which from a "Western" perspective used to be vaguely located in very distant places somewhere in "the East". From this point on, cultural horizons will have to be expanded, traditional stereotypes held up for critical assessment. The Union must get to know a more complete (and more complex) story of Europe's historic heritage - one that reflects the views on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. With May 2004, the two notions of "we" and "the others" are getting seriously reshuffled' (Toggenburg 2004).

<sup>9</sup> See, most prominently, Grimm (1995); and Offe (2000); see for a critique of such visions, Friese and Wagner (2001).

a European democratic order lacks a 'political substructure', in the form of a public sphere integrated by language and a collective identity, which are necessary to socially embed a European democratic institutional order (Grimm 1995: 294-7). And according to Claus Offe, the European order is unable to reproduce the necessary mutual feelings of trust and solidarity as they exist between national citizens:

the conclusion seems inescapable that a repertoire of social norms capable of supporting a more "intentionalistic" paradigm of European integration does not currently exist. Moreover, independence and the division of labour will not automatically generate this trust and solidarity, anymore than social integration, in the sense of the convergence of social norms and cognitive orientation, will flow naturally from the integration of national systems through trade and factors of mobility (Offe 2000: 19).

The statist vision assumes that a 'thick' form of cultural commonality, which sometimes risks lapsing into essentialist understandings of a singular collective identity,<sup>10</sup> is necessary for the creation of a feeling of belonging and solidarity without which a viable and stable democracy would not be possible. In normative political theory, such a strong link between national identity and democracy often takes the shape of 'liberal nationalism'. One of the most arduous defenders of such an understanding of nationalism is Will Kymlicka, according to whom 'national units' are necessarily the primary units in a democracy as well as in the European order. In this vein, Kymlicka has for instance suggested that the European integration project faces an almost insurmountable democratic problem as the result of its pluri-lingualism, as this inhibits the construction of a European 'public opinion' necessary for genuine democratic participation (see Kymlicka 2001: 214, approvingly citing Dieter Grimm). Moreover, the nation-state, according to Kymlicka, is bound to remain the main unit of legitimation in European integration (2001: 214-15).

On Kymlicka's account, the significance of a national identity and culture<sup>11</sup> for democracy consists in the fact that it provides a common language for communication and a system of meaning in order to make meaningful choices; national identity thus provides individual citizens with meaning, means of communication, and a distinct identity. For Kymlicka, a democratic order can only genuinely exist if a common space for communication based on a shared language exists and shared historical traditions underpin a sense of solidarity. The cultural system of meaning allows the individual to be free and to be able to exercise his/her autonomy. And only in the context of a shared language and history can a sufficient basis for trust and solidarity develop, and can a reciprocal political culture emerge that comprises public-spiritedness, a sense of justice, and recognition of and respect for the rights of others (Kymlicka 2001; cf. Brock 2002).

But Kymlicka is aware of the cultural complexities of modern societies which cannot be easily grounded in one national culture. As modern, complex societies almost invariably need to accommodate various minority cultures within the common political community, ways need to be found in which such pluralism can be incorporated without leading to the suppression of difference nor to the fragmentation of the political order. Kymlicka identifies two viable ways of achieving these aims (apart from the generally less viable ways of out-migration or marginalization of minorities): assimilation into the majority societal culture, and the recognition of distinct rights and powers for minority

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<sup>10</sup> See Friese and Wagner (2001: 352) and Kohli (2000: 117).

<sup>11</sup> A 'societal culture', in Kymlicka's terms, consists of a 'territorially concentrated culture, centred on a shared language which is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both public and private life' (see 2001: 209, fn 5).

nations (Kymlicka and Opalski 2001: 23). In both cases, the democratic order is ultimately to be held together by a shared political culture, based on the liberal values of reciprocal tolerance and respect. Kymlicka suggests that thereby a national-liberal model continues to have relevance for modern, multi-cultural societies if it can create an equilibrium, based on a shared liberal political culture, between various recognized 'national' cultures within a 'multination' state.<sup>12</sup>

Kymlicka's liberal-nationalist model focuses, on the one hand, on the integrative function of national culture(-s) and, on the other, on a shared liberal political culture regulating state-society relations and those between different nations in multination states. There are two main problems with such a 'nationalist' model, in particular when used to evaluate a potential European democratic order (as Kymlicka does, for instance, in Kymlicka 2001). First of all, Kymlicka assumes that the classical, Westphalian relation between culture, identity, and politics is the only viable way of grounding a modern democratic order. He confines democratic self-expression and self-determination to expression within a homogeneous cultural sphere in which a 'societal culture' is shared. Therefore, when he is considering a possible future European democratic regime, he assumes that since a European society that is bounded by a common 'vernacular' and shared traditions does not (yet) exist, a post-national democratic regime is impossible to realize (Kymlicka 2001: 324-25). His equation of meaningful culture with national culture is problematic, however, in that such a 'modernist' reading of culture foregoes its ultimately constructed nature (cf. Benhabib 2002: 66; Pensky 2000; Walzer 1994; 2002). In other words, there is no *a priori* reason why a meaningful and shared European identity could not emerge (this is not to deny that this might be a long and a complicated process). In addition, and contrary to Kymlicka's own remarks, his multinational democracy, if read as the interaction of various nations within one political community held together by a 'thin' liberal political culture, seems to be one way of describing a minimal democracy on the European level, rather than to contradict it.

Second, and in a related but slightly different sense, Kymlicka's model seems blind to the relation of democracy with other (more complex) identities and cultural manifestations than national ones,<sup>13</sup> or, alternatively, with democratic models that do not need his nation-based definition of culture, or any 'thick' form of identity for that matter. In this, Kymlicka's critique of post-national and cosmopolitan models seems based on a rather conservative and unimaginative stance rather than a careful consideration of emerging - potentially innovative - forms of, for instance, democracy on the European level. In the light of the multiple and overlapping cultural identities emerging in Europe, it seems not wholly utopian to argue for a kind of 'meta-identity' that is based on a continuous dialogue between different and multiple identities, rather than for a traditional identity based on a singular and homogeneous set of commonly shared values.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> It is not clear, though, how the various nations come to desire to 'hold together' in their deep diversity and to share a liberal political culture (Parekh 2000: 104). Kymlicka points to a strong sense of mutual identification and the valuing of diversity, but is not able to clarify the historical circumstances under which such values emerge (Kymlicka 1995: 190-1).

<sup>13</sup> For instance, concerning groups that are territorially dispersed rather than concentrated in a singular territory.

<sup>14</sup> One historical analogy for such a 'meta-identity' has been suggested in the form of a 'Central European', multi-cultural identity (see Betz 1990; Blokker *forthcoming*; Delanty 1996).



### *Post-national Democracy*

A second reading, that of ‘constitutional patriotism’ and ‘post-national democracy’, is more sensitive to diversity and innovative forms of democracy, and is most prominently reflected in Jürgen Habermas’ idea of a polity founded on a popular allegiance to the values of the constitution. Habermas has on various occasions suggested the relevance of such a model for the emerging European political community.<sup>15</sup> Habermas’ idea of constitutional patriotism, in concomitance with the notion of a – procedurally instituted - public sphere based on unrestricted deliberation in which citizens debate on questions of common significance, is unquestionably a major step forward in the political theoretical imagination of a (European) polity in which political and cultural diversity can be accustomed.

In such a deliberative model, it seems that problems of the denial or suppression of cultural diversity are effectively transcended by means of a focus on rational-critical discourse rather than on identities and social status. The essentialism and particularism of nationalist and statist approaches to (European) culture and a (European) collective identity is avoided as the model of deliberative democracy is based on a universal morality in which issues of identity and cultural difference are transcended, while public reason is based on impartiality and neutrality. While Habermas acknowledges that ‘national myths’ have had emancipatory and inclusionary features, he equally underlines their discriminating and aggressive aspects in that the nation as a myth or ‘imagined community’ has fed the idea of ‘collective freedom’ which can be (and has historically been) used to override individual freedoms and suppress diversity.<sup>16</sup> In order to promote equality and inclusion, therefore, collective identities and ethical visions are ‘bracketed’ (Calhoun 1995: 244), that is, they are perceived as belonging to the private sphere,<sup>17</sup> in order to avoid their political instrumentalization and the domination by the national majority over minority groups on their basis.

According to Habermas, politics should not be confined to self-exploration or the definition of a collective identity, but rather needs to be grounded in widely shared constitutional principles. This shared political culture or ‘common horizon of interpretation’ forms the framework within which citizens debate on matters of collective interest. Habermas sustains that complex societies can only be held together by such a ‘procedural consensus’ as a substantive consensus over values cannot be upheld in pluralized modern societies (Habermas 1994a: 134-35). The universalist vision of constitutional consensus, which seeks to transcend the ambivalent features of nationalisms and collectivism, fits clearly very well with one of the main rationales of European integration, in which Europe is a primary means of overcoming the horrors of the nationalisms of the World Wars.

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<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Habermas 1998; 2001.

<sup>16</sup> The argumentation of Habermas is twofold. On the one hand, he points to the historically ambivalent function that nationalism has had in Western Europe, i.e., as socially integrating and stimulating social solidarity but at the same time as an exclusivist force. In this sense, he argues for the ‘shaking off’ of its ambivalence. On the other hand, Habermas designates ‘national myths’ as a ‘non-secularised remainder’ in secularised states, which prevents rational deliberation of the citizens, as the pre-political nature of an organic nation or *Volk* constitutes an element that is formed independently of the political formation of opinion and will of the citizen, (Habermas 1999: 138-39, 141-42).

<sup>17</sup> ‘The level of a common political culture needs to be detached from the level of subcultures and their pre-politically formed identities’ (Habermas 1999: 142).

Habermas' idea of constitutional patriotism is, however, not without problems and seems to be too limited exactly in the fields of cultural diversity and political conflict over values. It has been argued that, even if Habermas is able to avoid a number of important problems related to the imposition of a majority culture on minorities of various kinds, his universalist model ultimately is unable to deal with conflict over deep principles and cultural diversity.<sup>18</sup> With regard to the diversity of cultural identities and life forms, Habermas' theory has 'difficulty in answering new cross-cultural challenges, such as Islamic modernity, the politics of identity associated with new social movements, and, above all, the politics of reconciliation in deeply divided societies'.<sup>19</sup> This line of argument might be of importance with regard to Central and Eastern European societies as well as various minority groups in the region, which experienced a historical development different from that of the West, have (re-)constructed, ask recognition for, and want to preserve different collective identities (often including different civilizational and modern components), are in some cases attached to different values, and often have to confront deeply divided multi-ethnic societies.

First, while Habermas's ideas of 'post-national democracy' and 'constitutional patriotism' avoid the trappings of statism, 'national liberalism', as well as exclusionary collective identities, the post-national model might be said to be bypassing the historical context of the transformations in Central and Eastern Europe. While Habermas's model grew out of a necessity to transcend the particularist nationalisms that had threatened to destroy Europe altogether,<sup>20</sup> and certainly has relevance for countering those manifestations of exclusivist, violent nationalisms that emerged after 1989 (such as in former Yugoslavia, but also, in a much less violent form, in many other countries, such as Slovakia and Romania), the move to a 'thin', shared political culture in which no reference to particularist, cultural values is possible might prove too thin to be relevant for the reconstruction of the former communist societies.<sup>21</sup> It seems that at least some form of particularist understanding of togetherness or 'background consensus' is needed to embed such a form of 'constitutional patriotism', something that Habermas admits to himself when he sees adherence to constitutional values as in need of grounding in a particular historical context (see Habermas 1994a). Neither the option of bypassing the question of self-definition by directly adhering to a set of constitutional principles nor the jump to a post-national, European identity seem to be feasible or realistic. The post-1989 reconstructions are not only about the rejection of the heteronomy of Soviet domination, but also about refinding ways of self-expression. But while Kymlicka essentializes national cultures, Habermas seems to understand any form of collective identity as inherently irrational and exclusionary and, therefore, unfit for participation in

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Bohmann (1995); for a different vision, see Benhabib (2002).

<sup>19</sup> See Delanty (1997: 30).

<sup>20</sup> Habermas's model of 'constitutional patriotism' has been often exposed as strictly related to the specific West-German postwar trajectory. Constitutional patriotism provided a way of transcending the problematic, fascist past, and firmly anchored democracy in the constitution ([Turner 2004]; Müller 2006: 378). Post-national democracy is then predominantly a reflection on the postwar experiences of West-Germany, and to a certain extent the wider Western European experience (cf. Habermas 1999: 144).

<sup>21</sup> In this regard, it is indeed somewhat paradoxical that while Western European societies are apparently moving to a post-national form of social solidarity, the former communist societies are dealing with the foundational question of who they are. A simple skipping of this 'national question' by means of the adherence to universalist constitutional principles seems in that light not feasible.

rational political deliberation (cf. Breda 2004; Pensky 2000). But the recently regained national sovereignty and concomitant search for and construction of social identities in the former communist societies not only to involve the manifestation of exclusivist, repressive, and closed forms of ethnic nationalism, but also milder, more open, and Europeanist forms of communitarian understandings of identity and liberal forms of social identities. In his understanding of constitutional patriotism and a concomitant political culture, Habermas does not, however, not seem to leave much room for the expression of either open and relatively fluid manifestations of collective identities nor for multiple identities for that matter, the latter which may include attachments to the locality, the nation as well more cosmopolitan inclinations to Europe at the same time (cf. Calhoun 1994: 327). The issue is then perhaps not so much how to overcome forms of collective identity and nationalism, but rather how to create open, tolerant, and cross-cultural forms of collective identification.

A second problem with Habermas's model is that it is too much the expression of a singular reading of modernity, thereby largely bypassing the question of 'multiple modernities', their relationship with different civilizational backgrounds, and connected conceptualizations of the relation between culture and politics. While it might be said that the collapse of communism eliminated the rivalry between two alternative forms of modernity, the diversity of transformation pathways of the successor states to the Soviet empire point to the importance of historical legacies and different experiences with modernity (Arnason 2000: 5). Habermas's response to the collapse of communism has been that

the revolutionary process in the GDR and in East-Central Europe hold onto our passions, even though the original enthusiasm has given place to fear and skepticism. The events change the international and inter-German scene nearly daily. But the catching-up revolution throws no new light on our *old* problems (Habermas 1990: 7).

Habermas has confirmed such a view in later moments (see, e.g., Habermas 1994b) and regards the transformations of the former communist countries basically as the 'catching-up' with the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Habermas's characterization of a democratic political culture is based on the profound change in political mentality that was the result of the French Revolution, that is, the development of a future-oriented consciousness, a new understanding of political praxis as self-determination and self-realization, and a new form of post-metaphysical legitimation (Habermas 1992: 603-608). While such a political culture on the European level would in many ways be appealing for its inclusionary and participative nature, it might prove to be rather intolerant of those (including non-liberal) visions of democracy that do not fully share such a political mentality.

One problematic aspect concerns, for instance, different perceptions of the role of religion in public life and politics. One instance of this might be the role of Orthodox Christianity in a number of South-Eastern European countries, such as Romania. Orthodox culture has not been touched by modernizing forces in the same way as Western Christianity, and in that sense has not been object to the process of secularization in the same way. It has in this regard been argued that one might distinguish a Western European modernity but also a South-Eastern European, Orthodoxy modernity (Dungaciu 2004). It can further be argued that the relation of orthodoxy with democracy is by no means a clear-cut issue (Papanikolaou 2003). While the conventional argument is that democracy and orthodoxy are incompatible (see, in particular, Huntington 1992), particular interpretations of orthodox culture are rather

close to communitarian understandings of democracy, and it seems not unreasonable to argue for an orthodox form of pluralism (see Duțu 1995: 151-53). The revival of religion in the post-communist era indicates a different relation of citizens to religion, and of state-church relations. Rather than subjecting the new members states to a secularised and post-metaphysical understanding of democracy and the public sphere, it might be better to perceive of a European political culture as a ‘post-secular’ culture (Delanty *forthcoming*).

### **3. Post-National Democracy in the Enlarged European Union**

Both the statist version of Europe with its relatively ‘thick’, value-based understanding of commonality grounded in the nation-state and the post-national, rights-based perception of Europe with its ‘thin’ attachment to a common constitutional project provide important recognition for and explicitly engage with cultural pluralism. However, as has been argued here, both fall short in dealing with cultural diversity in post-enlargement Europe in a comprehensive and ultimately convincing way, in particular with regard to the experiences of the Central and Eastern European societies.

The statist reading of modern democracy, here analysed mostly in the form of Kymlicka’s ‘multicultural liberalism’, is arguing for the continuing relevance of the nation-state in sustaining modern democracy, in that the liberal right to nation-building is extended to nations other than the majority nation. From this national point of view, Kymlicka argues for the impossibility of European democracy, mostly in a form of the well-known ‘no-demos’-thesis. By claiming that modern democracy is only possible on the national level, Kymlicka only recognizes the nation as a significant cultural identity (cf. Young 1997) and basis of social solidarity, to the detriment of other forms of identity (including post-national multiple forms, based on local, regional, or supranational identities, or religion). By prioritizing the nation as the primary form of identity, Kymlicka essentializes national identity and, at the same time, portrays it as a coherent, commonly shared identity. In this way, neither other cultural identities, nor any intra-national differences are sufficiently taken into account (cf. Benhabib 2002: 60). Kymlicka’s naturalising of the nation further leads him to deny the possibility of democracy beyond the nation-state, even if, as Habermas and, most famously, Anderson have argued (Anderson 1983; Habermas 1998), the nation is itself a constructed identity, which at least not excludes the possibility of the construction of other forms of identity.

While Kymlicka’s project is to modernize and extent liberalism so as to include the complex pluralism of modern society, rehabilitating the nation as an undeniable component of modern democracy along the way, Habermas’s theory addresses the same problem from a very different angle. His ‘constitutional patriotism’ constitutes – at least in one reading of it – an attempt to reconcile democracy with the modern fact of cultural pluralism and the impossibility of organizing modern society around a singular set of substantive values. But rather than reifying the nation Habermas seeks to overcome national, ethical-political forms of identification in favour of a post-national form of democracy centred on universal, constitutional values. But in this he eschews any form of belonging and social identity, making his theory too formal and abstract to be reality-proof.<sup>22</sup> And while his model of deliberative democracy is clearly much more inclusive

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<sup>22</sup> This is probably the reason why Habermas simultaneously and paradoxically insists on the necessity of the historical embedment of constitutional allegiance (see Habermas 1994, 2006; Pensky 2000).

and participatory than many other democratic models, it might be said to be too much wedded to a Eurocentric reading of the emergence of (the public sphere in) modern democracy in the first place to be sensitive to possible other 'democratization roads'. This is then a second instance in which Habermas's model is not reality-proof in contemporary post-Enlargement Europe.

The fifth wave of enlargement is not only about the 'return to Europe' of a number of always already European countries, nor simply about the 'catching up with missed developments' of these countries (Habermas 1990: 180). The post-enlargement order faces the challenge of finding a common denominator for deeper political integration while acknowledging Europe's political and cultural plurality. I have argued that such plurality is more complex in the post-enlargement order in that there is currently a clear need for an open confrontation with the multiple civilizational past as well as various routes to modernity, the relations of these routes to multiple political forms and cultural identities, and a mosaic of complex cultural identities. The future of European integration is not merely concerned with the political assimilation of the new member states to either a post-national, rights-based vision or a national, value-based understanding of the European political order. Rather, Europe needs to find ways to, on the one hand, engage with, accommodate, and transform multiple cultural differences and identities, as might be derived from one way of reading the notion of 'unity in diversity', and incorporate multiple democratic discourses and practices, on the other. A post-national understanding of a common European identity clearly cannot be settled in terms of a fixed set of norms and values and needs to go beyond the idea that democracy on the European level can only exist on such a basis. But neither the idea that a European identity can only be grounded in a political culture of abstract principles shared by all, while national and sub-national identities are 'bracketed', is relevant to the post-enlargement situation. Instead, a European common identity should be based on inclusion and participation in open deliberation about such an identity, stimulating dialogue on distinct values and in order to further cross-group identification. A democratic European order should not be based on the idea that the quest for democracy has now ended with the discovery of one or the other ideal-typical order. Instead, deliberative democracy should be based on an understanding of democratic praxis that includes a continuous dialogue on various discourses of democracy as well as multiple identities.

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