



Petya Kabakchieva

Eurolocal perspectives towards the EU

Imagining the European Union as a nation–state

This text, first published in 2002, describes how in Bulgaria, the EU has replaced the nation state as a symbol of authority. Even local history and culture is being embedded and rewritten in the context of European cultural history. Nevertheless, regional identity won't get lost, argues the author, since regions "are a configuration of different liminalities enveloping spatial zones of different sizes that overlap and accrue, providing different options."

The problem: whose Europe?

The end of the 20th century has posed a formidable challenge to social scientists. *Prima facie*, globalization seems to have called into question both the classical institutions of modernity and the terms in which we conceptualize the world – there is talk of the end of the nation state, of the fall of empires, institutions have been replaced with networks, etc. At the same time, however, there has been a notable revival of nation states and nationalisms and growing speculation about the birth of new empires as the new world order seems to be reproducing the old division of centre and periphery in a new form. It seems that we are witnessing an intensification of the ambivalence of modernity rather than a postmodern mix or recycling; or at least it is obvious that some places have given old forms a new lease of life, while others seem to be generating something new, with unclear outlines. Where exactly and why are nationalisms emerging in some places whilst something else is emerging in others – those questions require case–by–case analysis and cannot be answered by generalizations about global trends.

United Europe in the context of further enlargement is an especially interesting subject of study in this respect. The European Union is a challenge to the classical structures of the nation state, yet it is also capable of provoking nationalisms by this very challenge; EU is building a new institutional structure while keeping the old ones in place; it is striving to homogenize its territory, but intends to integrate into the single European space countries that are quite economically and culturally heterogeneous.

The question which I will consider here is the following: what will the principle of constitution of the new type of sociopolitical structures in the new Europe be? I am deliberately avoiding the term "nation state" because it is very likely that the nation state will *not* be the main structure – or even if it is, it will probably have different functions. Of course, this is a very hypothetical question because there still are many dormant tendencies within united and uniting Europe, and it is not clear precisely which one will ultimately prevail. As Jacques Derrida, we are also aware that "[s]omething unique is afoot in

Europe, in what is still called Europe even if we no longer know very well *what* or *who* goes by this name". And "[w]e ask ourselves in hope, in fear and trembling, what this face is going to resemble? Will it still resemble? Will it resemble the face of some *persona* whom we believe we know: Europe?" (Derrida, 1992:5–6).

This new face of Europe is usually regarded as a problem above all for the elites – in terms of both the EU's institutional reform and future strategy of development (as a union of nation states or as a federation, etc.) and it is constructed by applying a classical political "technique" – as an elitist project it is built similarly to the nation state, i.e. top–down. The problem examined in this text concerns more or less the "bottom–up" perception of "Europe" and the EU; how this clearly delineated but conceptually vague structure is imagined in the everyday consciousness of people – at that, people from an EU candidate country, Bulgaria. Why is this important? Because reality is a product of both building and imagining, because those two processes are interrelated, and the stability of the structure depends on the application of building practices which correspond to people's values and norms and, in this sense, are superstructured and adequate to this imaginary reality.

The view presented here is constituted on the basis of an analysis of one of the tendencies typical for Bulgaria – a postcommunist country which wants to join the united Europe and which, for the time being, has been left for the second wave of accession. Bulgaria is often beyond the scope of vision of researchers both of Eastern Europe and of European enlargement for two reasons: first, it is not among the "top achievers" in terms of either transition or future EU admission; second, it is neither an example of an extreme situation such as ex–Yugoslavia, nor a newly constituted nation state with all the challenges which this constitution entails. Bulgaria is an ordinary country that is neither a failure nor a success story – a country with functioning democracy without outstanding democratization; with a market that is asserting itself in the economy but is yet to assert itself as a market economy; with minority problems but not with a problems with minorities, etc. Could this non–extreme country, which is in itself a typical example of part of the postcommunist world, offer us possible options for understanding the new type of political configuration within the future enlarged European Union?

Before proceeding to analyze the problem under review from the perspective of developments in this particular country, we should consider the theoretical question of how political entities become possible and what prevents large groups of people united into common structures from falling apart.

Methodological framework: centre and periphery

Needless to say, the question of the principles of consolidation of society and the establishment of a comparatively stable social structure is crucial in sociology and has different paradigmatic answers. Here I will use Edward Shils's methodological scheme of the centre as maintaining the integrity of society. The centre in Shils's sense includes two components – a central value system which, in its turn, legitimates the central institutional system, i.e. the institutions which structure the life of the majority of the population. I am using this methodological model because, to quote Shils, it is both ambitious and ambiguous. Being ambitious, it is universal in its abstract explanatory potential; being ambiguous, it is polysemous and can easily be applied to the study of the political constitution of different territorial configurations which sometimes could not have firmly fixed territorial boundaries, but cultural

boundaries which delimit shared values and norms and institutional boundaries, i.e. boundaries of a territory that is regulated in a particular way. At the same time, it is possible to have different centres, insofar as the centre invariably comprises a particular group which engages in interaction with other groups. Since the purpose of this model is to explain the constitution of society and social integration of different groups (yet this also means exclusion – as a matter of fact, there is no such thing as total exclusion since even the remotest peripheries are ultimately mirrored in some kind of centre), we are constantly coming across different and more or less consistent centres, which cover more or less distant peripheries in one way or another. The centre may include commonly shared embedded values and norms – in this sense, it undoubtedly bears the "imprint" of Durkheim's conscience collective; at the same time, it is ideologically constructed – for Shils the centre as a value system is equivalent to Mannheim's concept of ideology (Shils, 1982:95). The authority of the centre may be maintained by universally shared values that are legitimate for all; but it may also rest on the charisma of a particular individual or elite; or it may be imposed by coercion and violence (here there is an impact of Weber's concept of the three types of legitimate authority). The specific configuration of the centre/centres and peripheries, and the ways of asserting the domination of the centre/centres over peripheries, determine the different political configurations and, with the emergence of powerful economic centres in the Modern Age, they also determine the structure of the modern economic and political systems (world economy and world political system – F. Braudel and I. Wallerstein).

We discover this centre/periphery relation in all political structures – in the old and the new empires, in the modern nation state – the difference is in the degree of the respective centre's consolidation. Unlike the empire in which the central value system, understood both as "united juridical categories and universal ethical values" (Hardt, Negri, 2000:10) is asserted by means of coercive political domination (because the empire unites many culturally and economically heterogeneous territories with mini-centres of their own); the modern nation state emerges as a unitary authoritative centre striving to homogenize a given territory in economic, cultural, political and administrative terms; moreover, the modern nation state succeeded in imagining a community, "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1998). This sense of fraternity and horizontal comradeship is possible precisely because the universality of the value system is duplicated by the universality of market exchange – economic exchange presupposes and requires a common language and value code; thus economic homogenization, based on market exchange, goes hand in hand with cultural homogenization. As the analyses of Immanuel Wallerstein and Jürgen Habermas brilliantly show, precisely the involvement in the newly emerged world economy prompts the political and cultural homogenization of modern states and makes them *nation*-states – imagined communities with strong national identities.

Yet since the nation state emerges as the main agent in the world economy (Braudel, Wallerstein), the development of this world economy takes the form of a structuring of the states themselves – some become centres and others remain peripheral, while others are semi-peripheral. This intrinsic inclusion of nation states in the world economy, i.e. their situating in a supra-national space that is now global, makes it possible in principle to substitute another centre for the national one. And this is the main hypothesis of this text – namely that the central zones of the world economy may also become symbolic centres, substituting national symbolic centres. This is possible especially in regions which regard themselves as peripheral vis-onomically

stronger centre in the hope of becoming its metropolis. This game of centre and periphery also makes possible a shift of symbolic borders, and this shift may likewise seek to acquire some institutional, albeit not spatial, form.

Thus, the main question explored in this text concerns whether "Europe," in its capacity as EU included, may prove to be such a centre – both symbolic and economic – for regions that are peripheral in regard to the nation state and, combined with the "Europe-of-regions" ideology, may legitimize the emergence of a new regionalism which is beyond the nation state in two ways. First, it does not develop along nation state lines because its centre is thought as not situated on a given territory, i.e. the centre is not "on" but "above," beyond a concretely foreseeable territoriality. Second, this type of region is beyond the nation state, insofar as it covers parts of nation states constituting a common region – and, in this sense, it is not "in" either, but "around". I believe that this approach has not lost its relevance yet (even though many theoreticians of postmodernity renounce this type of structuration in principle, positing everything either in the sphere of language games and networks, e.g. Lyotard, or in the sphere of the simulacrum or simple recycling, e.g. Baudrillard), and I would like to examine precisely from this theoretical perspective the imagining of different political configurations in an East European postcommunist country after the fall of the Soviet empire.

After the fall of the Soviet Empire – "searching for a centre that holds"

Not only the Soviet Union, but also the entire Soviet bloc ("camp") was based on the principle of empire – the communist ideology, thought of as being universal – the central value system, was imposed by political (and sometimes military) coercion. Political dominance was exercised over culturally and economically heterogeneous territories interconnected by politically centralized voluntaristic power rather than by market or any other exchange. That is why this interconnection depended entirely on the force of political coercion, and the moment this coercion weakened the empire crumbled into its constituents. Within the Soviet empire itself a process of emancipation of nation states had started even in the 60s; after the political grip loosened, the nation states where this emancipation had reached a comparatively self-sufficient economic and political level were quick to adjust to the global economy, restructuring their economies more or less effectively. For example, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland or Slovenia.¹ Where the respective country was strongly dependent on COMECON, profiled and adjusted to COMECON markets only, and did not conduct radical economic reforms, adjustment of the national economy to the new situation of opening to the global markets and global economy has been harder and often ineffective. Bulgaria is a case in point.

On the one hand, communism really industrialized Bulgaria, opening a series of enterprises – which, however, depended directly on the COMECON economy and did not have their own resources. In its turn the opening of a particular enterprise, as studies of the recent communist past show, did not depend on available infrastructure and a particular type of economic arguments, but on the will of the respective communist party heavyweight who came from this particular part of the country. The thus built economic structure de facto did *not* constitute an infrastructure, and after the failure of the artificially maintained "by the top" – i.e. by the party–state power social interconnection, Bulgaria broke up into a series of socially fragmented localities, where deindustrialization was quick to set in.

Deindustrialization was due to the above-mentioned artificially maintained "infrastructure" which was wholly dependent on state subsidies – now declining, as well as to the loss of COMECON markets. This process was intensified by the decapitalization of the national economy in the name of the capitalization of concrete economic actors – a process which occurred not only in Bulgaria and which is appropriately defined by David Stark as privatization of assets and nationalization of losses. This, in its turn, led to loss of the artificially maintained economic homogenization of Bulgarian territory, and to excessive expectations that the state would cope with the economic decline and would either restore the previous poor but nevertheless stable economic security or conduct reforms facilitating individual enterprise. Since neither happened for years and reverting to the previous state of affairs whilst the reforms were delayed was impossible, confidence in the nation state's political institutions plummeted; this has been a stable tendency since 1994.² The institutional centre started losing prestige – both as political government and economic distributor of resources.

The central value system, i.e the communist ideology was seen even during the communist regime as empty words backed by strong power. The "contradiction between words and deeds" was discussed constantly even at the official level. The official value system was thus actually desacralized, deprived of meaning and practically ineffective even during communism and especially in the 80s. The individualistic values of personal – material, professional – prosperity started to be asserted at the everyday level (Kabakchieva, 1991). Recognizing the crisis of communist ideology, the authorities attempted to assert a nationalist ideology in the early 80s – the lavish celebrations of the 1,300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state; as well as the name change of Bulgarian Turks, ideologized as a return to the roots. Yet because the promotion of this ideology coincided with the crisis of the communist regime, it did not win particular popularity.

Thus after the fall of the communist regime and the subsequent non-reformist limbo that lasted for several years, the nation state lost its significant centres – there was a crisis both of the value system and of the central institutions. In this sense, Bulgaria was dually fragmentized – in territorial terms, because the economic interconnection largely disintegrated; and in value terms – it was not clear what bonded people in a community. This was not the common past, because the assessment of the past divided the population into two large parts – pro-communist-past and anticommunists; neither was it the common future, because only a handful of people made dramatic progress in life, whereas the overwhelming majority lost the prospects of their individual time horizon (Kabakchieva, 1999). So, there is a crisis in the existential chronotope – there is no clear past, neither clear future.

This situation of anomic crisis has prompted "searching for a (new) centre that holds" (Bauman, 1995) the disintegrating sociality. The most obvious options are two: reviving the nationalist ideals and ideology for the purpose of stabilizing the nation state; or moving the centre in a direction beyond the nation state. And since Bulgaria cannot mobilize resources of its own to cope with the crisis, the most natural solution is to look for a legitimate centre beyond the nation state. From this perspective, the ideology of European enlargement has been welcomed with relief and joy both at the national and local levels.

Europe as the new centre

Everyone³ has gladly embraced the ideology of EU integration for several reasons:

First, the EU, i.e. Western Europe, is a symbol of civilization understood as economic well-being and prosperity – in other words, precisely what we want to achieve. Second, Europe is a symbol of culture – of an ancient and expanding culture of which it is easy to prove that we are a part too. The EU is thus becoming both a standard and a norm, our coveted future and our deserved worthy past. Europe provides the perfect chronotope – on the one hand the desired future and, on the other, the as if experienced value code. Europe provides the longed for and legitimate value system.

On the other hand, our institutions are in crisis whilst the European ones enjoy prestige. Almost all European countries are adopting the *acquis communautaire*, consequently the most visible marker of Europeanness is for us to adopt the *acquis* too. Besides, a series of EU programmes are being launched and the EU is coming to be seen as a large financial donor. Thus, even though not so obviously, the EU is also coming to be seen as an institutional centre that sets the political rules and redistributes economic resources.

This image of the EU is also identifiable in the analysis of the language of the campaign manifestos (in the 2001 elections) of all significant Bulgarian political parties. The EU is discussed in terms of "we are following their directives, adopting European standards, embracing and applying their social, educational, etc. model, abiding by European norms, applying the European Charter of... and utilizing their funds and pre-accession instruments." Everything is approached from a passive position and, moreover, the closer a party is to power, the more subjectless its discourse on the EU. Consequently, Bulgaria's political elites are positing the EU both as a new symbolic and a new institutional centre.

Keeping in mind the above stated arguments for the dual fragmentation of Bulgarian society Europe's emergence as a new centre at the local level is easy to predict. Here I will present the visions of Europe as seen by people from a small town in Southern Bulgaria, established in the course of a qualitative research, done in 2000, and then I shall reconstruct the political implications of this imaginary Europe.

Imagining Europe from a local perspective: The new symbolic authority

All interviewees invariably assessed Bulgaria's situation in comparison to Europe – "Europe" sets the standards in terms of both quality of life and professionalism. These standards are perceived as the norm, understood as "normal life," the life all people should have. "Our normal salaries should be five times as high if we are to be a bit closer to Europe." "We are far from the European standards"; or "In education we have European standards" – these are commonly used phrases. This perception is ambivalent – "we, as all Europeans, should have a normal life but usually don't." People felt far from Europe as regards living standards and logistics, and close to, even *in* Europe, in terms of professional skills. They felt *like Europeans, but outside Europe*.

Here is an excerpt from a newsletter of a local NGO, under the motto "Let us prepare for worthy dialogue" (meaning with "Europe"). The text begins as follows: "Albeit in Bulgaria, albeit in Europe, the population of the Rhodopi area is far more demotivated and disadvantaged by a combination of

geographical and socio-economic circumstances." And ends: "We have the ambition for versatile training of personnel who...will ultimately *reach the level* of European and world dialogue." One can see that the text begins with an explicit periphery complex and, from this perspective, "Bulgaria" is seen as being as far away from Rhodopi mountains as "Europe." And at the end the text "jumps" to the really important level – "Europe" and the "world," sidestepping Bulgaria. So, the new symbolic centre is already established and it is "Europe" as incarnation of "the highest norm", as "the Peak" one could reach if (s)he is properly trained – a new cultural homogenization, as E. Gellner would have put it, begins with this new high cultural norm.⁴ And this is both on the official (the implementation of the *acquis communautaire* means the same) and everyday levels.

"Europe" as donor and new economic centre

At the same time people usually associate "Europe", but already understood as "the EU" or "Western Europe," with an important economic donor, with a rich place where people know how they could earn money. This is mostly an NGO image of Europe, but with the current benefits from the SAPARD and ISPA pre-accession financial instruments this image is becoming increasingly popular. The question of "how can we catch up with them" is raised again in this context, but in far more concrete and instrumental terms: how can we get the European money, in particular, and, more generally, how is money made "in Europe". So, this image of Europe is instrumental, utilitarian; the image of a successful, well-run commercial enterprise which presumes a particular business and organizational culture, this is not a civic political image. This "business" image has proved to have at least two important positive effects: first, the notion of successful style of management has changed, and second, a new type of corporate culture is emerging, especially in the business community, which is trying really hard to win new niches in the "West" and, for instance, to attract Western tourists in Bulgaria.

The old image of the nation state as the main re-distributor of economic resources has now been substituted by the image of the EU, which could give us money and which could teach us how money is made in order to become "true Europeans." As the nation state is seen as poor, giving nothing, this leads to a *redefinition of the main centre of political power* and to the appearance of a new local-based supranational regionalism. Since they cannot count on central government for extra subsidies, the municipality officials have concentrated on fund-raising from international programmes and European structures. The newsletter states that:

Our Municipality is a member of a European structure – the European Association of Border Regions due to our own initiative. And this helps, mainly in terms of contacts – the contacts with neighbouring Greece are established through this Association. We are a border region. This prepares us for the eventual opening of the borders in this region. We have joint projects with the Greeks and are preparing to utilize the European structural funds.

This leads to a clear idea about regional government:

One of the major obstacles to a balance between centralization and decentralization is the absence of a regional level of self-government. Or as they call it in Europe, the second level

of self-government. The second level is relevant to the construction of infrastructure, since the latter is not the priority of a single municipality only.

And this directly leads to a "Europe-of-regions" ideology for pure pragmatic purposes. "We prefer to become a region of Europe and to bond with Greece. This will also help us get rid of our inferiority complex vis-a-vis Sofia, and we'll become European directly" (NGO activist). In fact, they had already established a Bulgarian-Greek Euro-region – "Rhodopi". What then is happening to the nation state and what to national identity?

Local history as European history

If we accept the main characteristics of a national identity as defined by Anthony Smith (Smith 2000: 35); the notion of "us-community" based on commitment to a common historical territory, common myths and historical memories, common mass public culture, common legal rights and obligations for all members, common economy and territorial mobility, we could say that for the local people common national economy has disappeared and they are looking to EU economic resources; common legal rights and obligations are adjusted to European legislation; with the spread of the modern media and new information technologies, common mass public culture is no longer nationally specific; territorial mobility is still restricted, but a lot of people are going abroad to work illegally; and it seems that the only things which could have remained relatively stable should be the common historical territory, common myths and memories. So, let us look at local versions of the local history and how territory is perceived.

A travel guide: "Homer described these vast lands as 'the snowy mountains of the Thracians...The mineral springs welling forth at the foot of the mountains offer a unique opportunity to combine a vacation in the spa resorts with *cultural studies travels*. Traces of several civilizations – Thracian, Ancient Greek, Byzantine, Roman – are scattered in unbelievable mountain sites." In other publications the history of the Rhodopi mountains starts from the Neolithic and moves on to the numerous Thracian tribes which created "high culture on the level of the Greek colonies"; eventually, "the *Rhodopian* Thracians" were conquered by the Romans, but "the empire failed to Romanize them." Later, they lived peacefully within Byzantium. Next the Thracians became Slavs – the *Rhodopian Slavs*. Then Bulgar troops liberated the Rhodopian Slavs from Byzantine rule and they became part of the Bulgarian state. The only constant characteristic in this history is the focus on the *Rhodopians*, who were part of a lot of different cultures, even civilizations. So, the local history is beginning to be retold as a local version of a more global European history, and the message somehow is, "we, as belonging to this place, are part of this European culture and civilization." If one looks at the websites of different Euro-regions, (s)he could find similar narratives.⁵ Local history is being de-ethnocentrized and focuses on the place itself. The plac, the "local", is not interpreted by its unique folk culture anymore, it becomes an empty place of belonging, the place where one is living and where one's ancestors lived, but whose culture is always contextual, re-interpreted, re-invented, recycled, imagined from the point of view of the important for the moment symbolic and economic centres. This "local" is both premodern and postmodern – the place you belong to is important, it is "your" place which you are interpreting as "the whole significant for me world." *The place is becoming glocal indeed, more precisely in this case – Eurolocal.*

The EU as nation state or vs the nation state?

As we see, the constitution of the image of Europe is strongly reminiscent of its imagining – unconsciously – along the lines of those nation states where the nation emerged before the state. There is a common cultural code, which is based – now – on the recognition of "Europe" as a central symbolic authority. The symbolic charisma, as Shils would put it, is so strong that even history is being rewritten as a history of all European cultures developed in a particular place. This gives rise to a sense of identity, which may be defined as *a local–European identity* – being here, we belong to Europe. From this perspective, there seems to be a homogeneous symbolic space, which is somehow reminiscent of the process of the emergence of the nation as imagined community in B. Anderson's sense. This similarity, however, is formal only. While national identity is particular – it invariably identifies some kind of "us" versus the Others as foreigners, and in this sense forms a collective body distinguished by "a deep horizontal comradeship... fraternity"(Anderson); in our case we have dominance of a universal norm concerning the universal equality of all human beings in principle, with Europe as the symbol of that equality. "We all are Europeans and as such we should be equal"; "As Europeans all of us have to have a normal human life." In this sense, the identity is open and tolerant in principle, and it rules out exclusion (unless you are not European). At the same time, however, precisely because equality is its fundamental principle, it is sensitive to inequalities, i.e. the universal norm must not simply be universally valid, but it must also be universally applicable – which it is not. This creates an internal distinction between those for whom the norm has been applied in practice, and those for whom it is still utopian ("We are all Europeans, but some ("they") are more European than us"). Hence this identity is fragile, insecure and crucially dependent on the implementation of the norm of universal equality, being too sensitive to the internal inequalities. Any essentialization of those inequalities, however, would shatter it, and any exclusion in principle of particular groups substitutes the universality of the norm and nips this identity in the bud. From this point of view this local – European identity is not stable and could easily be transformed into eurosceptical attitudes.

Parallel with this new identity, we can also see a new constitution of socio–economic space, which seems to be replacing the old administrative and economic centre of the nation state by a new, symbolically more significant and economically more powerful centre – "Europe", "the EU". Yet the newly imagined structure is too fluid and it is not governed by a single coherent logic. On the one hand, there is an economic centre – the present EU as a whole, whose task is to achieve economic homogenization of European territory (this is just the ideology of the EU); but it is not perceived as a political centre, or, at least, this does not matter at the present stage, because the idea is to have comparatively autonomous local–regional government.

Local everyday consciousness constructs a very peculiar image of Europe and the EU, which seems to be unconsciously nostalgic for the strong nation state, but actually turns out to be a many–layered formation that is not governed by the coherent logic of the nation state: a construct that is localized in a concrete place, but that is oriented towards an all–European cultural code (in this sense *glocal*); oriented to an abstract economic centre and to politically more concrete (local–regional) government, the abstract centre being expected to support the concrete but diffusely interpreted decision making process.

In fact, the only absence in this paradoxical social–sciences terms of many–headed and many–faced constructs is the classical nation state; the nation as imagined community.

And yet the EU somehow constructs itself along the lines of the nation state, too – having a common political centre, trying to homogenize all the territories included in it, introducing a common market, imagining itself as an abstract community with a shared European identity. The only problem is that this large "nation state" is built above the really existing nation states, which could perceive the larger "state" as their own rival. If this happens they could view the EU as an empire, imposing political decisions upon its provinces. But this is not likely to come until "Europe" is perceived as the legitimate symbolic and institutional centre. What does this entail?

I believe there is a need for a serious debate on the fate of the nation state, due to the fact that from one side the "archetype" of the "nation state" itself is a very strong one, but from the other side the functions of the "old" nation state are loosing ground in the new situation. So, people have to be, so to speak, prepared for the natural death of its classical form. Because the sudden shock of its impending demise might cause the very opposite reaction – nationalistic revival by the political elites, which will be deprived of their real and potential power, and might start to speculate with the theme of the loss of national identity. And here the strength of the archetype "searching for a centre that holds" could help the spread of a right wing rhetoric which clearly poses a nationalistic centre, oriented to integration of smaller groups and exclusion of various types of Others.

On the other hand, the principles of regulation of the thus "bottom–up" imagined cultural–economic–political hybrid are rather unclear and, hence, potentially contradictory. Yet in the final count those principles are not so strange and, albeit contradictory, they perhaps show a possible development of the new European structures in the direction of more flexible, pragmatically oriented configurations such as the regions are. Such regions cannot be thought in terms of concrete spatial borders – they are a configuration of different liminalities enveloping, configuring different in size spatial zones which may overlap or accrue, providing different options – pulsations of the respective region. The constitution of a given region could range over different zones that vary by degree of abstraction and will not be an easy task because of this fluidness and pluralism. But that is why this constitution is a challenge to the classical institutional arrangement and will presuppose new decisions.

Thus Europe, even losing one of its main modern distinctive features – the nation state – again will keep its identity – its immanent variability, constant openness, pluralistically diverse integrity. Europe will keep its unique face – protean, not resembling anything.

¹ Culture probably has a say here too, but this problems requires special investigation. Even if we confine ourselves to an enquiry into the arguments of one of the most heated debates on the differences between Central and Eastern Europe – that between M. Kundera, M. Wajda and M. Sczimeckay , we will see that it is hard to give an unambiguous answer.

² Public opinion polls from March 2002 show that 72 per cent of Bulgaria's population disapprove of the performance of the Bulgarian Parliament.

³ Among all political parties there is general consensus on Bulgaria's integration with the EU, and opinion polls show that on average approximately 70 per cent of the population are pro–EU.

⁴ So, here we have everyday versions of the language of Bulgarian political parties' programs.

⁵ Let take as an example the history of the Nysa Euro–region, as explicated on the web:
"Nature has granted the Czech–German–Polish border lands an individual beauty, while history has given them the thousand year flow of the fate of people ... Looking back at the history of our region, it is possible to find signs of human habitation from the stone age. Later, during the era of the Romans, the Celtic Boii left their mark upon the region followed by the Germanic Markoman tribe at the turn of the millennium. Slavonic people began to make their homes there from the 6th century .. At that time, however, a wave of colonisation arrived bringing with it new German settlers. This meant that the older Slavonic settlements were supplemented by new settlements with Germanic populations or mixed populations of Germanic and Slavonic origin."

Published 2002–11–27
Original in English
Contribution by Transit
© Transit