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Nationalism, Postnational Identity, and The Project of a European Public Sphere

Craig Calhoun ¹

Hopes for cosmopolitan democracy, democracy not limited by nation-states, are expressed largely in calls for change in attitudes and identity.² In the spirit of Kant, people should see themselves as citizens of the world, not just of their countries. This requires escape from the dominance of a nationalist social imaginary. Both the change in identity itself and effective action on new scales depend also on the growth of transnational civil society. Social relations must be organized outside the power of states and across their borders.

Civil society is indeed extending beyond nation-states. In order to assess how effectively it provides for extending democracy, however, we need to go beyond demonstrating its mere existence. First, we need to clarify both the concept and the empirical evidence by distinguishing the extent to which transnational civil society is a matter of (a) impersonal systemic relations, (b) exercise of power, and (c) democratic decision-making on the basis of a public sphere. Civil society is a realm of social self-organization outside the control of states, but this is not necessarily based on conscious reflection, debate, or choice. New media like the Internet enable markets, powerful business organizations, and critical discourse among ordinary people each to grow. But these do not necessarily grow at the same speed or wield the same influence over institutional arrangements.

¹ The author is President of the Social Science Research Council and Professor of Sociology and History at New York University. Earlier versions of parts of this text were presented to the EUI conference on “The Future of the European Public Sphere,” Florence, June 17-19, 1999, and to the Department of Sociology, University of Michigan, January, 2000; I am grateful for discussion from both audiences.

² For thoughtful examples, see essays in Daniele Archibugi and David Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) and Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Köhler, eds., *Re-Imagining Political Community* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998) and the more sustained exposition in David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995). Habermas offers a similar call in *The Inclusion of the Other* (ed. C. Cronin and P. De Greiff; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998). See the essays connecting the present to Kant’s cosmopolitan project in James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, eds., *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant’s Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

Second, we need to take the power of national identity and the national social imaginary (that is, the nationalist way of understanding what society is and constituting new political communities) seriously. It is one thing to posit the normative attractiveness of cosmopolitanism or “constitutional patriotism”. It is another to assess whether either is immanent in or supported by the actual organization of civil society and the public sphere or by new political arrangements. And even where such bases for postnational forms of identity may be shown to exist, they need to be weighed in comparison to those that reproduce nationalism.

In the present paper, I want to explore the question of how democratic an increasingly global society is likely to be by taking up each of these issues. I do not question the normative appeal of “constitutional patriotism” and “cosmopolitanism”. I ask how it matters that each posits a “thinner” identity than nationalism, but seeks to mobilize people in even broader commitments to each other. I ask how effectively the institutions of public life are being extended beyond nations to transnational politics. Practical action must involve extending the social, communicative, and political economic conditions for public life transcending nations, not only exhortations for it.

I propose to focus this inquiry through attention to a relatively favorable case, that of Europe.³ In Europe, democratic culture is well developed and citizens are widely able to enter effectively into public discourse. There is relatively little censorship in Europe, and relatively little other use of state power to inhibit the development of the public sphere. At the same time, there is a well-developed and growing transnational polity—the European Union. Like most of transnational society, Europe reflects a variety of forces

³ I make no pretense to presenting a detailed empirical study of the European public sphere, and still less European civil society in general or the politics of integration. Rather, I hope that by using a concrete case we can better understand abstract issues. It is, moreover, the concrete case behind much of the abstract theoretical discussion of postnational identity and citizenship. That the case is regional is significant. First, it reminds us that globalization does not simply suffuse the atmosphere of the planet as a whole, but is built piecemeal. Indeed, globalization in some areas like finance and trade has been a spur to regional integration. Second, in many ways regional public life ought to be easier to achieve and (especially in Europe) to extend to all citizens, not just elites. Third, though, it is true as we shall see that one of the problems with creating a regional public sphere is that media and other institutions have a tendency to seek wider global reach. This doesn’t make the regional example irrelevant, though, since regional organizations of governmental power are still growing more significant.

including centrally economic ones. As we shall see, though, the examining Europe suggests a certain caution about optimistic accounts of global democracy.

Reinventing Europe

The postwar institutional ancestors of the European Union were created as economic organizations with a political purpose. They sought to limit the potential for continental (and world) wars by tying members into new webs of shared institutions and markets. In some cases, these were specifically linked to military agendas, as the coal and steel community sought to limit the autonomy of national industries in strategic lines of production. In a growing proportion of the fields of cooperation, however, the principle was simply to increase the bonds of solidarity that kept Europeans committed to cooperation with each other. And of course, the political purpose was increasingly backed up with directly economic ones, notably to compete more effectively in global markets.

The institutions of the European Union have gradually come more and more to resemble a kind of state. This brings to the fore questions about the basis of their political legitimacy, the extent to which they are open to participation from the broad range of European constituencies, the ways in which they are influenced and the extent to which this reflects inequalities of power. How does the European Union derive legitimacy amid European traditions of republicanism, democracy, and nationalism. It delivers economic goods (and arguable peace); does it deliver liberty and virtue?

Republican traditions raise not only questions about the form of political institutions, but also the ideals of virtuous citizenship that shaped republican understandings of membership in a polity. These ideals required a level of individual liberty of political subjects (in a sense, transforming the very meaning of the word 'subject' from that of obedient underling to the more grammatical sense of autonomous actor) and emphasized that with such liberty came obligations. Republican political institutions depend, however, not only on political commitments, strictly understood, but on social solidarity and collective identity.

Likewise, democracy is more than a formal matter of elections and other mechanisms of selection for office and distribution of power. In the European context, these formal questions have been intimately bound to a shift in understandings of political legitimacy. Instead of judging governments by their conformity to top down

structures of authority—those of God or tradition—modern Europeans came to place ever-greater stress on having governments serve the interests of the ordinary people under them. This claim to have one’s interests served has become basic to citizenship. Even regimes which were not in any sense formally democratic—from Bismark’s Germany to Jaruzelski’s Poland—presented themselves as serving the interests of their “peoples”. If it is to have meaning, though, the idea of democracy must refer to popular guidance of government, not only government according to strong liberal (or other) normative ideals as to what the people’s interests ought to be.

Here democracy was intimately bound to nationalism. The development of national identities and nationalist projects gave a sense of internal coherence, boundaries, and even moral righteousness to the “peoples” whose interests states were obliged increasingly to serve, and who sometimes claimed the right to democratic self-rule. Indeed, the replacement of medieval “descending” claims to political legitimacy with modern “ascending” ones depended crucially on establishing the identity of the people from which such claims ascended, and this was accomplished largely through the production of national identities. This poses a challenge to those who would conceptualize political identities today in “postnational” terms. They need to indicate what form of social solidarity and collective identity can take the place of nations. As Habermas says, “the question arises of whether there exists a functional equivalent for the fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation.”⁴

In this respect, advocates of a “postnational” Europe—or world--do themselves and theory no favors by equating nationalism with ethnonationalism and understanding this primarily through its most distasteful examples. Nations have often had ethnic pedigrees and employed ethnic rhetorics, but they are modern products of shared political, culture, and social participation, not mere inheritances. Not only this, the attempt to equate nationalism with problematic ethnonationalism sometimes ends up placing all “thick” understandings of culture and the cultural constitution of political practices, forms, and identities on the nationalist side of the classification. Only quite thin

⁴ *The Inclusion of the Other*, p. 117.

notions of “political culture” are retained on the attractive postnationalist side.⁵ The problem here is that republicanism and democracy depend on more than narrowly political culture; they depend on richer ways of constituting life together.

These shifts in the political culture of early modern Europe are of more than ‘merely historical’ interest because the issues they raised for European nation-states remained basic for hundreds of years, shaping for example both the later development of welfare states and their crises of legitimacy. Attempts to match states to coherent and self-recognized peoples in order to make an ascending principle of legitimacy operate have kept nationalism a live issue in Europe. In the early 1990s, many were quick to label this just a transitional concern in the East, but it quickly became a central feature of Western European politics as well, with new populisms and antagonism towards migrants. The project of a democratically integrated Europe—as distinct from a top down or primarily functional union—inherently raises questions about the collective identity and social solidarity of the citizens who form its base.

This context is crucial for considering the development of a European public sphere, because it suggests something of what is at stake in discussion of this seemingly abstract concept. It belongs alongside nationalism in a discussion of the sociocultural foundations for democracy and republicanism. On the one hand, it is important to see how both purport to offer answers to questions about the constitution of the “people” basic to a particular polity. On the other hand, it is also important to see that while these answers compete, they are not opposites. To place nationalism on the side of “mere history,” and thus implicitly of power without justification, is to encourage too thin a view of culture. To see the public sphere entirely as a realm of rational-critical discourse is to lose sight of the importance of forming culture in public life, and of the production and reworking of a common social imaginary. Not least of all, both collective identity and collective discourse depend on social organization and capacities for action—whether provided by states or civil society.

Civil Society and the Public Sphere

⁵Habermas tends often in this direction. See, e.g., the essays in *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

Social relations are being organized across national boundaries by both non-governmental organizations and new forms of government. Such civil society is shaped by a multitude of connections through markets and business institutions, media and migrations. This new scale of civil society has nurtured global social movements and global linkages among a variety of more local ones. Human rights activists, advocates for indigenous peoples, and opponents of the World Trade Organization all join forces in this transnational civil society, aided by the Internet, the broadcast media, and relatively easy travel. So too a variety of non-governmental organizations deliver medicine without borders, provide food and other emergency assistance, help in drilling wells and aid in protecting rainforests.

This said, it is important to recall that the dominant forces in transnational civil society remain businesses and organizations tied to business and capital. Businesses are important in ways distinct from markets—as institutions organize much of the lives of employees, and coordinate production as well as exchange on several continents. The business dimension of global civil society is not limited to multinational corporations; it includes NGOs that set accountancy standards and provide for arbitration and conflict resolution, a business press, lawyers, and a range of consultants. The point is not whether this is good or bad, but that this is civil society—on a global scale but not totally unlike what Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson saw on a local and national scale in the late 18th century. Civil society meant then and still means the extension of more or less self-organizing relationships on a scale beyond the intentional control of individual actors and outside of the strict dictates of states. It offers many freedoms—but so do states. Neither is automatically liberal or democratic.

Just as national borders are crossed by civil society organizations, media, and social networks, so too are they transcended by new forms of government and quasi-governmental or inter-governmental organizations. The IMF and World Bank, the WTO, and the UN all figure prominently on a world scale, but the growth of transnational society is a matter of regional integration as well as global organizations. SEATO, Mercosur, NATO and the EU are also all critical indicators that transnational politics is a matter of effective integration not only wars and diplomacy.

In pursuit of democracy, workers and ordinary citizens have built associations in civil society—including social democratic parties--that enabled them to assert themselves in relation to states. Simultaneously, they have appealed to states to regulate relationships in civil society, not least by obliging employers to adopt better labor practices and recognize unions. In other words, neither states nor civil societies by themselves have provided adequately for democracy. It has flourished, where it has, in the interaction between the two. And the strength of democratic forces in civil society has generally lagged behind that of business institutions and capitalist markets. In themselves, these are neither pro- nor anti-democratic, but simply concerned with other ends. Indeed, certain businesses play vital roles in democracy—newspapers, for example, and increasingly some Internet information providers. Cafes and bookstores are operated as businesses but create public spaces in which critical democratic discussions may flourish. Overall, however, capitalist businesses knit social relations together on a combination of power relations and impersonal economic pressure that is hardly democratic.

It is important to assert this at the outset, because since 1989 it has become all too common to treat civil society as a cure to all political ills. Influenced by Gramsci and East European discourses of society vs. the state, the concept of civil society has often been constructed as referring to a realm of unquestionably positive, pro-democratic action.⁶ Habermas somewhat surprisingly accepts a version of this recent usage in recent work on the law, motivated perhaps by a search for mediation between private experience and discourse about public action. “Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organized public spheres.”⁷ As Habermas suggests,

⁶ I will not try to review this literature here. Easily the most systematic discussion is that of Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). See also Adam Seligman, *Civil Society*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and John Keane, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

⁷ Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996; orig. 1992), p. 367.

though, this is a minimally theorized as well as optimistic usage. It highlights one aspect of civil society but does not make clear the most basic issue. Civil society refers to the domains in which social life is self-organizing, that is, in which it is not subject to direction by the state. This self-organization can be a matter of system function or of conscious collective choice. Markets made economic activity into the paradigm case of such self-organization for Adam Smith. But Smith demonstrated the self-organizing capacity of markets not simply out of love for the economy as an end in itself but in order to reveal the capacity for self-organization which he thought could flourish also in other aspects of social life. The question posed by Habermas's earlier theory of the public sphere remains crucial: to what extent could this social self-organization be accomplished by widespread rational-critical discourse among ordinary citizens?⁸

Clearly NGOs, social movements, and a host of other associations figure prominently in civil society. But it is a mistake either to treat them as the whole of it or to overestimate their democratic capacity. Excessive claims for civil society have been especially widespread in explorations of global civil society.⁹ These have tended to equate civil society with activism in favor of issues with which liberal analysts identify. This, however, is hardly the whole of the terrain nor a very meaningful usage of the term. It has also encouraged neglect of the disproportionate power of other forces in global civil society, as though the protesters outside the Seattle meeting of the WTO represented civil society and the business interests pressing governments from inside did not. It has also distracted attention from the question of what kinds of institutional developments based in civil society actually do help to produce democracy. These include movements, but pride of place must go to what is commonly called the public sphere. It is the public sphere of civil society that represents capacity to use reasoned discourse to determine the nature and shape of social institutions.

⁸ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989; orig. 1962).

⁹ For a variety of views, see John Burbidge, ed. *Beyond Prince and Mercant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society* (New York: Pact Publications); and Michael G. Schecter, ed.: *The Revival of Civil Society: Global and Comparative Perspectives* (New York: St. Martins, 1999). For a helpful critical review, see the introduction to John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, eds., *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

The term ‘public sphere’ came into widespread usage largely as a result of the publication of Jurgen Habermas’s early book, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*). It gained a renewed currency in English in the 1990s partly because a long-delayed (1989) translation of the Habermas book coincided with a renewal of concern for ‘civil society’ and democratic participation, both in the West and in attention to the transitions in Eastern Europe. If the specific term is linked to Habermas, the cluster of ideas involved is both broader and older.

A slightly earlier formulation by Hannah Arendt was, indeed, one of the major influences on Habermas.¹⁰ Among other differences in Arendt’s concept of public space was a greater emphasis on creativity, including the creation of the forms of common political life through founding actions—as in revolution and constitution-making. In addition, she emphasized a notion of public space in which people are radically plural, not necessarily similar, but bound do each other by promises that are explicit or implicit in their lives together.¹¹ In both cases, the emphasis was on political publics, though Habermas recognized, for example, the ways in which a literary public sphere foreshadowed, shaped and overlapped with the political one.¹² I shall follow common usage in referring to the political public sphere without always repeating the word ‘political’ unless I indicate otherwise. But it is important to emphasize that the notion of politics here should remain broad. While Habermas focuses overwhelmingly on the state, the sense of politics should I think be broadened to include the production and transformation of politically salient identities and solidarities—including the category and practical manifestation of ‘the people’ that is basic to democracy.¹³

¹⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

¹¹ See Calhoun, “Plurality, Promises, and Public Spaces,” pp. 232-259 in C. Calhoun and J. McGowan, eds.: *Hannah Arendt and The Meaning of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

¹² Habermas reaffirms this emphasis in more recent work: “the ‘literary’ public sphere in the broader sense, which is specialized for the articulation of values and world disclosure, is intertwined with the political public sphere,” *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 365.

¹³ This sheds some light on disputes over whether Habermas’s theory implies a unitary public sphere or multiple publics (Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, pp. 109-142 in C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Michael Warner, “Public and Private” in Catherine Stimpson, ed., *Blackwell Companion to Gender Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell,

Recognizing politics beyond or outside the state is especially important to seeing how more global public spheres might be effective. Arendt instructively went even further. The term “public,” she wrote, “signifies two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena: It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. ... Second, the term “public” signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it.”¹⁴ Public space, thus, is the crucial terrain of the humanly created as distinct from natural world, of appearance and memory, and of talk and recognition. We hold in common a world we create in common in part by the processes through which we imagine it. This is what I mean by the “social imaginary”.¹⁵

I want to avoid recapitulating Habermas’s account of the public sphere, but it seems important to note three things. First, this was in important ways a product of its time (the early 1960s). Habermas was concerned with the question of whether the emancipatory potential of bourgeois political institutions had been exhausted, or whether democracy might still be advanced through reinvigoration of the political public sphere. The *Strukturwandel* foreshadowed some of Habermas’s later interests, including the importance of communicative action to democracy but also more immediately the legitimation crisis of the European welfare states. This was rooted in part in an instrumentalization of politics that reflected a retrenchment of public participation in democratic discourse in favor of bureaucracies and experts serving what they understood

forthcoming). Clearly in several senses, publics may be multiple, but where public discourse addresses and/or is occasioned by a state, there is a pressure for reaching integration at the level of that state. The plural publics need relation to each other in a public sphere if they are to be able to facilitate democracy within that state by informing its actions.

¹⁴ *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 50, 52.

¹⁵ The idea of a social imaginary derives from Cornelius Castoriadis, for whom it addresses the dimensions of society not graspable as a functional system nor as a network of symbols, but crucial to the idea that there can be a social choice about the functional and symbolic order or social life. The imaginary includes “significations that are not there *in order to* represent something else, that are like the final articulations the society in question has imposed on the world, on itself, and on its needs, the organizing patterns that are the conditions for the representability of everything that the society can give to itself.” *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987, orig. 1975), p. 143. Compare Taylor: “The social imaginary is not a set of ‘ideas’; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society.” “Modern Social Imaginaries,” draft ms., p. 1.

to be the interests of the people. Second, Habermas took pains to emphasize that the public sphere was a category of civil society, oriented to the state and public affairs, but not included within the state. Like the market and voluntary organizations, but distinct from both, it was one of the civil society institutions in which individuals defined in part by their private liberties and private lives related to each other. Concern for the public sphere was concern for the extent to the organization of society could be chosen by participants' rational-critical discourse and deliberation, rather than simply determined by market forces, or those with state power. Third, Habermas's attention was focused not just on the ideals of public life, but on the question of why apparently democratic expansions in the scale of public participation had brought a decline in the rational-critical character of public discourse, a vulnerability to demagogic and mass-media manipulation, and sometimes a loss of democracy itself. The distorted publicity of American-style advertising, public relations, and political campaigns was a manifest focus, but an underlying concern was also the way in which public life lost its links to both democracy and rational-critical understanding in the Third Reich.

The questions of how a European public sphere might be organized and what influence it might have are as basic to Europe's future as the rise of democratic institutions within nation-states was to its past. Indeed, Habermas himself has returned to this theoretical framework recently in considering relations among nation, rule of law, and democracy in a changing Europe:

The initial impetus to integration in the direction of a postnational society is not provided by the substrate of a supposed "European people" but by the communicative network of a European-wide political public sphere embedded in a shared political culture. The latter is founded on a civil society composed of interest groups, nongovernmental organizations, and citizen initiatives and movements, and will be occupied by arenas in which the political parties can directly address the decisions of European institutions and go beyond mere tactical alliance to form a European party system.¹⁶

This is clearly a statement of hopes and conditions for a desirable future as much as description of trends. Such a European public sphere is a question more than a reality, as

is an integrated European party system. But the conceptual point is clear. The creation of such a public sphere is the condition of a democratic, republican integration of Europe and the safeguard against a problematically nationalist one.

The production of a flourishing public sphere, thus, along with a normatively sound constitution, allows for a good answer to Habermas's orienting question: "When does a collection of persons constitute an entity—'a people'—entitled to govern itself democratically?"¹⁷ The common answer is much less good: "In the real world, who in each instance acquires the power to define the disputed borders of a state is settled by historical contingencies, usually by the quasi-natural outcome of violent conflicts, wars, and civil wars. Whereas republicanism reinforces our awareness of the contingency of these borders, this contingency can be dispelled by appeal to the idea of a grown nation that imbues the borders with the aura of imitated substantiality and legitimates them through fictitious links with the past. Nationalism bridges the normative gap by appealing to a so-called right of national self-determination."¹⁸

Habermas's earlier concern for the ways in which European nation-states pursued public welfare through reliance on technical expertise and bureaucracy rather than popular participation and rational-critical public discourse seems mirrored in questions about the 'democratic deficit' within the EU institutions. Eruptions of nationalist struggles over the constitution of peoples capable of lending legitimacy to discrete states reveals the continuing importance of the basic framework of legitimacy which has shaped modern Europe's political life. At the same time, it should remind us that nationalism—especially ethnic nationalism—represents not just a rhetoric for defining which people are the legitimate participants in a public discourse, but an alternative approach to determining collective identity. That is, one may stress the ways in which civil society and the public sphere produce solidarities and identities at least partly through voluntary choice, or one may stress the extent to which inherited identities impose obligations or exclusions on people regardless of public discourse or personal choice. NATO's approach to dealing with such nationalist struggles in the former Yugoslavia has

¹⁶ Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 153.

¹⁷ *Inclusion of the Other*, p. 141.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

demonstrated the ways in which a politics of expertise and technical proficiency may substitute for debate in the public sphere (as well as the limits to understanding of many of the alleged experts).

Not least of all, Habermas was concerned with the importance of a social institutional basis for public discourse (indeed, this is one of the attractive features of his earlier account compared to his later theory in which communicative action is approached with less attention to its institutional basis). Face-to-face discourse in cafes and coffee houses anchored the 18th century ideal of bourgeois public life. These (along with theaters, salons, and other institutions) produced urban publics, and the public sphere has remained importantly rooted in cities.¹⁹ Though urbanites were often cosmopolitan, though, these urban models of the public sphere were linked to nation-states. We may wonder about transformations of urban life, about which institutions underpin a Europe-wide public sphere, and about which settings for face-to-face interaction may bring together Europeans of different backgrounds for rational-critical discourse. Print media and literacy were crucial to the rise of the bourgeois public sphere, and we would do well to pay attention to the proliferation of new media.

Beyond print and electronic media, physical public spaces, gathering places, social networks, and occasions for communication have made public communication possible. Cities have been especially important as settings in which people from different contexts enter into discourse with each other. Cities are also, however, one of the dimensions of the European public sphere that is currently being transformed. Americans are wont to romanticize the public character of European cities, dwelling perhaps more on novels written in Vienna's cafes a hundred years ago than on present day Vienna. Nonetheless, many of Europe's cities have been distinctive in their pedestrian character and their scale. Urban centers in which people of different classes, ethnic origins, and occupations rub shoulders and enter into conversation, however, house less and less of Europe's population.²⁰ *Banlieux* sprawl around Paris; Greater London stretches through

¹⁹ See also Richard Sennett's classic account of urban public life in *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1977).

²⁰ This erosion is a trend at least as old as Hausman's attack on the Paris *quartiers*; see David Harvey's discussion in *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

five countries and what were a century and a half ago still dozens of separate towns and villages. There is still neighborhood life in European capitals, and there are still vital urban centers and intellectual districts. But one of the challenges for the future of Europe's public sphere is to find replacements for the kind of public life that flourished in face-to-face urban relations and yet spoke to the concerns of the nation as a whole.²¹

Cities have not shrunk, but they have lost much of their centrality to the organization of European public life and may stand to lose more. I do not mean here to offer a prediction, so much as to point out an issue on which choices still remain to be made. The relationship of cities to their immediate regions, to other cities, and to nation-states are all subject to transformation. In much of Europe, the combination of global competition and neo-liberal ideology has encouraged a devolution of some kinds of authority—even in setting labor policies—to local levels.²² Ironically, given the importance of cities to the historical public sphere, this has happened with relatively little public debate. The urban public spheres have not been attuned to local policy making as much as to that of central states, and perhaps even more basically the left has recently been short of ideas with which to challenge the spread of neo-liberalism.

Not only have the issues shifted, the organization of public communication has shifted dramatically. In the first place, continuing a long trend, it has become more national. What were once the great newspapers of different cities have increasingly become competing national newspapers (or fallen by the way). And of course there is TV. Universities that were once closely tied to the character and politics of different cities and states are increasingly competitors in national labor markets. Local intellectual and professional associations have generally ceased to play a major role.

A key question is whether the further integration of Europe will be an extension of this pattern of national integration of public communication, or will bring its reversal, or still a different direction of change. Many analysts point to the growth of regionalism

University Press, 1985). It has gained pace in the last few years, propelled forward by neoliberal policies and shifting relations among public authorities on different scales.

²¹ See Calhoun, "Community without Propinquity Revisited: Communications Technology and the Transformation of the Urban Public Sphere," *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 68 #3, pp. 373-397.

to suggest a reversal, but I am dubious. While this may be important in certain aspects of politics, and in the organization of collective identity, I suspect it is much less likely to organize collective discourse about large-scale public affairs. And there are significant contrary indicators. Gradually and grudgingly, for example, intellectual life and even academic appointments in each of the European countries are becoming more international. National labor markets are still the strongest for professionals in these areas, but to the extent that they give way it is to international mobility more than subnational fixity.

Solidarity and Choice

The public sphere is important as a basic condition of democracy. But it signals more than simply the capacity to weigh specific issues in the court of public opinion. The public sphere is also a form of social solidarity. It is one of the institutional forms in which the members of a society may be joined together with each other. In this sense, its counterparts are families, communities, bureaucracies, markets, and nations. All of these are arenas of social participation. Exclusion from them is among the most basic definitions of alienation from contemporary societies. Among the various forms of social solidarity, though, the public sphere is distinctive because it is created and reproduced through discourse. It is not primarily a matter of unconscious inheritance, of power relations, or of the usually invisible relationships forged as a byproduct of industrial production and market exchanges. People talk in families, communities, and workplaces, of course, but the public sphere exists uniquely in, through, and for talk. It also consists specifically of talk about other social arrangements, including but not limited to actions the state might take. The stakes of theories and analyses of the public sphere, therefore, concern the extent to which communication can be influential in producing or reshaping social solidarity.

What are some of the other choices? Let me borrow Durkheim's famous distinction of mechanical from organic solidarity to illustrate two main ones.²³ Mechanical solidarity, Durkheim suggested, obtains in societies where people and social

²² See Neil Brenner, "Global cities, glocal states: global city formation and state territorial restructuring in contemporary Europe," *Review of International Political Economy*, 5, 1 (1998): 1-37.

units are basically similar to each other; it is produced above all by a shared *conscience collective*. Organic solidarity is characteristic of differentiated societies with a high division of labor, considerable variation among individuals, and constituent groups formed on different principles. Fair enough, but note that neither type of solidarity describes a process of choice. Both are externally determined. For Durkheim they were variants on the contrast of traditional and modern societies, and he has puzzled a century of commentators by insisting that in principle organic solidarity knit people together more tightly and all the failures of modern social integration were merely exceptions to the rule. What is clear is that organic solidarity can knit together larger populations. It may be more helpful, however, to think of these as suggesting two dimensions of solidarity-formation at work in modern societies. Rename organic solidarity ‘functional interdependence’, and recognize that this includes market relations as well as the other ways in which different social institutions and groups depend on each other. Less familiarly, rename mechanical solidarity ‘nationalism’. Think of it as describing the ideology of equal membership in a national whole, complete with the strong sense of the primacy of the whole over its members, such that they will die for it and kill for it. It is important to see that both forms of solidarity are at work in every country today—material relations of interdependence, more or less managed by states, and collective identities, reflecting various combinations of inheritance and energetic reproduction and shaping by intellectuals and cultural producers.

The key question for the public sphere is to what extent rational-critical discourse among an open range of citizens can be a third force in the production of social solidarity.²⁴ Can it shape the kinds of institutions that organize life in a differentiated

²³ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1975; orig. 1893).

²⁴ There is also a fourth force: networks of concrete, interpersonal relationships. These are extremely important for the production of social solidarity; they organize much of face-to-face social life and stretch in some ways beyond it. But they are sharply limited in capacity to constitute the social order of a complex, large-scale society. The overall order of such a society is necessarily shaped much more by the mediation of markets, formal organizations, and impersonal communications. See Calhoun, "Imagined Communities and Indirect Relationships: Large Scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life," in P. Bourdieu and J.S. Coleman, eds.: *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 95-120 and "The Infrastructure of Modernity: Indirect Relationships, Information Technology, and Social

society? Can it shape the collective understandings of membership and identity? Emphasizing the public sphere is a challenge, thus, to speaking of institutions as though they are produced simply by adaptation to material necessity (as some market ideology would suggest). It is equally a challenge to the ways in which nationalists present membership in France, say, or Serbia as being an undifferentiated and immediate relationship between individuals and a collective whole which is always already there and about which there are few legitimate variations in opinion.

At the heart of the notion of a democratic public sphere lie differences, both among participants and among possible opinions. If a public sphere is not able to encompass people of different personal and group identities, it can hardly be the basis for democracy. If people have the same views, no public sphere is needed—or at least none beyond ritual affirmation of unity. The latter is a problem not only with nationalist pressures to conform, but with insistence on the application of technical expertise, as though it (or the science that might lie behind it) embodied perfect, unchanging, perspectiveless, and disinterested solutions to problems. But the former is also a challenge. If a public sphere needs to include people of different classes, genders, even nations, it also requires participants to be able to adopt a perspective distanced from their immediate circumstances and thus carry on a conversation that is not determined strictly by private interest. The point is not that any escape influences from their personal lives, but that none are strictly determined by those influences, unable to see the merits in good arguments presented by those who represent competing interests or worldviews. If there are no meaningful differences within the public sphere, it may reaffirm solidarity and *conscience collective*, but it cannot address choices about how solidarity and institutional arrangements could be other than they are.

The issue of "democratic inclusiveness" is not just a quantitative matter of the scale of a public sphere or the proportion of the members of a political community who may speak within it. While it is clearly a matter of stratification and boundaries (e.g. openness to the propertyless, the uneducated, women or immigrants), it is also a matter of how the public sphere incorporates and recognizes the diversity of identities which

Integration," in H. Haferkamp and N.J. Smelser, eds.: *Social Change and Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 205-236.

people bring to it from their manifold involvements in civil society. It is a matter of whether in order to participate in such a public sphere, for example, women must act in ways previously characteristic of men and avoid addressing certain topics defined as appropriate to the private realm (the putatively more female sphere). Marx criticized the discourse of bourgeois citizenship for implying that it fit everyone equally when it in fact tacitly presumed an understanding of citizens as property-owners. The same sort of false universalism has presented citizens in gender neutral or gender symmetrical terms without in fact acknowledging highly gendered underlying conceptions. Moreover, the boundaries between public and private are part of the stakes of debate in the public sphere, not something neatly settled in advance.²⁵

All attempts to render a single public discourse authoritative privilege certain topics, certain forms of speech, certain ways of constructing and presenting identities, and certain speakers.²⁶ This is partly a matter of emphasis on the single, unitary whole--the discourse of all the citizens rather than of subsets--and partly a matter of the specific demarcations of public from private. If sexual harassment, for example, is seen as a matter of concern to women, but not men, it becomes a sectional matter rather than a matter for the public in general; if it is seen as a private matter then by definition it is not a public concern. The same goes for a host of other topics of attention that are inhibited from reaching full recognition in a public sphere conceptualized as a single discourse about matters consensually determined to be of public significance.

The liberal model of the public sphere pursues discursive equality by disqualifying discourse about the differences among actors. These differences are treated

²⁵ See, among many in this large literature, Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) and *Justice Interruptus* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Michael Warner, "Public and Private," in Catherine Stimpson, ed.: *Blackwell Companion to Gender Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, forthcoming). See also the early response to Habermas and very different development of the idea of public sphere in Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *The Public Sphere and Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; orig., 1964).

²⁶ In 1996, *Figaro* ran an article asserting that "ultrafeminist" demands for abortion rights (and ultratraditionalist opposition) were simply failures to speak "the language of reason." In the same issue, Alain Peyrefitte wrote that this language was French--a language made for the expression of universal aspirations. Bernard Bonilauri, "Le langage de la raison," p. 2 and Alain Peyrefitte, "Le contraire d'un ghetto," p. 1 in *Le Figaro*, 20 mars 1996.

as matters of private, but not public, interest. On Habermas's account, the best version of the public sphere was based on "a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether."²⁷ It worked by a "mutual willingness to accept the given roles and simultaneously to suspend their reality."²⁸ This "bracketing" of difference as merely private and irrelevant to the public sphere was undertaken, Habermas argues, in order to defend the genuinely rational-critical notion that arguments must be decided on their merits rather than the identities of the arguers. This was, by the way, as important as fear of censors for the prominence of anonymous or pseudonymous authorship in the 18th century public sphere.²⁹ Yet it has the effect of excluding some of the most important concerns of many members of any polity--both those whose existing identities are suppressed or devalued and those whose exploration of possible identities is truncated. If the public sphere exists in part to relate individual life histories to public policies (as Habermas suggests), then bracketing issues of identity is seriously impoverishing.³⁰ In addition, this bracketing of differences also undermines the self-reflexive capacity of public discourse. If it is impossible to communicate seriously about basic differences among members of a public sphere, then it will be impossible also to address the difficulties of communication across such lines of basic difference.

This is important not just narrowly for fairness in particular political decisions. It is important more broadly, as Charles Taylor has argued forcefully, because of "the need, in self-governing societies, of a high degree of cohesion".³¹ Democratic states, in other words, require a kind and level of "peopleness" that is not required in other forms of government. They offer a level of inclusion that is unprecedented—the government of **all** the people—but they place a new pressure on the constitution of this people in socio-cultural and political practice. This makes it clear, I think, that although all the aspects of

²⁷*Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989; orig. 1962), p. 36.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁹ See Michael Warner: *Letters of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard university Press, 1992).

³⁰ *Between Facts and Norms*, ch. 8.

³¹ "Modern social imaginaries," draft p. 1.

constructing peoplehood cannot be brought into explicit political contention, nonetheless the process of constructing the relevant people cannot be treated as prepolitical, simply the taken-as-given basis for politics. This is, however, what much nationalist discourse does, and it is also what much political philosophy does—even in classic forms like Rawls’ theory of justice. It says, in effect, “given a people, how should it be governed or socially organized?” It is important to see the constitution of “the people” as much more theoretically, and practically, problematic. One of the consequences of doing so, however, is that this entails rejection of any purely external or objective approach to resolving questions of political identity.

In particular, external approaches to identifying “the people” fail to provide an understanding of why and when the definition of the whole becomes a political problem, and which issues become the key signifiers in debate. Why, for example, are there contexts where race matters less than language and others in which that ordering is hard to imagine? This is closely related to the fact that belonging to (or being excluded from) “the people” is not simply a matter of large-scale political participation in modern society. It is precisely the kind of question of personal identity that produces passions that escape the conventional categories of the political. This is so, we can see following Taylor, because of the extent to which ideas and feelings about “the people” are woven into the moral frameworks of “strong evaluation” in relation to which we establish our senses of self.³² There is an important Hegelian moment, thus, with a dialectic of the whole and its parts. Without grasping this dialectic, we can understand neither of its polar dimensions—nation and individual. We are also especially apt to be misled into seeing them as opposites rather than complicit with each other. But in fact, the ideas of nation and individual grew up together in Western history and continue to inform each other. Far from being an objective distinction of collective from singular, the opposition of nation and individual reflects a tension-laden relationship. Nations are themselves treated--by ideologues, of course, but also by international diplomats and lawyers, and comparative sociologists--as being individuals. Moreover, the relationship between human persons and nations is commonly constructed as immediate, so that intermediate associations and subsidiary identities are displaced by it. In this way, nations commonly

appear in rhetorical practice as categories of similar individuals as well as organic wholes. 33

In recent writings, Habermas has suggested a greater role for “identity” in public discourse, but only in the thin, lowest common denominator form of “constitutional patriotism.”³⁴ By this he means above all attachment to certain procedural norms, a love of the conditions one’s country provides for communicative action tolerant of differences, rather than of other, substantive, manifestations of collective identity. Habermas approaches constitutional patriotism first of all as an alternative to ethnic nationalism (which he more or less equates with nationalism) within existing states. “The nation-state owes its historical success to the fact that it substituted relations of solidarity between the citizens for the disintegrating corporative ties of early modern society. But this republican achievement is endangered when, conversely, the integrative force of the nation of citizens is traced back to the prepolitical fact of a quasi-natural people, that is, to something independent of and prior to the political opinion-and will-formation of the citizens themselves.”³⁵

Taking ethnic nationalism as his model, Habermas equates the attempt to ground European unity in cultural similarity or ‘peoplehood’ with ethnic exclusion. In doing so, he approaches the public sphere as a process abstracted from identity formation and culture. Indeed, he works with an opposition of voluntary public life and shared cultural identity. “Whereas the voluntary nation of citizens is the source of democratic legitimation, it is the inherited or ascribed nation founded on ethnic membership that secures social integration.”³⁶ The problem with which Habermas is grappling is real, for there is indeed a widespread tendency to treat common culture as always inherited, and to separate normative analysis of legitimacy from the givenness or facticity or actually existing collectivities. But his solution to the problem is inadequate. In the first place, however common in political argument it may be to treat cultural similarity as the basis

³² Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

³³ I have explored these issues in *Nationalism* (Minnesota, 1997).

³⁴ See “Citizenship and National Identity,” Appendix II in *Between Facts and Norms*, and various chapters in *The Inclusion of the Other*.

³⁵ *The Inclusion of the Other*, p. 115.

³⁶ *The Inclusion of the Other*, p. 115.

of solidarity, it is not a sociologically adequate account. Common membership of such a category (mechanical solidarity) may be one source of solidarity, but hardly the only one. Functional integration (organic solidarity), concrete social networks, and mutual engagement in the public sphere are also sources or dimensions of solidarity as I suggested above. Moreover, there is no reason to accept the rhetoric of ethnic nationalists who treat tradition as “the hard cake of culture,” simply to be affirmed from its prepolitical ancientness. Culture is subject to continual reformation or it dies, and participation in democratic public life is part of not separate from the processes through which culture is produced and reproduced in modern societies, and part of the process by which individual and collective identities are made and remade. The problem with which Habermas rightly wrestles remains insoluble so long as culture is treated as inheritance and sharply opposed to reason conceived as voluntary activity.

There is no intrinsic reason why “constitutional patriotism” could not work on the scale of Europe, but there are questions about whether it can stand alone as an adequate source of belonging and mutual commitment adequate. It is therefore important to address legitimacy and solidarity together, not separately. This need not involve a reduction of the normative content of arguments about legitimacy to mere recognition of the facticity of existing solidarities.³⁷ On the contrary, it could involve the development of stronger normative analysis of the legitimacy of different forms and concrete organizations of solidarity. Attending to the dynamic processes by which culture is produced and reproduced also makes it easier to conceptualize the introduction into public space of other kinds of identities besides those that unify the polity as a whole. This does not mean that multiculturalism is not challenging, but it suggests that it does not introduce a radically new element into previously unproblematic uniformity and

³⁷ Taguieff quotes Lévi-Strauss’s comment on ethnocentrism (from *The View from Afar*, xv): “Since these inclinations and attitudes are in some degree consubstantial with our species, we have no right to deny that they play a part in our history: always inevitable, often fruitful, and even dangerous when exacerbated.” Responds Taguieff, “the differentialist conservatism of the ethnologists tends to interpret factual universality as a necessity: universal ‘prejudice’ such as ethnocentric prejudice, is worthy of respect ... If every cultural entity tends to persevere in its being, and must persevere in its differential being, and if ethnocentric/xenophobic prejudice is the minimum safety belt of each cultural identity, then one must rehabilitate the prejudice against the hypercritical attitude of the moderns—for this attitude aims to destroy every society’s systems of

fixity of collective identity. The key is to reject the notion—which nationalist ideology indeed commonly asserts—that the cultural conditions of public life—including both individual and collective identity—are established prior to properly public discourse itself.

The Public Sphere and European Identity

When protagonists of the so-called “new social movements” brought identity issues to the fore in the 1960s and after, they were protesting among other things the extent to which national unity and the norms of citizenship presupposed or demanded a uniformity of personal identity. They were objecting to the notion that there was one right way to be a French man, for example, or to be an Italian woman. They were demanding that the rights and respect due citizens not be conditional on conforming to any set cultural ideal, but instead be open to those who found in themselves or wished to forge different kinds of identities. These were movements of people who felt literally “alienated,” made to feel like foreigners in their own countries.³⁸ In this aspect, the new social movements anticipated the cosmopolitan ideal articulated a generation later as “postnational citizenship”.³⁹ It is worth remarking how very international these movements were—for example, in regard to gender, peace, environment, and animal rights.

The discourse of identity and difference advocated by many new social movements and kindred theorists also shaped the ways in which race and ethnicity were conceptualized. This was influential and problematic as non-European-immigration and European integration simultaneously challenged nationalist identities. In Europe as in America a new discourse arose about appreciating the other, affirming the virtues of group identity, and decrying the symbolic violence of assimilation. Pierre-Andre Taguieff has shown how this “differentialist” argument transformed antiracism. Antiracism started out with universalist criticism of the category of race itself, and more generally of those

self-representation, that is, to suppress its primary conditions of self-conservation.” *The Force of Prejudice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming, ms. p. 96).

³⁸ See, among many, Alberto Melucci: *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989) and *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁹ See, for example, Yasmine Soysal, *Postnational Limits of Citizenship : Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

who made racial difference stigmatizing. Recognizing the bias and possibilities for oppression inherent in assimilationism, however, one strand of antiracism made racial difference a virtue.⁴⁰ Whatever the initial merits of the move, it has proved disempowering in the face of Europe's new populist right wing, which often used similar language to argue for the virtue of "every people in its own homeland".⁴¹

As labor migrants turned into long-term immigrants and brought a racialized multiculturalism to Europe, they sparked a revitalization of nationalist identities, passions, and anxieties. The internal unity and cultural self-similarity of the nation were proclaimed anew. From the populist right, though, this was a proclamation against liberal assimilationism, ironically echoing the criticisms from the left. Despite the cultural violence wrought in the name of assimilation, it is important to recall that European nationalism has been not only the enemy of difference but the basis for overcoming internal conflict and discrimination. The European nation-states grew in tension with regional, religious, linguistic and other differentiations; they wrought repression from the Reformation on; but they were alternatives not only to happy coexistence but to violent conflicts. It is worth asking whether there can be any collective regimes of identity production as integrated and integrative as those of nation-states were in their heydays.

Linked to both the growth of markets and especially various state-driven projects of standardization, nationalism rendered the nation a repository of moral value and emotional identity as well as a sense of meaningful location in the world. Wars reinforced this. But European integration challenged it, both in itself and as the symbolic face of global capitalism. Hostility to immigrants was fueled by the resulting insecurities.

A reassertion of nationalist (and indeed, ethnonationalist) identities responded, thus, to threats from both internal diversity and external loss of power (to market as well as EU forces). Indeed, resurgent populist nationalism has been for a decade one of the most distinctive—if ironic--features of the European public sphere. In Habermas's words, "in the diverse voices of this public, one hears the echo of private experiences that are

⁴⁰ Pierre-Andre Taguieff, *La force du préjugé* (Paris: Decouverte, 1987). A central part of Taguieff's argument concerns the extent to which antiracism is itself an ideology, not merely the counterpoint to racist ideology.

⁴¹ The shared heritage of populist nationalism is one reason why this new right has been able to appeal to so many voters from the traditional left.

caused throughout society by the externalities (and internal disturbances) of various functional systems—and even by the very state apparatus on whose regulatory activities the complex and poorly coordinated subsystems depend. Systemic deficiencies are experienced in the context of individual life histories.”⁴² Of course, this does not mean that causes are effectively analyzed; indeed, populism trades on problematic oversimplifications and distortions in translating the personal into the political.⁴³ As Habermas notes, “the ‘quality’ of public opinion, insofar as it is measured by the procedural properties of its process of generation, is an empirical variable.”⁴⁴

Resurgent nationalist identities in Europe thus reflect not simply historical heritage or sheer political opportunism, but efforts to grasp both globalization and local lifeworld changes and mobilize in response. As problematic as they may be, it is important to ask what other options are available. Is ‘constitutional patriotism’ a plausible alternative? If so, on what basis of actual institutional performance, democratic participation, and public discourse would it depend? It makes little sense, I think, to imagine that it can simply be promoted because it is normatively ‘better’. Rather, it is crucial to ask from what actual social conditions might it grow immanently. The very thinness of the existing public communication at the scale of Europe contributes to the resort to national identities and nationalist ideologies to organize popular mobilization.⁴⁵

Globalization and the Media

Nations were never as bounded as they seemed, and a unified Europe seems destined to be much less so. This means that any understanding of its solidarity must address the different ways in which Europeans are tied to others outside Europe. These ties will obviously differentiate among Europeans—by nation, class, industry, and

⁴² *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 365. Habermas’s conceptualization here brings him closer to the account of Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge in *The Public Sphere and Experience* than their respective positions in the 1960s would have suggested.

⁴³ Calhoun, “Populist Politics, Communications Media, and Large Scale Social Integration,” *Sociological Theory*, vol. 6 (1988) #2, pp. 219-241.

⁴⁴ *Between Facts and Norms*, p. 362.

⁴⁵ This does not mean that nations need to be the crucial units into which a common Europe (or a common world) is differentiated. Subnational variation and cross-cutting lines of integration and differentiation are also important. Indeed, the EU’s facilitation of regional autonomy has been a

involvement in social movements or concerns like human rights or the environment. There has been a great deal of attention to how Europeans may remain divided on nation-state lines, as indeed they may. But analysts exaggerate the extent to which the issue is simply inheritance of either cultural identities or specific domestic institutional regimes. Divisions will be produced and reproduced by differential incorporation into global markets, production systems, and indeed publics. Some Europeans will minimize their investment in the internal organization of Europe and maximize their commitment to firms or other organizations operating across its borders. This may be as important a form of dual identity as that of migrants. Other Europeans will mobilize global social movement ties (or international corporate power) to challenge institutional arrangements within Europe.

Take for example the media. A key basis for democracy in European states was the growth of national communications media (though in themselves these did not guarantee democracy, of course, even where they did contribute to socio-cultural integration. Newspapers were one of the most important vehicles for building national culture and identity. During the early years of television and radio, government investment in most European countries helped to make the new media function in a national manner. Willingness to subsidize national culture and national public spheres in this way has declined substantially in recent years, though not yet disappeared. As state media declined and private media importance grew, a veritable industry grew to assess whether the new media were becoming effective agents of European integration.⁴⁶ One finding of this research is that while international media consumption has grown, especially in certain kinds of entertainment programming, people still prefer to hear the news in their national languages and with attention to national content. When planes crash in Asia, the European media report the number of French—or British or Swedish—

among its most important contributions, and it has produced invigoration of public life as well as commercial activity in many regions.

⁴⁶ See, for some English-language examples, Robin Mansell and Roger Silverstone, eds., *Communication by Design: The Politics of Information and Communications Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Philip Schlesinger, *Politics, Media, Identity* (London: Routledge, 1992) and *European Communication Council Report, 1997*; Shalini Venturrelli, *Liberalizing the European Media : Politics, Regulation, and the Public Sphere* (Oxford:

passengers, not the number of Europeans. To what extent tastes in entertainment content are language specific vs. nation-state specific is debated. But none of this captures the most crucial feature.

As European communications media become less national, they do not clearly become “European”. They become in different degrees and ways part of a global information and entertainment production and marketing system in which a handful of firms dominate and in which the United States is the largest market. English publishers—even academic ones like Polity—choose what books to publish in Britain partly on the basis of which they can sell in America. Other publishing houses—like Bertelsman—consolidate like car companies, even across once insuperable national and linguistic boundaries. Whatever its shifting evaluation by critics, Hollywood still sells films. So, of course, does Bombay—Indian cinema is big business in parts of Europe and as big a competitor as the US globally. Pop music tastes differ among European countries and between Europe and elsewhere, but the trend in taste cultures is toward multiple differentiations which do not follow either national or continental lines. Is hip-hop European, or Caribbean, or American?⁴⁷

It is not yet clear whether this will be the pattern for the political public sphere. Some of Europe’s great newspapers and magazines remain largely national. This is especially the case for Germany, partly because German doesn’t sell well abroad. French periodicals that are at least as nationalist in content have a slightly larger—but generally not growing—international market. Spanish publications sell in Latin America—and vice versa. In Portugal’s case the trade is even more imbalanced, with Brazil increasingly the intellectual center rather than periphery (though Brazil in turn shows deference to France and America). Major English magazines and newspapers—notably *The Economist*, somewhat less successfully *The Guardian*, and more recently, the *Financial Times*, have all become international publications. A current *Economist* slogan is “Business knows no boundaries. Neither do we.” In short, there is no single trend (except for the growing

Clarendon, 1998); Peter J. Humpries, *Mass Media and Media Policy in Western Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

⁴⁷ As Paul Gilroy suggests, the answer must be “all of the above”, but it is an answer obscured by the organization of even racialized resistance on nationalist lines; see *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

status of English as the ironic *lingua franca* of the age). Rather, we see several different patterns of European integration into global public spheres. If this is true for print publications, consider how much more so it is for TV and is likely to be for the Internet.

This raises two important questions. First, in the midst of global communications empires and flows, will the growing state power of the EU ever be matched by a specifically European public sphere? Second, will there come to be anything resembling a European public identity?⁴⁸

Constitutional patriotism depends to some extent on achievement of both collective identity and a vital public sphere. It is entirely possible, however, that European collective identity might be achieved without an effective and democratic European public sphere. Marketing, product design, food, and leisure activities all convey images of a European identity. Although news media are not effectively organized on a European scale, entertainment is a bit more so. And both news and entertainment media carry more and content about an integrated Europe—and implicitly a European culture. There might, in other words, be a sort of European-wide nationalism without the institutional basis to make it democratic.

This might be matched, moreover, by European state-making. The amalgamation of European countries into a unified Europe might follow the path of the amalgamation of once-separate principalities, free cities and other polities and cultural regions into the various national states. There might be greater or lesser respect for cultural difference, and greater or lesser regional devolution of power in such a European state, just as there is in various current member states. But the logic would be that of the nation-state. It might or might not be accompanied by creation of a public sphere that provided real opportunity for rational-critical evaluation of the ways in which it happened and choice among them.

The recent NATO intervention into the conflict over Kosovo was perhaps a test case for this. On the one hand, Europeans who see the continent on the model of Hellas or Christendom were quick to claim the NATO action as protection of civilization against

⁴⁸ See also my own “Identity and Plurality in the Conceptualization of Europe” and other discussions of this question in Lars-Eric Cederman, ed.: *Constructing Europe’s Identity: Issues and Trade-offs* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner, 2000).

barbarism.⁴⁹ Civilizations have sometimes formed the basis for empires, but otherwise have not been bases for political units at all. Does the future lie with a division of the world into civilizational blocs? Would such blocks be constructed as empires, or super-nation-states, or federations? The question takes on new currency in the wake of the Kosovo war.

In this as in other questions, European intellectuals are potentially still leading voices in the public sphere, even though the rise of new media and other forces may undermine their leadership. They are hindered in this when they are captured by universities and internal academic discourse, or by consultancies. They are hampered also by the surprising extent to which intellectual life remains organized in national traditions.⁵⁰ This is changing, but European wide media for intellectual life are still rudimentary, and many intellectuals prefer to be spokespeople for and in their nations. The EUI and Erasmus scheme notwithstanding, intellectual production has not been as much a leading sector for Europeanization as one might have expected. Faced, for example, with NATO bombing of Serbia, a range of European intellectuals did attempt to offer critical analyses. Though several of the most prominent figures in Europe were involved, they produced, however, not coherent and publically recognizable voice. Their petitions were most visibly organized on national lines. One of the reasons for this is the extent to which the self-identity of many of these intellectuals remains embedded within a national social imaginary even when the manifest content of their thought opposes nationalism.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The leading academic advocate of this approach has actually been an American, Samuel P. Huntington. See "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993), pp. 22-49; see also the various criticisms in the following issue, especially that by Fouad Adjami, and Huntington's response, "If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993), pp. 186-94. Huntington's argument appears in book-length as, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996);

⁵⁰ See Bourdieu's call for a new international of intellectuals in *Acts of Resistance* (New York: New Press, 1999).

⁵¹ This is so not only by an unmotivated deficiency of thought (though I would not underestimate the force of habit and sheer failure of imagination in perpetuating nationalism). It also reflects the embedding of many intellectuals in nationally organized fields that give them their prestige. See Bruce Robbins, *Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (London: Verso, 1993), esp. chapter 6. Even intellectuals critical of the state reproduce a statist discourse, and often derive much of their symbolic legitimacy from their own positions in state-organized institutions.

Among the biggest obstacles to the development of a European public sphere is the fact that European-wide governing institutions are organized in ways that make them minimally responsive to public opinion. The European Parliament is weak, though growing stronger. The European Commission is not simply a bureaucracy, but an embodiment of the culture of expertise rather than public participation. Indeed, one of the most important quasi-state institutions in Europe is not even European, as well as not directly subject to pressures of public discourse: NATO. No wonder that Europe's public spheres remain heavily oriented to nation-state governments. These are the ones that invite democratic participation and draw guidance most directly from public discourse.

Nonetheless, Europe is integrating. And powerful decisions are being made by its quasi-state institutions. It is important to keep the project of a public sphere vital alongside the determinations of functional integration and nationalism (or its analogs). It offers the potential to shape institutions and solidarity by reasoned discourse and informed choice.

At the same time, it is equally important to remember the extent to which life together is made possible not simply by systemic integration, the construction of formal organizations, and rational-critical discourse. It is made possible, as Arendt argued, by promises that bind people to each other. This is a crucial dimension of constitution-making. It is made possible also by acts of imagination, communicated and incorporated into common culture. Think for a moment of the ways in which such acts of promising and imagination are implicated in the creation of the very institutions of our shared world. Not just the nation, but the business corporation exists as the product of such imagining (and is none the less real and powerful for that). How is the corporate whole called into being, granted legitimacy in law and the capacity to act in contracts, suits, or property-holding? It is a product of the social imaginary. But like the way in which ideas of individual self and nation are embedded in much modern culture, this acceptance of corporations is deeply rooted. It is reproduced in a host of quotidian practices as well as more elaborate legal procedures. This is indeed part of what turns a mere formal organization into an institution. This is something that can be grasped only from within the very culture that makes it possible, not externally to it. It can never, therefore, be rendered altogether objective.

The most helpful conception of the public sphere, therefore, is one that includes within it *both* a dimension of rational-critical discourse and a dimension of social imagination and promising. Among the many virtues of the former is the capacity to challenge and potentially improve existing culture, products of social imagination, and relationships. But among its limits is the fact that in itself it cannot create them.

Conclusion

The development of a European public sphere lags behind functional integration and powerful organizations. It is certainly true that a range of social movements and non-governmental organizations operate on a European scale, and that these are gradually increasing the density of personal networks across the continent. The interpersonal relations Europeans forge in the course of their business and professional lives are also drawing them closer together (though very unequally across class and occupation). But for the most part, communication among ordinary citizens is not organized on a European scale. When media transcend nations, ironically, they often transcend the continent as well. Political participation—even with regard to the EU—remains organized nationally, not internationally. At the same time, Europe *is* being imagined, and society imagined on a European scale. It is imagined as a shared relationship to certain common institutions, however, much more than a shared participation in transnational politics.

How much more is this true on a global scale? Institutions, organizations, and networks of action organized across the boundaries of nation-states are growing in capacity and influence. NGOs and activist organizations proliferate at a rapid rate. Even more rapidly, not only trade but the organization of production, finance, and capital accumulation itself are becoming globally organized. There is clearly global integration of civil society--as well as of an international society in which states remain key actors. This global civil society, however, is steered only minimally by the rational-critical discourse of ordinary people mobilized in a global public sphere. To begin with, the self-organization of global civil society is much more a matter of capitalism than politics or public discourse. Beyond this, collective participation in the global public sphere is skewed dramatically toward elites.

A transnational class participates in transnational politics, and has created a public sphere in which its concerns are represented. These include concerns for those who suffer

injustice within nations and those on the losing end of transnational exchanges. But these instances of “cosmopolitan politics” seldom mobilize wide ranges of ordinary citizens—especially outside of the world’s richest countries. This does not make them any less commendable, but it suggests caution about leaping from such examples—doctors without borders, NetAid—to a very optimistic assessment of the extent to which the public sphere of global civil society is able to determine the shape of global institutions.

The “global” media are global in reach but much less so in participation. They anchor only a very thin amount of public discourse or a global scale. To the extent this public discourse exists, it obviously dramatically over-represents first world voices and indeed English-language voices. There is a remarkable hierarchical filtering that makes the media representation of global society include much more information and imagery from some parts of the world and much less from others—far out of proportion to human numbers.

Global media are also organized in ways that ironically reflect the continued power of the national social imaginary. Talking heads and plane crashes alike are located in nations; sporting victories and famines are both reported as occurring to national subjects. And this is true not simply of CNN or the BBC; it is true of the internal media and discourses of the UN, the Ford Foundation, Care, and the Catholic Church.

This is not to say that there are no alternative imaginaries operative in the constitution of global culture and social relations. From Islamism to deep ecology, there are ways of imagining the possible institutions of a new and different social order. A common humanity is imagined most prominently in discourses of human rights. And in fact the most powerful postnational or cosmopolitan social imaginary is that of the market.⁵² Affirmation of global society comes less from expression of some positive value than from the notion that the market demands it. “The market” in such discourse is always represented in external and deterministic terms, as a force of necessity rather than an object of choice. And this raises the basic issue.

⁵² Robbins notes that the first cited usage under “cosmopolitan” in the Oxford English Dictionary comes from John Stuart Mill’s *Political Economy* in 1848: “Capital is becoming more and more cosmopolitan”. *Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture*, p. 182.

The speed with which global civil society is gaining capacity to self-organize autonomously from states may be debated. But there is little doubt that the global public sphere lags dramatically behind the less democratic, less choice-oriented dimensions of global society. Among the many questions to ask about this global public sphere is what kinds of collective identity will orient participation within it. Are there attractive forms for collective identity that offer nationalism's potential to integrate large populations and produce mutual commitment without its tendency to external exclusion and internal rejection of difference? Fear of bad nationalism leads many to hope that relatively thin identities will predominate. Cosmopolitans and constitutional patriots may presumably orient themselves to many spheres of action from the very local to the global. But are these forms of identity that can create the new social imaginary that will commit people to each other on a global scale? Are they by their nature restricted to elites and meaningful only in relationship to the nationalism of others? Or are they attractive possibilities that follow from rather than lay the basis for more democratic public institutions?