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Collective Identity Formation in the Process of EU Enlargement Defeating the Inclusive Paradigm of a European Democracy?

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Abstract

In this paper it is argued that the EU eastern enlargement did not result in a significant change of predominantly ethnos-based collective identity in the new EU countries. Consequently, it is argued that the EU eastern enlargement has, by and large, been understood by citizens of the new EU countries as primarily a process of economic adjustment to the common market standards with limited impact on the political dimension of European integration, i.e. the *finalité politique* of the EU institutional design or, more generally, the model of future democratic order in Europe. The main conclusion that could be drawn from the analysis of the dynamics of collective identity formation in the context of the EU enlargement is that the inclusive paradigm of European democracy which constituted the identitarian foundation of the European integration process since the establishment of the European Communities turned out to be self-defeating in the context of the EU eastern enlargement at least in a short-term perspective.

Keywords

European Identity - Democracy - Post-Communism - Enlargement

Debating the social

Before 1989 the European Communities constructed their collective identity largely in relation to the eastern part of Europe, on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Berlin Wall was a powerful boundary which separated two sides of Europe, but which also gave meaning to the process of western European integration. It was relatively easy to think of the principles upon which Western Europe was to be founded: free market, democracy, human rights, freedom and prosperity, in opposition to eastern dictatorship, centralisation, poverty, and oppression. The boundaries of Europe were well-defined, as were the values which governed the Western European way of life. The East was far away, largely unknown, alien and distrusted; it practically did not exist in the mind of an average European, except as a very vague concept of a grey, cold and generally unpleasant zone in the East.

The revolution of 1989, the unification of Germany and subsequent process of gradual accession of former Soviet satellite, communist countries to European, western structures, in spite of being generally very positive in most respects, also ruined the former, clear and easily understandable meaning of the world. Nothing was simple any more. Former distant neighbours from the East became "us", at least nominally and institutionally. The question of borders of Europe and limits of EU enlargement became an important issue and problem to solve. The EU decided to undergo deep reforms of its institutions, as it became clear that the organisation could no longer function in its present form, if a dozen of new members were to join. The prospect of enlargement caused much anxiety both in the West and in the East of Europe. For citizens of the EU 15, the accession of new members brought a risk of losing job security and possible decrease of the level of income. But perhaps equally important was uncertainty as to the social and cultural consequences of the enlargement. Would Europe still be the same after the new members join? Are Eastern Europeans prepared to be EU citizens? Or perhaps the cultural gap between old and new members will cause problems? Will European institutions be able to function as before? There was also much anxiety in the East, though of somewhat different kind. Will we be able to cope with the challenge of accession? Will we be able to compete with Western Europeans, whose competence is perhaps much greater than ours? Or perhaps we, the Easterners, will lose in confrontation with the reality of integrated Europe. Apart from obvious hesitations and fears caused by unequal economic relation between East and West, and the problem of economic security which seemed to be in danger, the main issue was "mental security", the perception of the world as meaningful, understood and familiar. On both sides of the former Iron Curtain this mental security is in danger. People in the west feel that Europe is changing, that new, less known and culturally different people joined the Union, that they bring not only sometimes unfair competition in the labour market, but also different mentality, traditions, beliefs and prejudices. People in the East are afraid of opening up to the West, exposing themselves to new ideas, new ways of life, and new requirements of competences which they may lack. The EU, to which they now belong, is governed by principles, values and norms which they often do not understand. The reaction of both sides of the former East-West boundary is a tendency to hide behind the secure boundary of the new and familiar. This is why many Western Europeans chose to say no to the proposed European Constitution, preferring to remain within the familiar boundaries of the nation state, where they at least now know what to expect, even if they are not always completely happy. They opposed against giving more power to the European institutions, in fear that things

may slip out of control, perhaps in the direction of even further enlargement. One may doubt if European citizens are at present ready for any new enlargement, before their world re-integrates and their mental security is restored. In the East, citizens also reacted to the trauma of transformation and European accession by hiding behind the familiar boundary of tradition. Alternatively, they chose to support politicians who promised strong leadership, and clear guidance, preferably along traditional, well known and well understood, secure lines. The questions which the European Communities always tried to answer now sound particularly strong: who is a European? Where are the borders of Europe and of the EU? How far the process of EU enlargement can go, without losing the common European identity? Does Europe have a common identity in the first place?

Conceptualising collective identity in an enlarged Europe

Identity is a very popular concept in social sciences. It is also very often discussed in Europe today, where it usually refers to collective identifications, a feeling and expression of belonging to a common culture, way of life, a common symbolic system, a common cultural heritage. Identity is always constructed in relation to others, to partners, with whom we are in dialogue, negotiating our mutual images and meaning of whom we are and what it means to be “us” and “them”. In the present European context, the former, pre-1989 “significant other” – Eastern Europe, disappeared, and so did the clear meaning of who is European and where the boundaries are. At the same time, the discussion continues as to the nature of collective identity in Europe. In general, there are two main approaches to collective identity in social sciences. One sees it as a kind of cultural “essence”, an intrinsic characteristic of a group, based on its origin, common core culture, and historical heritage. Such a model of identity, often referred to as “ethnic”, tends to be exclusive, creating boundaries separating “us” from “them”, and demanding that those who wish to join “our” community will convert to “our” culture, through assimilation. Those who are not “like us” do not belong to our society. The other, alternative concept of collective identity, often referred to as civic or political, allows for more pluralism in the matters of culture, and more diversity. To belong to “our” community, people must be willing to contribute and to negotiate, but they may remain different. Such a model of identity seems to be more appropriate for the construction of integrated Europe. However, in the debate about the future European identity, one often finds “ethnic” approach, when for example the religious identity of Europe is discussed in connection with future membership of Turkey.

It seems to be useful to conceptualise identity not as “being”, but as “becoming”, as a process of construction, as activity in the direction of building a collective image in a dialogue and negotiation with others. Identity seen from this perspective is a dynamic process of construction, something one does, rather than what one has. In this way identity is seen in a context of interactions with others, as a process of mutual identification and construction of images through a complex symbolic process. Seen as such, identity may often appear to be inconsistent, fragmentary, and contextual. Especially in the contemporary European society, suspended between modernity and post-modernity, one should expect plurality and diversification of frames of reference in which identity is constructed. Traditional frames of reference, such as national, regional, religious, coexist with new ones, while individuals and groups move more and more freely in the European public space, negotiating their

identity in relation to different partners. The prospect of constructing a future common European identity has to take into account the process of fragmentation, diversification and negotiability of various different identities within the changing boundaries of Europe. It seems to be possible to think of European identity more as a process of construction than as something which has already been constructed, which exists and is ready for Europeans to take.

Enlargement of the EU made this process of construction and negotiation of multiple identities even more complicated. We are still learning the lesson of the big enlargement of 2004, and it seems that the EU and its citizens are not yet ready for the new big opening, before the issue of collective identity has been properly discussed and negotiated. There are questions of common European values, of mutual trust and distrust, of the meaning of European citizenship, overcoming ignorance and stereotypes of each other, the conditions of participation in the common social and cultural space. The failure of the proposed Constitution Treaty, and the current attempt to have the Reform Treaty accepted should be seen in this light, together with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

New, eastern members of the EU must learn the meaning of what is European, which does not mean that this learning process has to take a form of unilateral instruction from the West. It will rather be again a process of negotiation of new meanings and interpretations of European values, common goals, prejudices and anxieties, hopes and expectations. For the Eastern Europeans this process is part of the larger process of transformation which started in 1989, and which is still far from complete. Becoming European and earning the meaning of European citizenship constitute an essential aspect of this transformation. New European citizens often suffer from the lack of civic competence and of trust, but many of them are also very active in the process of creating new, better life for themselves and their children. This is happening in the new, European frame of reference. But this does not mean that the process of construction a new meaning of the social world and new life in the broader, European framework, is immediately and consistently expressed and communicated symbolically. It seems that there is a gap, a discrepancy between what people do and what they say and even how they think about their activities. More and more people from eastern member states become active in the European framework. They migrate in search for work and opportunity, they travel and trade, and they learn languages and establish professional and private relations with other Europeans. Networks of contacts are becoming more and more elaborate, and they constitute the new social and economic reality of Europe. Through these activities the new identity of Europeans is being constructed at the grass root level. Soon it will be inconceivable that one could go back to the old, narrow framework of a nation state. But at the same time people still think in old, traditional categories, as far as their identity is concerned. They still describe themselves in terms of national and regional frames of reference. There is a lack of new language, of new categories available to average citizens of new EU member states with which they could express their new, transnational identity. The old categories dominate in the public discourse, in the media and in the church. They have the symbolic power with which they impose traditional categories on citizens, who often lack a platform of debate in which new language and new thinking could be developed.

The case studies which our team carried out in the first year of the project reveal this discrepancy between the symbolic discourse and the involvement in various

individual and collective projects on the European level. The public discourse is dominated by the national rhetoric. Europe is described either as the common cultural heritage to which all Europeans belong, and which excludes others, or as a diversity of nation states, internally integrated and possessing well established identity. The future of Europe is seen either as a federation (to be rejected by true “national” patriots) or as a “Europe of sovereign nation states”. There is little room in this discourse for anything like a new type of transnational identity developed by citizens through their involvement and participation in various projects on the European level, across traditional boundaries. This new transnational identity can be understood only if seen as a dynamic process, diversified, often fragmentary and inconsistent, but on the whole developing in the direction of Europe of citizens, and out of the tradition of seeing collective identities in Europe in “ethnic” categories. Further research which is being planned for the next 3-4 years will hopefully allow us to trace this process developing further and to verify this hypothesis.

Transforming the political

The functionalist discourse of European integration, which dominated both theory and practice of post-1945 integration process in Western Europe was based upon the assumption that constitutionalisation of supranational legal and political architecture would inevitably lead to crystallisation of genuine European collective identity. The relative success of economic integration and slow but firm constitutionalisation of European legal order based on the evolution of *acquis communautaire* seemed to confirm efficiency of the functionalist approach. What was relatively a linear process in the post-1945 Western Europe, however, has not been the case when European integration faced the challenge of Eastern enlargement in the post-Cold War international environment.

With the downfall of the Berlin Wall new line of division emerged in Europe: *tribalism vs. supranationalism*. Ethnic nationalism in post-communist Europe became a driving force for collective identity construction in most of the East-Central European countries which aspired to the EU membership. At the same time, the Western Europe was forging a common destiny in Maastricht with much growing confidence in *an ever closer Union among the peoples of Europe*. The EU enlargement of 2004 magnified the clash of these two distinct modes of social identity construction, which defused between and across East-West cleavage. The ultimate failure of a Constitution for Europe ratification process could be also an evidence for predominantly conflictual nature of emerging European collective identity. It seems that an enlarging Europe has entered presently a period of an ongoing negotiation of social identity between European civilisational identity and cross-cutting myriad of national, regional and local identities. As seen from the perspective of new and prospective EU countries, a consolidation of genuine European identity is largely depending on complementarity of two interrelated processes: a social integration within the East-Central European societies based on the ideals of democratic rule of law, civil society and respect of human rights and the East-West integration based on common understanding of European civilisational identity.

Analysing the European identity in the context of the EU Eastern enlargement should not exclusively be framed as an obvious feature of the ongoing process of reform of the institutional setting of the EU. It seems much convincing to argue that the

European identity is constructed in multidimensional interactions between national identities, European cultural identities and identifications with the EU integration project (Spohn 2003). The reason for that is that we can hardly speak about an all-European integrative identity manifested by all segments of the societies of the new EU member states. In order to be able to understand this multidimensional interactions between different forms of collective identification in the context of the EU Eastern enlargement, it seems essential to investigate – among others – attitudes towards democracy displayed by various segments of the Central-Eastern European societies.

Democracy fatigue and dilemmas of European collective identity in new Europe

As Jacques Rupnik observed

The bad news is that several CEE countries in which democracy is allegedly consolidated have recently displayed signs of backsliding (even if these are not captured in their still very good Freedom House ratings). [...] The real question is not „Is democracy facing an imminent threat?“ Instead, we should ask “What kinds of democracies are emerging after the transitions in East-Central Europe, and what are their vulnerabilities?“ and „What is the significance of their troubles from a Europe-wide perspective?“

(Rupnik 2007:2)

The significance of democracy fatigue in the Eastern-Central European countries for the European collective identity discourse is that it reduces the debate over reconstitutionalisation of democracy in Europe to virtually a single model of the nation-state as the only “natural” container of democracy. As a consequence, the EU is seen from the East-Central perspective as a common market primarily. Thus, it should not claim any distinct role on the international arena. This democratic fatigue in Eastern-Central Europe reveals also a quite dangerous tendency to bypass democratic standards. The findings of the public opinion polls conducted subsequently by Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in Poland in 2005 and 2006 are especially alarming in this respect. In the 2005 CBOS survey (2005) about 50% of all polled admitted that “in some cases a non-democratic regime may be preferable to a democratic one and that they are ambivalent whether the political system in Poland is democratic or non-democratic one”. In the 2006 CBOS survey (2006b) about 75% of Poles expressed the view that “democracy is too indecisive or incapable of maintaining law and order”. These findings confirm also a lack of trust to public sphere displayed by large proportions of Polish society.

Trust in public sphere is one of the main factors, which determines functioning of a particular type of social ties within civil society, which turn, has a profound impact on the process of constructing collective identities within different segments of the society. The map of social trust that emerges out of the analysis of surveys conducted in Central European countries which joined the EU displays certain asymmetry in the level of social trust between the private and the public sphere. An overwhelming majority of Poles, Czechs and Hungarians – although to a different degree – trust their relatives and friends more than the public institutions such as parliament, government and political parties. Poland represents a particularly sharp case for the asymmetry in the map of social trust and distrust. Charity institutions and the Roman

Catholic Church are trusted by 80% of the population (CBOS 2006a). Other most trusted institutions are: the army (76%) and the Ombudsman (69%). In this context it is worth emphasising that international institutions such the EU also enjoy a relatively high level of public trust (62%). Distrust dominates in relation to crucial democratic institutions such as parliament (67%) and political parties (72%).

The accession of Poland and other Central European countries to the EU had a rather positive impact with regard to the level of trust to public institutions. However, in spite of an improvement in the level of social trust in the public institutions both of national and international character, the level of distrust to strangers in daily situations remains high (43% rather distrust, 30 % definitely distrust [CBOS 2006a]). This may be an indication of predominance of an ethnos over demos type of social ties, which determinates a dynamics and forms of collective identity construction.

As it was mentioned in present analysis already, the political transformation in the East-Central European countries brought about an extremely high level of distrust to public institutions, far and foremost, to such fundamental democratic institutions as parliament or mass media. Dramatically low level of trust to public institutions combined with low level of participation in democratic procedures in East-Central Europe is an evidence of much larger problem of a profound weakness of civil society in this region. This, in turn, reduces significantly a possibility of convergence between Western and Eastern European societies within the realm of strong supranational civil society and public sphere.

Vibrant civil society functioning within well-established public sphere is fundamentally vital for collective identity formation as it serves as major factor framing political socialisation. It plays also a crucial role of a forum of social conflict resolution, which is of particular importance for East-Central Europe being historically vulnerable to overlapping conflicts of ethnic, religious and social nature.

Aleksander Smolar gave an insightful explanation of malfunctioning of civil society in East-Central Europe. As he convincingly argued

A civil society whose essence was radical opposition to the communist state could not survive the disappearance of that state. Civil society, it turned out, had been a historical costume; its usefulness disappeared with the times that dictated its wearing.

(Smolar 1999)

This theatrical metaphor of post-1989 East-Central European political transformation could be transposed into contemporary backsliding of democracy manifested in hesitance towards organised forms of social and political life; the prevalence of informal social networks; and, the mutation of former „us (oppressed nation)” and „them (communist rulers)” cleavage along the „we (individuals and informal social groups)” - „them (institutions and actors performing public power)” bipolar division.

The backsliding of democracy, the lack of a clear-cut vision of the ultimate aims of integration as well as underestimation of the need for the adoption of *acquis communautaire* produced an *in abstracto* integration syndrome in East-Central Europe. It needs to be emphasised that the essence of this syndrome was a vague acceptance (and a little knowledge) of principles and consequences of European integration

displayed by both political elite and public. It should be also noted that a pace of adaptive process of integration with the EU was closely connected with a progress of systemic transformation. The analysis of the social perception of benefits stemming from the progress of market reforms and democratisation shows that there were a limited number of those who admitted to take advantage of these developments. Similarly, there was a restraint part within the East-Central European societies, which acknowledges making profit of integration with the EU.

A relative deprivation felt by the overwhelming part of the East-Central European societies was a result of marginalisation caused by the dynamics of systemic transformation. This, in turn, triggered massive frustration and disappointment. The simultaneity of the processes of systemic transformation and the European integration implicated a reaction of "scapegoat-search". A scapegoat here was the EU building its economic prosperity at the expense of the national economies of the Central European countries as a whole as well as at the expense of farmers and the people of labour in particular.

Political parties played a decisive role in public discourse over the meaning of the EU membership. In their strive to attract electorates they adopted a certain attitude towards EU upon a criterion of group interest. The impact of the calculation of anticipated profits and losses upon party's stand towards European integration was so significant that it determined a certain vision of country's European policy. The panorama of partisan discourse in the East-Central European countries revealed predominance of two "ideal models" of European integration: Europe as an opportunity vs. Europe as threat.

Amongst the arguments elevated by parties representing the pro-European attitude one can point at the argumentation according to which consolidation of market reforms, strengthening of civil society and a prompt accession into the EU were perceived as interwoven processes. The critics of pro-integration policy pointed out, on the other hand, that the EU membership would have meant exploitation and marginalisation as a result of peripheral geo-economic location of post-communist countries, Poland in particular.

Most extreme anti-European parties identified the EU with a hegemonic superpower trying to impose its rule upon the newly independent Central European countries. Accession to the EU would signify a loss of political and economic independence and deadly threat to a national identity.

In abstracto social acceptance of integration with the EU has been a constant feature of European discourse in East-Central Europe. Reaching a full and lasting social consensus with regard to the present and the future democratic order of the EU seems a lofty expectation without a common axiological platform in public debate, which was confirmed by a weakness of the ratification debate over a Constitution for Europe.

Civic identity and transformation of the “significant other” in new Europe

The existence of collective political identity is a condition critical of democracy. This seems to be relevant for EU democracy especially (Scharpf 1999). The frequently debated European identity deficit in the context of the EU eastern enlargement could be conceptualised in terms of a lack of what Karl Deutsch (1957: 36) described as a ‘sense of community’ – “a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties, ‘we-feeling’, trust and mutual consideration, partial identification in terms of self-images and interests, mutually successful preconditions of behaviour and co-operative action in accordance with it”. From yet another perspective, the meaning of European identity has two dimensions, ideational one and political one (Pollak and Mokre 2002: 320). Ideational identity means common values, traditions and expectations for the future, and political identity is the externalisation of the ideational identity (ibid.).

Collective political identity understood in Deutschian terms is *sine qua non* condition of the legitimate character of public power exercised within a given political system. The backbone of this social construct is citizenship, which serves as a forum for manifestation of collective political sense of belonging to the political community. First, and foremost, citizenship is the strongest factor influencing a give type of collective political identity. This assumption is relevant especially to above mentioned European identity deficit.

Citizenship is, in its fundamental meaning, comprised of rights, which are subject of constant reconstruction through historically changing social interactions. European citizenship introduced formally in the Maastricht Treaty established a framework for common European supranational identity. However, the very fact that the essence of European citizenship was an outcome of political bargaining among the EU member states results in ongoing contingency of European citizenship in European debates in the member states. This was particularly visible during the accession negotiations and soon after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements when the free movement of people – the constitutive principle of the EU citizenship – became one of the most, if not the most, debated issue across enlarging EU.

Indeed, the foundation of European citizenship is the principle of free movement of people, which was introduced to foster mobility of the Community citizens and consolidate the common market. The Maastricht Treaty by introducing *par excellence* European code of rights related to the principle of freedom of movement was a fulfilment of the archetypical ideal of the founding fathers of European integration, namely “an ever closer union amongst the peoples of Europe”. From the perspective of changing dynamics of European political identity, the establishment of such European rights altered the political environment and generated demands for extending and expanding the content of the original free movement rights (Maas 2005: 14). According to Maas (2005), this process reinforced fragmentation of the political system in which policies developed beyond the control of any single member state, which in turn opened up the sphere for emergence of European citizens who have been created on the basis of common rights and act autonomously, thus changing the dynamic of the integration process away from exclusive control of governments.

The subsequent waves of the EU eastern enlargement could be seen as amplifiers of the changing nature of the EU political system in this context. Millions of “new Europeans” have been moving across enlarging EU, which affects both their individual and collective identity as well as the EU political system itself. However, the direction of this change is pretty ambiguous. From the 2003 Eurobarometer survey, it was evident that only a minority of EU citizens (39%) supported the idea of the Eastern enlargement. Nonetheless, the 2006 Eurobarometer survey revealed that an overwhelming majority of EU citizens positively assessed opening of new markets to companies (86%). Over 80% of respondents believed that the recent enlargements will be benefit culture and environment in Europe.

Interestingly enough, one should emphasise a relatively high level of commonality of values among the “old” and “new” Europeans at least declared in public opinion surveys, which may indicate presence of European identity since internalisation of common values presupposes a sense of belonging to community. In 2004 Eurobarometer, the two-thirds of citizens of new accession countries expressed the believe that the supreme value the EU stands for is human rights protection, which may indicate a convergence with a similar conviction shared also by citizens of the old 15. This may constitute a basis of common perception of belonging to single political community with the shared collective identity among the citizens of “old” and “new” Europe.

Ambiguity of otherwise a positive impact of the eastern enlargement on consolidation of European collective identity is caused by reaction of some of the groups within the old EU countries. The mass flow of labour from the new to the old EU member states triggered a revival of nationalist movements, which address the public opinion in countries like France and the Netherlands with slogans according to which terrible waves of uncivilised people from the post-communist countries deprive nationals of these countries of jobs and life opportunities. This cliché was successfully used to construct famous Polish plumber slogan which mobilised antagonists of the European Constitution particularly in France. Certainly, strong nationalistic feelings skilfully animated by leaders of extreme right-wing and populist parties, be they advocates of closing labour markets from the newcomers from the East or defenders of national property from the cosmopolitan capital from the West, weaken collective European identity. Thus, enlargements of 2004 and 2007 as well as the prospective one together with the pace of implementation of major reform of the EU political system introduced by the Lisbon Treaty constitute both unique opportunity and serious challenge for the emerging European collective identity based on active European citizenship. Still, the evolution of European citizenship, both in its legal and societal dimensions, has not been yet a linear process inevitably leading to the functional placement of the spirit - European citizenship - in the machine - common market.

Conclusion

As we argued, the process of European integration in Western Europe began with construction of collective identity based on the concept of liberal democracy, civic freedoms and human rights put in direct relation to the “significant other” symbolically reflected in the Berlin Wall and *homo sovieticus* icons. The downfall of Yalta geopolitical order resulted in polarisation of mutual symbolic interactions between Western European democracies already consolidating themselves within the

realm of the supranational European Union founded in Maastricht and newly emerging democracies in post-totalitarian countries in East-Central Europe undergoing a re-ethno nationalisation of collective identity. The Maastricht Union narrative was, right from its conception, constructed on the imperative of identitarian re-unification of post-1945 Europe based on paradigmatic inclusiveness of liberal democracy. In other words, the EU had to open itself into new democracies from the east if it did not want to undermine its own axiological foundation. In consequence, the well-established Cold War significant other cliché ought to be deconstructed.

The decline of Cold War significant other resulted in re-vitalisation of ethnos based collective identity attitudinal patterns in the Maastricht-driven East-West re-unification process. The ultimate outcome of the EU eastern enlargement was re-culturalisation of collective identity construction, which may confirm the assumption that the implementation of western European democratic paradigm turned out to be self-defeating. Following this assumption, it becomes essential in further research within the RECON project to formulate the question to what extent (if ever) collective identity based on inclusive paradigm of civicness and deliberative democratic supranationalism in the context of the EU enlargement relies on direct reference to the “significant other”? Who (what) denotes the “significant other” presently for the “old” and “new” Europeans? In this context, the Charter for Fundamental Rights is being discussed widely as the document, which may stimulate the transformation of axiology and civic dimension of European integration. At the operational level of our further research within the RECON project, it becomes essential to investigate the ratification debate in the new EU countries from the perspective of the impact of the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter for Fundamental Rights in particular on dynamics of collective identity construction. Of specific interest, there seems to be the question whether the ratification debate on the Lisbon Treaty accelerates a process of transformation from collective identity construction based on the model of EU as audit democracy with weak European (supranational) identity to cosmopolitan deliberative democracy as a foundation of the rights based Union?

It becomes therefore important to carry out a comparative analysis of the Constitutional Treaty ratification debate with the present ratification debate over the Lisbon Treaty. The main idea behind this comparative approach is to identify the dynamics of attitudes displayed in public discourse in the new EU countries with regard to following questions: does the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter for Fundamental Rights specifically, allow for stronger European we-identity among the citizens of the EU?; do the values and rights of the Charter are commonly accepted and manifested values and rights the EU citizens internalise and live by? ; is (would) the Charter (be) perceived as a foundation of democratic society in Europe?

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RECON seeks to clarify whether democracy is possible under conditions of complexity, pluralism and multilevel governance. Three models for reconstituting democracy in Europe are delineated and assessed: (i) reframing the EU as a functional regime and reconstituting democracy at the national level; (ii) establishing the EU as a multi-national federal state; or (iii) developing a post-national Union with an explicit cosmopolitan imprint.

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