

The three faces of Europe or what culture and heritage can suggest for its future

Tomislav Šola, Zagreb, 2007

Introduction

This is an account of how Europe may be perceived by somebody from the South-East, from the transitional waiting room, where things are different from what is usually believed in the "old", well established Europe. The main-stream accounts are kind and soothing, and so are the usual relativist scientific texts. The questions are none if we choose so, or avoid them. But the newcomers to Europe are exhausted and fragile: will they care for culture enough in trying to catch up economically with veteran countries in the Union? Will they succumb to the parallel process of globalisation, of dis-culturation and become, in fact, less European than before? Do we always discuss the one and only Europe or there are more Europes, depending upon the interest and angle we identify with? How far can cultural or heritage issues reach in defining economic and political processes?

EU statutes are made in good faith and based upon the idealistic, yet possible Europe. But Western business is devouring the economic substance of the East and South. Why does a telephone impulse of T-Com cost six times more in Croatia than in Germany? Is this banal fact totally separate from any cultural or political impact? Benevolent declarations may be ignoring the reality: the opportunism of the strong, frailty of the weak - in issuing new subordinations where equality should be the principle. Politically and culturally encouraged as "all different and all equal", we have to be treated as such; otherwise European ideals may retreat irreversibly in the face of the harsh reality.

I believe culture was and should remain a corrective underlying power supporting the implicit conditions of unity. My point of view is that of a convinced European and a future European citizen. I assume the position of an interested aspiring citizen criticising the long-term project, which has to be based upon an ideology of freedom. If Europe cannot do that, if it does not become a flagship of freedom in the world, its entire project will be in vain. All too often things and assertions are taken for granted and are not sufficiently discussed. Whom do I represent? Quite possibly many among the approximately 50 million people in the European waiting room.

European politicians

Many a citizen from the East see the EU as just another secure sinecure for their politicians, a safe heaven for this eternal, self-promoting oligarchy. Quite a lot of EU politicians acquire the disarming *linguaggio* of some unattainable caste speaking to uneducated pariahs, making constant references to convention "x", article "y", memorandum this, agenda that, declaration of this, amendment to that, protocol of there and agenda from somewhere else. The citizens are lost, powerless, - unable to follow the scheme that disqualifies anybody not possessing the same, deep knowledge of the goings-on at the European court let alone that of its couloirs and lobbies.

The public perception is that they are a self-promoting oligarchy. Their discourse is dull, lacking any emotional engagement or true devotion, as if Europe were a foreign court where

their task is to provide diplomatic advantage for their national state. Do they believe in Europe? It surely does not look like it.

Some sources claim that there are as many as 15 000 direct or indirect lobbyists in Brussels and, indeed, 5000 of them are accredited in at the Parliament¹. By the same source² automobile industries have 140 lobbyists not to count numerous PR and PA firms doing the same job. It appears to be true that some industries have as many as two hundred permanent lobbyists in the EU's headquarters, to assure beneficial deals and arrangements.³ If it is, it would be a shameful deviation which would in fact reveal the corrupt mind of the central administration. Why would the usual channels of democratic persuasion be insufficient and bogus? Is it quality arguments or court intrigues that count? Lobby transparency is obligatory but is still absent in Brussels.

The three faces of Europe

If Europe's power and expansion is based on economics then Easterners have the right to perceive her as a coloniser. If business is forced upon politics, she is rightfully seen as patron not the partner. If that remains the only basis for unity, Europe has little chance of its members being faithful and its project durable.

But the faces are three. "Mother Europe", the good Europe, is a caring mother embracing her lost children, ever ready for the sacrifice and love that she distributes equally to all her offspring. That is the Europe of culture. The one we, from the social and humanist side of reality, think is the only. The dear Mother Europe regards all children with the same tenderness, knowing some children better than the others but still...

There is also the "Aunt Europe", - the political Europe, a kind, concerned, somewhat confused and often hesitant, but never trusting her straggler nephews (maybe rightfully so, at that). Deep inside, she cherishes the dream of a welfare super-state, but, alas, she is falling deeper and deeper in desperate love with a ruffian (by the name of Sam). This Europe is patronising and deceptive in its sentiments.

There is also the "Step-mother Europe", an avaricious and ruthless Europe of economy. This is the Europe of corporate transnational business, feverishly grasping after profit. This creature is proverbial by lacking in the social or political conscience, and has no nationality or cultural background. With the assistance of politicians, and the corrupt legal systems of the transitional countries themselves, she is finding easy, legitimate ways to buy off the shattered economies of transitional countries at bargain prices. Europe Inc. i.e. that of business is like any globalizing pack: quick profit and no scruples.

¹ Gow, David. Auto ice man puts the freeze on rivals, At this year's meeting, close to his 70th birthday, the VW chairman will be re-elected for another five years. Guardian Unlimited, Wednesday February 21, 2007

² Car industry flexes its muscles, Commission bows down
Briefing paper, Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), 16 March 2007
<http://www.corporateeurope.org/carlobby.html>

³ <http://www.corporateeurope.org/docs/lobbycracy/lobbyplanet.pdf>
Corporate European observatory. Brussels the EU Quarter; Explore the corporate lobbying paradise (distributed also as paperback edition)

So, there are at least three ways of discussing Europe, especially if one is forced to live the harsh reality of the underprivileged East and South. Europe is, therefore, multidimensional. It will always look different from different points of view and through eyes with different experiences behind them. Wisdom and fairness are demonstrated by the ability of looking through the eyes of the other. Anyhow, Europe looks by far the best in Brussels and from Brussels.

The Europe of Culture

Mother Europe is the poorest of the three: her direct budget for culture is €35 million a year to be shared between all its members. Exactly the budget of the Opera House in Brussels⁴. Indeed, it seems that the EU will in future have less money for culture, including heritage. The budget level of the last seven years is, apparently, the limit to be maintained. So in fact our loving Mother is poor. The aunt is mighty and influential but gives what it can. It is the rich, tight-fisted step-mother that makes the rules and dictates the solutions. The lobbyists are there to make sure she gets it the way she wants.

The Europe of culture is the Europe of democracy and rule of law, - the Europe of security and shared wealth. For the other two Europes these qualities are luxuries they support selectively or do not wish to consider. The humanities sector often subliminally avoids gloomy reality by limiting its European discussions to the Europe of culture, creating a self-congratulatory circle of the like-minded. And yet, the two other Europes, no matter how strong they are, will turn into temporary constructions, ultimately doomed to sophistry and quibbling if Europe identifies with them. Only the disregarded Mother Europe is able to offer a solid basis for a united welfare community of nations, a super-state, based on giving and solidarity.

Instead, Europe is a mini-globalization, creating the privileged and the subordinated among nations and cultures. Is this the way we are meant to function? Who prefers it this way? Is anybody encouraging this autism? I know my fellow academics are not in favour of it, but intellectual courage is long forgotten and intellectuals seem to have become an endangered species. They either choose docile service to the Machine (as Lewis Mumford would probably say) or armchair radicalism. They are often indignant, but carefully avoid displeasing anybody.

The Europe of culture is a Europe composed of citizens who consciously share European values. This membership is not founded upon mere selfish calculation. If the opposite were the case, if it were banal pragmatism that is the foundation of Europe, then it would also be able to abandon the cause when interests and advantages changed.

Fragmented interests as promoted by globalisation in fact cannot guarantee any stability to any structure in the face of changing economic and political interests. The ideological blocs are gone and the political ones are expiring. Only the cultural ones stand some chance. NATO is not about defence, but about loyalty to the leading political power, i.e. to its economic bosses. De-ideologised politics can only be a mediator between different economic interests or builders of power structures.

⁴ Nikolaus van der Pas, at European cultural heritage forum

"Cultural heritage counts for europe", European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels, 7 December 2005

The road paved with good intentions

Euro-sceptics think they would have done better without Europe. What Europe, developed and experienced in democracy as it is, counts as its achievements, often turns into grapes of evil if applied to some exhausted transitional countries. With inexperienced administration, untrained experts, inexperienced citizens and rather naïve politicians, often of the populist background, these countries are totally unprepared for the challenges that countries with long democratic tradition and strong institutions find easy to deal with.

Freedom of the press has all too often turned into the flood of crypto-fascist journals, tabloids and pornography. Freedom of association gave birth to the rightist political parties with ultra-nationalist (and also anti-European) agendas. The opening up of the countries, even before entering Europe, turned into a devastating sale of strategic national assets vital to any political independence or economic autonomy. The ruthless international corporations and even those owned by the EU member countries became practical owners of the core values to these countries. As this is happening with the blessing of the IMF and WTO then ordinary people ask what Europe is doing to protect us? It is by these unanswered questions, growing national debts, rising dependency upon others and decreasing quality of life in those countries that the European case loses ground and becomes a questionable project. Still another historical trap.

The two daily newspapers with the widest circulation in Croatia are owned by companies from the EU. The change of ownership was publicly perceived as, at least, a guarantee of high professionalism and responsibility it will bring. But what did they bring to this traumatised, post-war country? Greed and the immoral pursuit of political and any other sensationalism, poisoning further the wounded and impoverished war-ridden state.

Yet, the European project will have a chance as it seems to many that the shared European house, with its doors and windows wide open, is all but a secure bolt hole for local tyrants. But, why is it that the painful gap between the fabulously rich and the excessively poor has widened to obscene dimensions, both among citizens as well as among nations? The system of values has nominally changed for the better, but there are less social ethics and more fear, anxiety, insecurity and an ever-rising rate of crime.⁵ With the Church readily assuming the role of kingmaker in society, and doing so without restraint or measure, there is more talk about values than ever, but the only result is rising hypocrisy. There is also much more talk about freedom than before, when the Party made the definitions, but little chance of practicing it. Serving political parties and different lobbies, media have become corrupted and the quality of their product decreased with their fascination with profit. Back in the gloomy, proscribed Socialism, almost no speaker at the national television in Croatia was able to get a job without serious qualifications, personal culture and proven linguistic and communicational skills. The post-modernist deconstruction as sort of freedom of experts expressed in the syntagm "anything goes" became a tragic reality. The poor and the traumatised always get more than the fair share of evil.

⁵ http://www.citymayors.com/society/easteurope_cities.html

Brian Becker. UN reports grim facts: socialist breakup in Eastern Europe devastates workers, Workers World, 29 July 1999

Greed as the face of Europe coming in

The free movement of capital, goods, people and ideas is a marvellous thing, but in which directions are they circulating? Who are the protagonists? If capital is moving south-eastwards, why is the profit moving north-west? Goods are moving south-east, but is there an exchange going in the opposite direction? Is the free flow of people and ideas only a one-way process? Who owns the banks in the East and South, and do they really consider their host countries **their** countries. Banks in the former East were state owned, and as such, vehicles of development; so are most of the banks in the West even now. To perceive them only as profit makers and usurers requires imagination, but this is exactly what they do in the East. According to testimony from the former Yugoslavia: most banks are from Europe's West and they could not care less about the natives: they rehearse colonialism under the umbrella of our (culturally and politically inspired!) European brotherhood embodied in the supra-national state. What in the West is free market economy, in the East is free-for-all market economy.

Once the candidate countries receive their target percentage of foreign corporate property owners, speculation and overexploitation of resources will reign, be it in the cultural landscape, built heritage or social situation. Until European standards are put in place, corporate capital will enjoy what it cannot in its home countries: ultimate, uncontrolled greed (and quick to rebuke politicians on locals who are not tolerant, permissive or ready enough to accept their behaviour tacitly). That is the Europe as it appears to an anonymous, bewildered citizen: extra profit at any cost. Glossing over this sad reality is the lacquered democracy talk, coming from local politicians as well as from the special European envoys.

If not disciplined by culture and ideology, capital is ruthless and immoral by definition. And European capital is no exception. The Europe of Culture is in grave danger of becoming an alibi to corporate business and more or less corrupt politics. The European administration in Brussels is swelling and so do the lobbies and interest agencies.⁶

Lack of brotherly care

What the Europe of politics and economy hardly noticed was the sad, almost dramatic fact that some countries were on their knees coming out of the Soviet ghetto. Their citizens were as naïve as Pinocchio at the fair: unable to judge the offers and opportunities. With no experience of elaborated contemporary practices, be it economy or political life, Easterners are still now more vulnerable to temptations. There was a banal side to the fall of the socialist systems: mortgages and Kodak colour photos. The first made it possible to have a home and a car in one year, and the second made it all look still more attractive. Credit and colour were inconceivable in the sluggish and gloomy East, so the deceiving miracle looked like an irresistible Dream.

Bringing the Easterners up to the level not of equals but accountable partners required a friendly European strategy. This would be a long term policy for Europe. I believe many even tried that, but Europe as a whole proved much too insensible to the trouble and too eager to take the competitive share of the market and the better part of local assets – all at bargain prices. Formally, most of these were correct takeovers, but locals, though allowed to participate, were penniless and unable to compete. The buying power of the newcomers will

⁶ Most statistics often quoted in the media say that about 85 000 people work in EU administration and services and the numbers are still growing.

rise, of course, but the rise can only be paid for with the misery of their population, in spite of the statistical miracle of "their" rising GDPs. The seemingly boosted economies are just a consequence of foreign companies' physical presence and their use of low-cost local labour and cheap local resources. Foreign investment also means foreign profit, and though desirable, brings low-paid jobs and disputable consequences for the environment. So instead of becoming partners, the Eastern brothers were colonised, but within the safe legal framework and sound rhetoric of OUR common European super-state – and hence without a chance of overthrowing the colonialists in a happy historical moment.

Despair as choice

Aggressive capitalism is a dangerous exercise for people who already feel cheated. Only the fact that many believe that they will save themselves, individually, prevents the disappointment becoming more obvious. Between the merciless domestic elites and the reckless elites of Europe, millions of new-old Europeans have fallen on hard times. Some 50 million more are in the waiting room, with their countries on sale and with the fear that Europe will buy them out and carry on leaving them out.

Maybe it will help if the local arm of RTL TV offers the dream of a sudden fortune "earned" at Big Brother's house. It may also help to read the yellow press for stories of miraculous businesses. They can be started with money borrowed from reliable, rich Western banks whose glossy names all Westerners know from their own neighbourhoods. After Thatcherism and Reaganism they are less kind even in the West whereas in the East, as already said, they behave in a most ferocious and felonious manner. Life with Colonial Step-Mother Europe and her reckless local vassals (an oligarchy of tycoons and politicians), may become a most painful experience for many.

When the European West declares the red star equal to the swastika, they are really equating Stalin with Hitler. This is largely a fair equation, though Communism remains a legitimate, though unattainable dream betrayed in the Stalinist bloodshed, while the National Socialist idea is a nightmare in itself. Be that as it may, when this ban comes to the eastern provinces of the uniting Europe, it boosts fascism and degrades all that was good and valuable in the past 60 years. Stalin was far even from many of us, in time, space and practice, and not all we lived through was bad.

When Europe falls victim to the American variety of liberal capitalism, it does it with a resigned sigh. By the time this creature installs itself in the East and South, it has turned into an aggressive economic vampire, an obscene capitalism, because the immune system is not there. The result is poverty instead of richness and a horrible feeling that our big Western brothers are making a profit out of this trouble. The citizens are then told to make sacrifices by which our societies will one day catch up with the rest of Europe. This would theoretically be possible if the Old EU club were to wait for us. In all probability, however, it is feeding its own development on its widening resources.

European and national identity

So far, in spite of the efforts, least has been done towards creating a common identity for Europe. Jean Monnet's *Homo Europaeus*⁷ is a consequence of European mini-globalisation

⁷His pragmatism was economic but his idealism cultural and his implications political.

and excessive emigration from poorer states to richer ones and an uprooting of any sense of belonging. It is not the voluntary re-definition of national identity by relativising its ethnic specificity in favour of the wider identification with European-ness. But there is also a schizophrenic position of double identities or the defensive exaggeration of one as a response to imminent danger of its loss.

In most South-East European countries, local identity is literally withdrawing into museums, as only there can it find some security and self-affirmation. It is being hastily discovered as an asset and is now being trivialised, staged and choreographed for the tourist industry. Acculturation is a daily experience to which society has no coherent response. So in most countries loose disculturation alternates with strict conservative “preservationism” (the latter being strongly linked with the Church and right-wing political options). This conservative alternative is, naturally, a mythology with little chance of preserving anything.

Can Europe's citizenry retrieve the debate on national identity from crypto-fascist and right-wing opportunist politicians and their organised bodies? Not in the South-East, seemingly, where the left-wing political option has been doubly compromised by “leftists” from the former Communist parties, who have acted against identity, equating it with bourgeois nationalism. Many of them have found their way into right-wing ranks and made national identity their priority. Totalitarian temptations are always lurking to capitalise on any embarrassment: they offer an instant remedy to troubled, miserable individuals or groups, a ready assortment of enemies to blame, hate, or fight against, and they even, as we are seeing on an international scale, use the most odious methods to create enemies. The trouble is that many of these politicians are trying hard to represent us in Europe. Some succeeded in the last widening of Europe. Conversely, organised citizens never took up the discourse on the issue of national identity and are usually accused of succumbing too easily to a supra-national European identity, losing their own.

Are the European South and East well represented?

If you come from a smaller country or a newcomer country to the club of Europe, and you do not see economic globalisation as colonisation, or cultural globalisation, you have either failed to see things around you, or you may be part of the problem: there will always be an elite of 5% in any country whose only profession is to recognise their new masters. Their mentality is that of vassals. It is no matter if Europe is not a master and will never try to be one, yet such people will even deceive their national interests to become part of the permissive elite in the name of their presumed European-ness. The older ones among them are probably hiding their communist past, in which they were fervent fighters against any opening up of national borders. This, however, is not an attempt to denunciate them. Everybody has a right, maybe even an obligation, to change. But have they changed? Strangely enough, the ruling elites were neither Communist in the past nor are they extreme right-wingers now: they just surf their opportunities. The recent elections in some European newcomer countries revealed that reality: we are in Europe, therefore we can return to the more profitable local shape and exploit Europe as much as possible to the national advantage. Some politicians even question Europe's anti-fascist heritage or its political position as separate from that of the United States. The feeling is that Europe of culture, if more present in the very basis in European edifice, would discourage such reiterations.

Or, as some look at it, positions in European bodies provide a final clean-up for their political biographies, the same way as illicit money sooner or later becomes clean if laundered in economically correct investments. You can be a survival apparatchik-artist in

the European administration just like in any national one. If old EU members have bona fide representation, that is often not the case with the newcomers, who rarely have true representatives of the people. At best, they represent governments, and at worst their own interests or those of the eternal members of the ruling social or political group. They are disguised, yet recognisable by their dry rhetoric, their tone and meaningless discourse. It is a mixture of general political assertions, buzz words on international values and references to declarations, promemoria, conclusions, agendas and protocols. That was exactly what the socialist apparatchiks developed to perfection: a semantics that defined the class and formed instant solidarity among them and resentment towards outsiders. The eternal, self-promoting oligarchy is ready to pact with the most generous of bosses. They do not believe in Europe of distinctive culture and advanced mode of thinking.

Distrust of oneself and crisis of identity

It may well be that some 60% or more of young people in South-Eastern Europe see their future in emigrating to the West⁸ – nearer to jobs but also closer to the identity they regard as more important than their own. The names given to newborn babies tell the story clearly: either they are names of medieval kings and princesses from the national mythology or, more commonly, they are Western European names “to facilitate their future“ (as I have heard young parents say); in either case they present an automatic declaration of values. It is a flight from own identity.

Official claims deny that implication, but Easterners are humiliated by the abundance of evidence that they are taken by Westerners as people of little value. They experience this as tourists, guest workers or, which is so often terribly frustrating, as hosts. They are looked upon and disregarded as primitive, uncultured, and untidy. All too often, the small nations are subordinates, not partners; they are objects, not the subjects of the integration process.

If the West can cope with the speed of change, by creating the rules and devising adjustments to it, the name of Change in the disadvantaged world spells trouble. In this respect, the imported rules of Change literally wipe out local value systems with all their qualities that, once lost, impoverish the entire world. The European identity should have been addressed as a scientific problem so that a feasibility study would have been performed to show what the identity of Europe could be or become by absorbing this new richness. Needless to say, much is done from UNESCO (particularly its Venice office) to ICOM Europe or numerous activities of EC and Europa Nostra, but all that falls short in the face of such huge processes of paramount importance for the European future.

Most Easterners are turning into second-rate Westerners, a sort of imitation and caricature. The problem is that academics rarely discuss the matter from this day-to-day perspective: of course we all agree with them when they claim that Beethoven and operas are common to all

⁸<http://www.hsd.hr/revija/pdf/3-4-2003/02-odljev-znanstvenog-podmlatka-3-4-2003.pdf>

Those among young scientists who wish to leave mainly do because they see no perspective in their country

<http://www.h-alter.org/index.php?page=article&id=1011>

about 90 000 among the young wishes to leave the country (total population is 4.5 million)

<http://www.h-alter.org/print.php?id=957>

34% of Unemployed in Croatia are the young (doubled in comparison with other categories)

my experience among the student population in the three south-east European countries where I teach, supports this gloomy probability

of us, but European elites were always quite coherently European anyhow, weren't they? They elegantly followed changing historical fashions as importance shifted from one big European capital to another. But, it is the majority that will be composing the future Europe.

If seen from the fragile, suffering side, the correct name of European globalisation is a new colonisation, so "the free circulation of capital" is a mere euphemism. Why shouldn't people circulate freely too? And their values as well. But that needs a change of values and a redefinition of Europeanness in the streets of all the countries on the continent. A Europe of culture has to be a free association of equal differences.

Insufficient motivation for Europe

Quite a few people in some countries were tired of communism, socialism and the lack of a basic freedom of movement. They have also been dis-cultured and the inherited European identity has often melted away to the extent of fragmented remnants. Their readiness for Europe needs to be refreshed by arguments of legitimate but forgotten connections, like visits, photos and souvenirs do for a dispersed family. The new elites are rarely representing this shattered and yet dear collective memory. There is a strong distrust towards political and corporate elites composed of parvenus and *nouveau riches*, but it does not mean that the population trusts Europe and regards it as real progress. Contrary to what is usually assumed, their reasoning is basically: better the wider, open context in which we will manage somehow, at least individually, than a prison of local inadequate, false elites.

So, judgement of the Europeanness of the newcomers has to be based on a deeper awareness. What can be done? What is needed is representation that is independent of the corrupt elites, which mainly represent themselves or only a fraction of their country's citizens: Europe must prove its force by forming bodies that will not be mere representations of governments. The automatism whereby representatives are simply delegated from governments or on governmental recommendations may work for Western Europe (with its unbroken democratic and cultural tradition), but Eastern Europe needs a better chance. Saying this, some of us here who were Europeans before the formal opportunity was there will, paradoxically, be accused of disloyalty to our national interests, or Euro scepticism, or even both.

More access to representation

The quality of European civil society may well be due to weak representation. Organised citizens need more access to decision making and more insight into the processes. Citizens should be able to bypass their governments in many matters that in fact do not harm the ultimate sovereignty of their governments to rule their respective countries. The democracy we have is too precious to be abandoned, but, frankly, there is too much manipulation, too much of the power game and media premeditation to be able to claim that we are really represented by the best. We are not. Do not judge the rest by Sweden, Norway, Finland or the Netherlands, to name the few different countries. These exceptions show what the rule is, while some of their problems demonstrate the drama of others, less protected by the richness and unbroken democratic traditions these countries enjoy.

Now of course, you may dismiss this approach as frustrating, as anarchistic, as destructive, or as a mere account of intellectual frustration. It may be worse than that: what if I am inciting others to voice their rightful claims? Europe, we are often told, wants to be a civil

society. That is a Europe of citizens, not governments, not of the elites or oligarchies but of true, conscious, responsible and creative citizens. In other words, is the EU the result of the democratic choices of its citizens or the rulings of its governments? A free association of its citizens or an exclusive club of national administrations? Civil representatives could be chosen by the fact of their contribution, creativity and personal courage to contribute to the European cause, not by winning the strictly local elections.

The civil society of Europe

Is there a chance for the Europe of culture, the intellectual Europe, the Europe of freedom and humanist dignity? Intellectuals behave like an endangered species, retreating into the security of non-commitment. Should Europe declare itself a Christian super-state or can we, after the historic experience of "citoyenneté", assume Christianity as the "mere" ideology of freedom? One of them. When the media and politicians suddenly start to talk about healthy food, it means we are being poisoned by unhealthy food. When they stress civil rights, we are being repressed, when they underline the need for better education, it is a clear sign that the public education system is deteriorating further.....Rare are the iconic intellectuals and still rarer the institutions who stand in defence of human and civil rights, and the quality of life. How many statesmen do we have nowadays in Europe among so many presidents and prime ministers? Could museums and other institutions of collective memory bring the remembrance of such bright personalities into our reality? Or would we rather remember our brave conquerors and warriors?

As the State retreats, either by frailty or outsourcing, the civil society advances. At least it does by quantity of initiatives. Its organisations should be creative, honest, versatile, economic, good value for money, deeply rooted in their community and therefore for us – on the spot: ours, for us, about us..., - their community. Increasing numbers of NGOs have more and more to do, but they are becoming ever more enslaved by state administrations and dictatorial sponsors. NGOs should not be dependent upon either the business sector or the resources of governments and their political preferences; unfortunately, this is often the case, especially in the new European member countries and those still queuing up to get in.

Europe needs to be a flagship of open civil society that does not simply represent additional manipulation of its citizens but assists them in active involvement for a better quality of life. And again, either the civil society is a real opportunity for citizens to influence the decision-making processes at the European level, or the EU will be just a huge accumulation of governmental representatives forming a supranational administrative structure. The first is a Europe of united citizens and the second an organisation of government delegates. If having a common enemy promotes solidarity and constructive, concerted effort, let us articulate the lurking pitfalls we have to fight: the widening gap between rich and poor, selfishness, insecurity, the insatiability of profit, media manipulation, GM manipulation (that wishes to destroy natural food and create profitable patents), growing political dependence etc.

Europe has to be more than a simple sum of representations. If it grows too close to this, its ambition will be reduced to sharing the fates of the member states themselves. Civil society will turn into a mere face-saving exercise for the state government, whose only role is to conceal the fact that the State is slowly sliding into the service of corporate business.

Will the Europe of social justice, solidarity and prosperity endure? The economic feature of European identity was very much based upon the ideal of the welfare state, the social and

civil state that entrusts individual and group concerns to societal organisation and structures. The state then has to be prosperous to provide for the needs of its citizens. It derives its means from its own business, owned by all the citizens, past, present and future ones, and from taxes. A weakening state that yields to wild liberal pressure for excessive privatisation is destroying the dream of an honest, righteous, equitable, impartial and fair social and political framework for the harmonious functioning of society. Even the countries from the European waiting room performed such excessive privatisations that any constructive role of the state in moderating future civil society is highly questionable, if not impossible. A Europe of united weak administrations dependent on mammoth corporations is just a globalist cage for helpless citizens. Profit orientation destroys quality for the "masses" and shifts it to the few at the top, be it quality of food or education. These are not pillars to sustain any future let alone that of Europe.

What can heritage and culture do for European unity?

Economy and politics are rarely part of a discourse in humanist and social reflections, and this paper is a try in proposing their relevance. As specialists in culture and heritage, we often forget the context of our work. The result is a false reality and false conclusions. At best we declare business our enemy and lament its ignorance of our true values. But shouldn't we realise what we have to offer and know that business will never be able to continue without us? It can move forward either by creating its own quasi-cultural infrastructure, thus turning culture into goods, or it can work with us as partners, preserving the dignity and freedom of culture. When culture and information become marketable goods, all that matters is their market value and what they bring to their owners. This is euthanasia of culture and the end of any democratic ambition. Culture should be a corrective value to any development.

European heritage may be understood as a way of living, preservation of the value system that has much to do with our common identity; it is the way we define ourselves, as only that way can we live productive, meaningful and ennobled life in the political and economic framework of the united Europe.

What should museums and other heritage institutions do, then? Create and propose advanced, pro-active practices of a cybernetic nature, in an attempt to analyse, and then influence and reform present practices that endanger values celebrated as culture, heritage and identity. Therefore, heritage institutions should become active agents of contemporary society, pulling out of their stores material evidence of wisdom necessary to install a sustainable approach to all our dangerously speeding changes.

Institutions dealing with the past and the collective memory have changed in the contemporary world; they are a key element of social inclusion, participate in the market economy, and have a strong social mission through participation in real time. To do so they take part in sector convergence and professionalisation. Convergence is forming networks, new creative clusters and will eventually form a mega-profession. This should happen in Europe first, but isn't Europe also a bastion of conservatism?

Heritage institutions, be they museums, archives, libraries or other hybrid institutions, are turning themselves into communications businesses of a unique brand and importance. Europe has to demonstrate the art of balance; otherwise they will turn into a mere heritage industry. From their ambition to provide knowledge about heritage, heritage institutions now want to share, to impart and provide the joy and benefit of profound understanding. Sensing

the needs of society, they want to provide a better quality of life for the members of their communities and provide a basis for their harmonious development. Can Europe take the lead? Communication is giving. By communicating heritage we finally talk the language of our users, with all the difficulties this brings, but also with the incomparable advantages of making science and culture effectively present in their daily lives.

We all want the world to become a better place. Europe, which subjugated and enslaved the entire world, has to demonstrate it has learned the lesson, and make this a global standard. Globalisation so much resembles colonisation in many ways that Europe, be it in politics or economy, has a word to say. Culture will offer the form and wisdom. There is no better way to do this than by building bridges instead of walls. That is what communication of heritage is about. Europe is either a moral and social superstructure or it just repeats the imperfection of its components. Intangible heritage has finally been recognised and has intangible "objects", so we are in fact talking about a value system that describes the feeling of Europeanness, the unity in mind, much stronger than administrative ones.

Cultural heritage is not only important for Europe but is its soul. If Europe wishes to continue and flourish, its main strategy will have to be based on culture. This is necessarily a long-term strategy which stands little chance in the "here-and-now" world in which politicians want to see immediate results. Yet, Europe without its own, rightful and independent international politics is a mere fictitious whole in which culture becomes a sort of surrogat of coherence, unconvincing both to its citizens and to the rest of the world.

Conclusions, or what should Europe do?

Maybe Europe should create a practice of great goodwill encounters; with its citizens meeting their counterparts from other continents by turns. We, ordinary people, need to talk and tell our bosses that we just want to be free. Europe should be a synonym for freedom. Any freedom, not only "from" but also "for".

Europe should demonstrate that we have enough wisdom to slow down our development and use more work-intensive orientation, that quality of living is not having myriad differently coloured and packed goods but a few genuine, tasty, and healthy, natural products. Our politicians and our institutions of culture and education should be on our side and sustain our disappearing, deteriorating system of values. More than 3% of GDP for culture is needed, but not for elitist institutions that generate frustration in most of the population. Before we increase the number of contemporary art temples, we need to be sure that visual literacy is not going to deteriorate further. Citizens are illiterate in so many ways.

A pan-European strategy of heritage care and interpretation should be created so that we know how many points of interpretation of European values we need, and how they should work in order to promote better standards of citizenship.

Most politicians do not understand culture, let alone heritage; they do not consider it high enough on their agenda, and tend to support its superficiality, - its form and glamour. Having little money calls for better use of resources and effective strategy. We need exhibitions that will show how Europe has been re-invented over history and how some national myths blur the truth: that it is common continental space, be it physically or culturally, to an extent only to be demonstrated.

Heritage is an excellent link between the economic and cultural domains, and Europe could provide a better formula than at present by giving more recognition to creative individuals and organisations. Quality selection should ensure that individuals and institutions earn money through good practices, obvious success and beneficial impact, not by good negotiation, vicinity to decision makers or, alas, good connections. Europe needs to encourage true creators instead of pretentious activities and national administrations. If Europe comes to its citizens solely through national administrations, its image, reach and impact will be distorted. Europe has to be a clear option of high criteria, however small it may end up. National administrations have to be pressed and reminded to encourage more creative and European-minded individuals and organisations: there is a lot of nationalist politics behind the pro-European declarations. This means that the European cultural scene is too fragmented: a good way to waste money by overlapping. Europe needs to create a quality mechanism of unity: less administration and court, more civil, joint action.

Culture is the framework and national sovereignty has to submit to freedom of speech and communication. It should be absolutely inconceivable for a country to arrive in the EU and turn to nationalism and right-wing radicalism. Where are the united European intellectuals? Are heritage institutions there to unite us or they will remain marble reminders of our old hostilities and antagonisms? We need research, teaching and sharing of European values. Europe has to become a place of solidarity and security, a place where the old civil ideals and civic spirit are still valid. They cannot be defended in any other way but with heritage and communication of cultural values.

Europe needs to steep the entire collective memory in content and activities of European concern; we have enough arguments. Imagine the money invested in the Airbus project pumped into education and culture. To any inimical readers: culture is not necessarily a money spender but also earns, indirectly and by induction, and is able to produce economic marvels. We still have the task of re-writing history and communicating it as the "new" heritage(s) of Europe.

If we cannot live up to the ideals of being all different but all equal, we should split up and compete again. It is declared in the Assembly that equality should descend to ordinary people, but there are still too many disregarded peoples and cultures in Europe to make it a house of brothers/sisters who can live peacefully in concord and prosperity. If the reason lies in a lack of time and distorting materialism, can we do anything about it? If richness is *de facto* an official ideal in the United States, does it inevitably have to be the same in Europe? Is the pursuit of profit (for corporations) going to destroy our freedom and eradicate the time we need for others? If so, we do not need an expensive European administration to stage the play of a dream that will never come true. They are bad actors anyway. Geographically speaking, Europe is a stable fact, but the true Europe is more than that and far from obvious. The first thing to do would be to change its centre of gravity from economy + politics to culture + politics. Heritage, in its essence, is the epitome of humanist ethics and that is how Europe should manage it; otherwise it should be abandoned to serve as the raw material of dream and illusion industries, - be them mere entertainment or tourism.

In brief, can the Europe of Culture become a place:

- ❖ where quality is maintained and nourished?
- ❖ of balanced judgement and reliable, unbiased information?

- ❖ where the arts are cherished?
- ❖ where culture is lived?
- ❖ where human work is respected?
- ❖ where solidarity is highly valued?
- ❖ where politicians work towards a welfare state and are not mere servants to corporations?
- ❖ where trade is fair?
- ❖ where difference is taken as richness?
- ❖ where individual liberty is the highest priority?
- ❖ where all institutions serve the citizens?
- ❖ of excellent administration, citizen politicians, and powerful positive elites?
- ❖ of an open, civil, secular society?
- ❖ where economic relations with the "outer" world are governed by fair trade and exchange?

That is a Europe that will withstand any challenge that the future can bring, one anybody would find worth fighting for. Any other Europe is an expensive exercise that has no chance of surviving economic opportunism and evil alliances.