

The Idea and Practice of Europe in a Globalising World: Reality and Responsibility

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Introduction

Europe is at a crucial point of intersection of its history and at a decisive moment in the process of European integration. History illustrates that Europe is a dynamic and evolving entity with many faces, multiple identities and diversified co-operation forms. The recent enlargement (or re-unification) of 10 new member states reinforces this image.

Europe has an appointment with its destiny. Its model of society, based on the fundamental human rights, culture as vehicle of emancipation, on sustainable development and socio-economic cohesion, and on a multilateral vision of the world order, is put under stress and pressure. In other words, we experience a confrontation between the actual European confusing (political, economic, cultural and institutional) reality and the global responsibility of Europe in a context of an ever increasing globalisation.

The challenges are multiple and multidimensional within and outside the EU. It requires a future project for further European integration, for institutional governing structures, financing of European solidarity, vision which inspires the commitment of citizens, and certainly of young people, as well as the European role in the globalising world. The recently published report of sustainable development of the former French Minister Strauss-Kahn written for the Commission clearly refers to the necessity of a new mobilising myth for Europe. However, the political signals within the European actions are not always very hopeful. The discussions on the European Constitution, the debate and methods of creating the new Commission are therefore very meaningful and telling.

My contribution consists of three main parts: first, a short historical context, in the second part I treat 5 main challenges

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to the European societal model (i.e. globalisation, Europeanisation, identity and specificity, culture and perception) and finally I present three major European tasks for the future (i.e. quest for meaning, favouring European citizenship and responsibility at global level).

1. With the Historical Re-unification of Europe to Momentarily 25 Member States and 450 Million Citizens We Can Only State that Europe Is Placed at a Cross Roads of Paths between the Past, the Present and the Future

Hendrik Brugmans, the first Rector of the College of Europe wrote many years ago: «Europe is not any longer an abstract concept, neither is it a mere geographical, difficult confining area. It is a culture circle/environment, a community. Now it is on the way to become an ordered society, with citizens who take up civil responsibility for the whole, although this is not yet clear for many. Transition times as ours are characterised by extra-chaos. The hope is focused on a change in continuity. But a radical change».

Europe has to draw many lessons from its far and short past. The whole European history is characterised by forms and attempts of economic, political, military and cultural cooperation, which attempted equilibrium between integration and diversity within certain contours. Europe is however in the first place a diversified but coherent societal model shaped by vague geographical frontiers, fundamental values of freedom, solidarity and respect for the other, its common cultural heritage and shared historical experiences. In short, the historic and recent development of the current European integration process is an ongoing search for equilibrium between integration and cohesion on the one hand, and maintenance of diversity and regional and cultural identity on the other hand, within certain governance structures and institutions.

This radical change in continuity is not an objective in itself, but a process which priorities the objectives of peace and sustainable development within and outside Europe. The main lesson we can draw from the past is that Europe as reality and responsibility is a multiplicity, a plurality of diversity, with

positive and negative consequences. The solution is neither a dogmatic Euro-centrism nor a cultural relativism but a critical European centrism based on what James Tully excellently describes as «practical identity; that is the aspects of citizens' identities that matter to them, transform our societies into multiple minorities contending and collaborating with a general ethos of forbearance and critical responsiveness and make our institutions diversity-aware».

2. Challenges to the European Model of Socio-economic Cohesion and Regional Diversity

The present European debate is animated and confronted by internal and external challenges. They shape the current and future well being of Europe, i.e. the sustainability of the European model of society as a macro regional reality with global responsibility. I distinguish 5 fundamental challenges.

2.1. Globalisation

A first important challenge refers to the process of globalisation. Thus process leads to a radical decrease of the political-economic power of states in the management of socio-economic activities, an increasing domination of democratic societies by transnational plutocracies and to a slow depersonalisation of economic relations which undermine our societies... Economic globalisation strongly influences the territorial re-organisation and the process of state formation... The new regionalism causes a retreat of national states and a re-orientation of regional policy to a more competitive approach between regions, and consequently to more active regions within Europe... Europe is however not an exclusive economic space, but in the first place a community of shared values, which is forces to re-visit itself I, the current globalisation debate.

This globalisation trend increases the tension with culture. Next to the economic and political dimension, globalisation is also a cultural phenomenon with consequences for cultures, peoples and persons... The intensification of communication systems and the international mobility flows lead towards a global culture for which the French sociologue Pierre Bourdieu warned. The globalising cultural industries isolate men from

their historically developed local, religious, moral and societal reference frames and lead to a further individualisation and commodification of values and human relations.

The homogenisation of cultural production and consumption patterns goes hand in, hand with an increase of cultural assertivity and a growing consciousness of cultural differences. A kind of paradoxical process takes place. While globalisation strengthens cultural assertivity and participation to the global culture with some, the lack of comprehension and respect for cultural differences has led with others to distrust against other cultures and has increased the possibility of a clash between cultures and civilisations (Huntington). It has certainly strengthened «le choc de l'ignorance» and increased stereotype behaviour.

The impact of globalisation on cultures, societies, human relations and persons should be understood from a polycentric and pluricultural perspective. It implies that cultural differences are accepted and respected from a certain pattern of values without the domination of *a priori* superiority of a certain culture. This requires «a more compassionate globalisation» (Richard Falk) or «un humanisme cosmopolite» (Edwy Plenel). The great challenge is to look for governance structures which both create zones of common interests and shared values, as structures for civilised confrontation. Such structures should offer economic, social and cultural well-being with a guarantee of internal and external solidarity as accessibility for all to the opportunities and advantages of globalisation. Certainly in a period when extra-national, extra-territorial, transfrontier concepts and governance structures gain in importance, this means a real challenge to the global political governance. Momentarily the international community is lacking global political institutions and common values which may replace a culture of competition, distrust and fear for a culture of cooperation, peace and mutual respect.

A second important impact of globalisation is the accelerated development towards an informed and knowledge-driven society. The accelerated use of new technologies during the last years has produced enormous productivity increases as well as a progressive replacement of labour by capital. The danger is real that these changes lead to a further fragmentation and duality of the labour market if technological innovations are not

complemented with social innovations. The rethinking and revalorisation of labour and education as a fundamental condition to full integration of the citizen into society is under way. The conclusions of the Top of Lisbon in 2000 to make Europe by 2010 the most knowledge-driven economy or the Bologna process which aims at realising a European University space are obvious indications.

Another important development in the globalisation context is the revival of the civil society in institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms. The civil society is a mixture of social forces with diverging agenda, means, scope and power. It is more and more perceived as the place for answers to the mere economic globalisation and is more and more involved in local, regional, national and international decision-making processes. The civil society supports the construction of social capital. The realisation of social common goods creates confidence and results in solidarity which binds people and communities. People and citizens become more active and responsible at the grass roots level and are inspired by mobilising projects within formal and informal groups and communities. Although defining and protecting the common good is the responsibility of the state, from the local to the global action field, the active civil society has become, next to the market and the state, the third pillar in the societal development at all governance levels.

2.2. Europeanisation

Apart from the globalisation process, also the Europeanisation process shows clear internal and external tensions which endanger the specificity of the European integration process, the European unity in diversity. The important challenge today is how the EU as a *sui generis* integration process, based on a common cultural heritage, common historical experiences, common and shared values, can maintain its specificity and particularity.

In the first place there is the large societal debate concerning values and vision of how the individual is related to his surroundings. The functional integration thinking and acting, based on the principle of rationality, specialisation, competition, etc., has led to economic welfare within the European Community; but its underlying value patterns are more and more pressured for the lack of person-driven answers

in a complex institutional structure. Furthermore, the globalisation process undermines the European model and shakes values of solidarity, good citizenship, tolerances and respect for diversity. The lack of direction, underscored by political leadership, is leading to indifference, frustration and fundamental uncertainty of how a rich Europe has to be developed further.

Within this general societal debate the European model of unity in diversity is threatened by a number of specific challenges at the social, financial and political level:

- the European social model, i.e. the cohesion between economic and social objectives, between economic growth and social justice is threatened. The danger of a reduction of the individual life world and of cultural identity is real;
- the further development of the European integration process is undermined by modest financial support to conduct European policies in some specific fields;
- there is a democratic distrust of the citizen against society and the state and a clear lack of enthusiasm for the European Union. Europe is not any longer inspiring as an ideal in the globalisation context. The enthusiasm for the enlargement was genuine in the 10 new member states with quite some festivities around 1 May, but has cooled down rather quickly. According to the recent Euro barometer the confidence of the new Central and Eastern European member states has decreased to a mere 40%. In the old member states it is a bit less than 50%.

2.3. Identity and Specificity

The debate concerning the concept of identity in Europe and of a European identity is crucial for the further direction of the European integration process. To what extent is Europe part of our identity? The answer to this question is linked to the definition of European, national and regional identity in relation to nation, state and citizenship.

Identity refers to a certain value-sharing, a community of values which are decisive for the construction of an identity. Identity determination is not a constant invariable process, but changes over time according to criteria such as birth, family, language, religion, territory, etc. Nowadays this has become more complex with the heightened mobility of people and trespassing visual and virtual borders; it has also become more disturbed by

the growing individualisation and vagueness of the moral norms/ethics within society.

European identity: In search of the identity of Europe we have to accept that Europe presents a whole range of peoples and thus a great diversity of languages, cultures and religions. We have to part from a unilateral determination of an identity on the basis of birth, language, religion or territory. Such a reduced interpretation often implies intolerance and distrust against the other. We should embrace the idea «Europe» as an added (enriched) value to our multiple identity.

The European identity relates to a community of shared values such as solidarity, the rule of law, respect for diversity, attention to the person and the human dignity. Europe is part of our collective memory, but for many this is only a vague part of their historic memory. It implies that the development of a European identity depends on the influence of common European institutions (i.e. the community structure) on daily life as well as on the commitment of the citizen to the European project. This is not only the task and responsibility of politics, but mainly of education.

In short, identity is formed at different levels. Identity-building is less and less merely based on birth, language, religion or territory and is becoming more and more a relation identity. Identity does not know exclusive characteristics; multiplicity is the key characteristic of the European identity: multiple identities, containing compatible partial identities.

This is certainly true for the cultural identity which binds and unifies countries, regions and groups of persons. They are the shared memories and shared expectations, i.e. the common subjective interpretation of the own history and future determines the cultural identity. The political meaning of the importance of identity is the fact that mutual respect for the uniqueness can constitute the basis for more and certainly better collaboration and solidarity within and outside the EU. Cultural and regional identity is therefore an important factor for further integration and a source of inspiration for the strengthening of the European model of society.

2.4. Culture

A fourth challenge to the European societal model is presented by the role of culture. We start from an anthropological

definition of culture, being culture as heritage, creativity and way of life. This point of departure is clearly applicable to European culture, which is not a mythical story or untouchable concept, but a dynamic interaction of historic, spiritual, intellectual, material, artistic characteristics and attitudes. These characteristics illustrate the multiplicity and wealth of European cultures, cultural expressions and traditions.

Culture is in the first place a source of inspiration for further integration and socio-economic development. It certainly can give an impulse to greater commitment of the citizen to the European project.

- Culture can be integrated in the economy and polity, not as a marginal factor, but as an intrinsic added value in the societal development. Culture unfolds itself within society as a dynamic whole of spiritual, moral, intellectual elements which are being offered in education and formation through life-long learning.

- Cultural multiplicity is also a source of wealth and strength. Not any culture can be missed in the European cultural mosaic. Europe is pre-eminently a space of cultural diversity but respect for cultural diversity does not mean a mere nationalistic or regional reflex/behaviour. The respect and stimulation of cultural diversity are a guarantee for further European integration and a renewed co-operation with other cultures.

Cultural practice of the EU: Within the European context culture is permanently placed in a tensed relation between further market integration and the maintenance of cultural diversity (e.g. book, film, audiovisual sector, etc.) The history of EU intervention in the cultural sector is characterised by a number of phases: from a political-rhetoric discourse in the beginning, via a formalistic discourse to finally a pragmatic discourse of cultural co-operation programmes, from negative to positive integration and to a communitarian integrism of the decisions of the Court of Justice, and from a focus on European cultural identity and unity to a focus on cultural diversity.

Within this context intercultural dialogue is of great importance. Intercultural dialogue can be instrumental to soften and avoid the (negative) consequences of the globalisation process (i.e. the issue of minorities, migration, poverty, etc.). A dialogue between peoples and cultures can be constructive if we accept a number of common and moral values as point of departure (i.e. human dignity, respect for

differences and diversity, solidarity, etc.). In the current framework of the tension between (economic) globalisation and internal and external solidarity, between different religions, such a dialogue can be a vehicle for conviviality and multiculturalism in which cultures influence each other without destroying each other or to clash with each other.

Europe as a global player has an important voice in this dialogue between cultures and peoples, primarily from the value of its socio-economic model. The EU has made the first vital institutional steps under Romano Prodi to favour such an intercultural dialogue in the framework of the European-Mediterranean partnership with its overall good neighbourhood policy.

2.5. Perception

A final challenge is related to the perception of the idea and the practice of Europe. Europe is confronted with a general orientation crisis. There exists a stereotype perception of the EU as a slow, non transparent administration with complex decision-making procedures, which shows a lack of radiation, determination and vigour at vital moments of political decision-making. Recent statistics tell us that less than half of the population of the member states participated to the European elections of 13 June. That the image is rather negative also comes from ignorance. Few people realise that the European Parliament is a full grown legislator with European laws and regulations in many policy fields which determine national policies in many fields.

The faulty perception reveals a clear problem of communication. The European jargon and language in the study and discipline of European studies lead not always to a clear and simple message. For the media Europe remains an isolated subject; which is not any longer true in the daily reality. There is a growing interconnection between regional, national and European dossiers and the European issues/problems are becoming more complex for the not specialised journalist. For many politicians Europe remains a distant subject, sometimes a scapegoat for unpopular measures but mainly an important financial source for national dossiers. However, most of the times one keeps silence about the positive contribution of Europe in many domains. And often the (national) rhetoric of

member states is transparent and neglects the European common good. Europe is not selling itself very well; it communicates rather insufficiently with a rather technical and hermetic language and a complex bureaucracy.

In short, only a right perception and the delivery of a positive image can lead to respect of the own population and the European partners. They are important for the legitimacy of and the involvement of the citizen to Europe.

3. Europe's Task and Responsibility in a Globalising World

In the last part of my intervention I present three major tasks for Europe in the globalising world.

3.1. Quest for Meaning

We have to continue working to a better Europe, more democratic and social, with respect for its cultures. The European dream must be inspired by purpose which goes beyond the existing economic, political and social frontiers. The question though remains to which extent a common vision, founded on global common goods, can be developed in a context of economic globalisation and cultural relativism. The problems of social inequality and poverty as well as the non-accessibility to the advantages of globalisation take important forms in economic and cultural perspective at global level.

In short, the present situation refers to the need for an inspiring vision and a strategy which embodies such a vision. Europe can not be sold as a technical project, but requires purpose and mobilisation. Structures and institutions constitute no aim in itself, but are only a means to achieve a sustainable model of society, based on the rule of law and opportunities, which can serve as an example.

Europe has a task to be an actor of change and the responsibility to revitalise its original project, and so to mobilise the citizen, and particularly the young people. How? To invest in knowledge, to create a European industrial policy, to guarantee social protection, to stimulate a European democratic space and mainly to favour the involvement of citizens and young people into the European political project. That is what the European

and international information and training centre of Ryckvelde is doing since nearly 50 years. In general, it is the mobilising task of genuine education.

3.2. Favouring European Citizenship

Karel Verleye, one of the founders of the College of Europe in Bruges, wrote: «It is excluded that a European citizenship or a European commitment will be stimulated with the population, when no ample consideration will be given to a number of forgotten or undervalued factors in the construction of the new Europe, such as the cultural, regional, ethical, historical and spiritual dimensions».

There is a need for a large societal basis to support further European integration. Signs are not always hopeful. (European) politics and (European) administration do not always give an inspiring example. An overt support for more extreme tendencies in Europe may lead to intolerance and undermining of the European societal model. Therefore, a drastic increase in commitment of citizens and young people to the European project is necessary if Europe wants to be truthful to its destiny.

It is essential that with a bigger EU and greater political co-operation in fields such as social policy, employment, asylum, immigration, policy and justice, foreign policy and general security and defence policy, citizens are capable to express their cultural/regional identity within this changing environment. A further integration of the European continent has to continue to attract attention for traditional social, regional and cultural identities. The fundamental wealth of its diversity is not only geographic, but also institutional. Therefore, it is important that respect for diversity is encouraged and reflected in the institutions, the democratic processes and the policies of the EU. Furthermore the future of Europe is not an exclusive responsibility of governments, but also a responsibility of its citizens and their organisations. In order to valorise different dimensions of the cultural diversity and diverse forms of civil participation in Europe, the international association Forum Europe of the Cultures has been recently launched with the objective to promote an active European citizenship.

In short, the reference terms for a European citizenship require an inspiration which exceeds the existing economic, political and social boundaries. This insertion can give sense to a vision

in which Europe may evolve to a multiple citizenship. New concepts and multilevel political structures are being developed which can give form to the complex European governance structure and make it transparent for the citizen.

3.3. The Other Big Task for Europe

Is Taking Up the Responsibility at Global Level

The globalisation in a more and more unipolar world urges Europe to claim for a bigger role in the global governance structures and to start speaking with one single voice. Europe has the responsibility to conduct a more daring and coherent common security and foreign policy and, subsequently, actually favour a culture of peace, genuine dialogue, solidarity and sustainable development. This seems not be easy, given the present international developments and diverging viewpoints. Still an important step has been taken by the European Convention with the nomination of a Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Union, who will also be its Vice-President.

With a courageous foreign policy Europe can develop to a strong and trustful partner in a multilateral world order. The recently published strategy of the European Commission of a so-called good neighbourhood policy is a very good impulse to such a broad international policy framework («a ring of friends»). This strategy should avoid that the enlargement of the Union creates new divisions between the Union and its neighbouring countries. The European neighbourhood policy proposes to actually and financially (1.2 mrd/year) strengthen the links of the Union with these partner countries through a series of new co-operation structures.

Conclusion

We can now draw some conclusions: Europe is confronted with the preoccupation, but also with the moral responsibility to maintain its own model of integration and diversity within a strongly changing world system. This implies that Europe should defend its values and principles of solidarity, tolerance, democracy in the needy but open dialogue between cultures and peoples within and outside Europe. This requires a change in mentality, much imagination and an active thinking and acting

from the basis, but also political leadership and particularly an education that focuses on learning to responsibility.

The question has to be put (the answer is unsure) if:

- Europe within a further unifying European economic space can guarantee an acceptable common institutional basis in which states, regions and communities can live their diversity (guarantee of internal solidarity);
- Europe can offer an open societal model within the process of further globalisation (guarantee of external solidarity versus the European fortress).

The challenge for further European integration is the search for a new equilibrium between diversity and unity in a globalising world. The European model should take into account the economic, historic, social and political changes which are taken place at the international level, but it must be faithful to its principles of internal and external solidarity. «Repenser l'Europe» implies recognition of a radical increase of the level of complexity within our societies, a further development of a multiple citizenship within multiple identities and the elaboration of multi-level governance. The European constitution is herein a modest step forwards.

As Straus-Kahn writes in his report, there is again need for an enlarging and mobilising vision which can raise a new élan and a regained enthusiasm with the citizen. Furthermore we must dare to recall the enthusiasm and faith in the European project, as it was embodied by the Founding Fathers of Europe.

In short:

- Europe is in need of bridge builders who can concretely complete the rhetoric of the European story and the European ideals of peace, unity in diversity, freedom and solidarity and mobilise the young people for the European model of society. The role of education is herein fundamental.
- It also assumes that new forms and places of dialogue, active citizenship and co-operation can develop outside the existing institutionalised structures of representative representation. The European civil society becomes emancipated and develops opportunities in the globalising society through which persons, peoples and cultures within and outside Europe can meet peacefully and respectfully.