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## **Transformation of the Memory and Symbolism of Local Space in the Process of European Integration**

*Abstract:* European integration impacts the perception and symbolism of space, and the resultant transformation seems to be linked to changes in memory. Both of these factors belong to the deep, although not always conscious effects of integration. Memory is rarely stable. The biographical events in an individual's life, along with changes in the meaning of the broad European space, affect the symbolism of a local space as developed in both individual and collective memory. This also transforms the memory and symbolism of even the most intimate experience of a local space—and again, this takes place both in the memory of individuals and in the collective memory of local communities. Its form greatly depends on the variety of agents involved in public discourse, such as the media and the arguments made by political and religious leaders. One of the factors involved is the change in social and cultural perspective created by the expanded area of easily accessible space, which in today's EU includes countries once separated by physically experienced borders.

In the article I will attempt to identify and describe the mechanisms involved in transforming the symbolism of local space. One of the issues addressed will be the confrontation between advancing cosmopolitanism and the rise of attachment to localities.

*Keywords:* European integration, memory, territorial identity, local space, symbolism of space.

### **European Integration, Local Space, and Memory**

One of the tacit effects of European integration is the transformation of the memory and symbolism of local space. In the background of these effects is a kind of 'naturalization' of the European Union. Despite objections to EU governance practices, complaints regarding the democracy deficit in the EU, and other demonstrations of Euroscepticism, the European Union is simply taken for granted by most Europeans as a constitutive component of current political reality in Europe. In consequence—and in a number of ways—it impinges on the everyday life and mind of each European citizen (McNamara 2015). In fact, experiencing the European Union as a shared political environment is so 'natural' that it usually escapes our awareness. This is probably the experience of even those politicians who call for the end of their countries' EU membership. Of course, the perception of the EU in the everyday life of Europeans differs depending on a variety of features. It is certainly different in the 'old' member states than in the new ones. It is experienced differently by people of differing social strata and depends on the general attitude toward the EU. Supporters of integration tend to notice the positive effects of EU membership, while Eurosceptics stress certain limitations both for individuals and for institutions, including national governments.

Nevertheless, all think of the EU as of an existing political reality which has created certain basic conditions of our daily life.

One of the results of such naturalization of the EU is the new perception of territorial affinities and changing meanings of regional divisions. These changes also modify people's attitudes to the past and shape the content of memory anew. One good example, widely cited, is that of the border regions of France and Germany—but similar processes can also be observed (in a quite different context) in the former German territories which after the Second World War became part of Poland. Małgorzata Karczewska studied the attitudes of the local population toward a variety of memorials from prewar times in the Mazurian region (Karczewska 2013). Although European integration was outside the factors she was taking into consideration, behavioral patterns which are distinguished in her work could well serve as a starting point for studying the effects of European integration on people's memory and their perception of the local space. Being together with Germans in the European community is certainly a factor which initiated the interest in former German residents of the area, one which is now perceived as the space of a local Polish population. Such interest results, for example, in caring for the monuments left by the previous residents, although such care may have a variety of forms. It may lead to restoring monuments to their original shape, or to their adaptation to the needs of current residents. Still, such attitudes can be contrasted with some of the early-postwar activities, which were aimed at the destruction of objects which recalled the prewar owners of the surrounding space.

The impact of European integration on localities and social processes taking place in small communities is not limited to the border territories of the EU's member states or areas populated by the inflow of new inhabitants due to the postwar territorial changes. There are good reasons to believe that with accession to the EU every local space in the member states might change in its significance and meaning both for the local people and for those outside. For example, Poland's eastern regions became the borders of the EU and this new legal status has had profound impact on the everyday life of people in those areas and on the perception of this part of the country. Also, the past of numerous localities were likely to appear in different perspective, which fact affected the memory of individuals and communities. For example, I know places where the remains of old protestant graveyards, ones physically present for years but absent in people's consciousness, suddenly became noticed by local people and became an important part of the local space, adding new element to its identity. This phenomenon reflects a tendency to expand the range of our memory and such expansion has also an impact on local identity, although it may escape our awareness. Even the campaign before the referendum over accession to the EU had a deep imprint in the minds of citizens and encouraged the public to see also their immediate area in a new perspective. After all, when a country enters the European Union its every region becomes an EU region. The phrase, widely popular in Poland, which stated that accession to the EU was a "return to Europe" had not only national, but also regional and local meanings. Sometimes the "return to Europe" meant returning to various political affinities of the past which were now freed from once negative feelings and resentments. For example, in Kraków indication of such changes was expression of a kind of nostalgia for the Austro-Hungarian past, something which was demonstrated in a public discourse by the return of historical names from those times—like emperor Franz Josef—which became used among today's

local symbols. Such names were given, for example, to coffee houses and restaurants, as recalling forgotten facts and persons from the Habsburg past was intended to remind that this particular locality had unique links with the wider European area. Of course, there are also more subtle consequences of European integration for the local space, but in order to grasp them in research we need some kind of a theoretical framework. In that aim I would like to use a theoretical approach developed in my book *Symbols and Cultural Adaptation* (Nižnik 1985).

The main concept of this approach is 'symbolic universe' which, together with an assumption that cohesion of this universe is a constant need of individuals and social groups, offers convincing explanatory scheme for the analysis of social world's dynamics in times of radical changes like globalization or European integration. The current study has been focused on two elements of symbolic universe: local space and collective memory. Memory, which itself appears changeable, serves as an instrument of transformation of meaning and symbolism of a local space. Let me then briefly introduce into the present analysis both the concept of a symbolic universe and the role of its cohesion.

### The Concept of the Symbolic Universe

The idea of the symbolic universe appeared in very diverse theoretical endeavors. Perhaps the best examples are Ernst Cassirer's *An Essay on Man. An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* on the one hand, and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality*, on the other. For Cassirer, the symbolic universe was an epistemological concept derived from his philosophy of symbolic forms. According to Cassirer's perception of the uniqueness of human beings, this uniqueness was founded on the use of symbols that created a unique dimension for the human world: "No longer in a merely physical universe, man lives in a symbolic universe. Language, myth, art and religion are parts of this universe.... He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by interposition of this artificial medium" (Cassirer 1963: 25).

While for Cassirer the symbolic universe appeared as the basic category in his neo-Kantian epistemology, for Berger and Luckmann it was needed to legitimate the process of institutionalization. The authors of "The social construction of reality" did not even mention the name of Cassirer. The idea of a symbolic universe appears here in a sociological analysis that is aimed at explaining the puzzle of intersubjectivity when dealing with the meanings in social relations. Symbolic universes serve as a final level of legitimation of the architecture of the social world. "The symbolic universe is conceived of as a matrix of all socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings; the entire historic society and the entire biography of the individual are seen as events taking place within this universe" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 96). In this approach to social reality it is important to notice that symbolic universe provides human beings with the only meaningful social environment possible. The symbolic universe makes the world we live in an understandable reality which appears as our own, is sufficiently predictable, and allows smooth coexistence with other inhabitants of our world in accordance with established norms. Therefore, the sym-

bolic universe appears as the ‘natural’ environment of a society. “This nomic function of the symbolic universe for the individual experience—write Berger and Luckmann—may be described quite simply by saying that it ‘puts everything in its right place’”(Berger and Luckmann 1967: 98). It is interesting that one of the contributors to the recent publication, devoted to the social aspects of memory, referred to the works of the same authors—E. Casirer, P. Berger and T. Luckmann—but did not take advantage of their concept of symbolic universe (Berek 2016).

In general, all three authors would agree that human beings, apart from their material surrounding, live in a world of symbols which is fundamental for their human uniqueness. However, most elements of our material world are able to serve symbolic functions, as well. In this way, the material layers of different cultures, including variety of space segments, also contribute to the creation of their symbolic dimension, and this constitutes the basic human condition. The symbolic universe of a given society may differ in a number of ways from those of other societies, but all symbolic universes serve the same functions and have the same characteristics.

### The Cohesion of the Symbolic Universe

To perform its functions, the symbolic universe must have several features—with one of a paramount importance: it must be cohesive. Its consistency is responsible for most of its qualities, securing also the meaning of the world we live in. From the individual, psychological point of view, inconsistency in a symbolic universe creates uncertainty in our knowledge of the world and may lead to cognitive dissonance, as described by Leon Festinger (Festinger 1957). In the social context, the lack of cohesion in the symbolic universe means social disorder and complications in social relations, including social communication. H.D. Duncan even claims that “disorder in society originates in disorder in communication” (Duncan 1968: 130).

However, the cohesion of the symbolic universe is relatively easily maintained only in traditional societies. In modern societies the cohesion of symbolic universes were continuously threatened by many factors. Among the most important factors destroying this cohesion we may point out scientific discoveries, new ideologies, new religions, intense contacts with differing cultures and civilizations, revolutionary technical inventions, and so on. Such a point of view explains why science has such devastating effects on traditional worldviews based on mythical thinking or religion (Niżnik 1992). The invention of new tools, introduction of new ideas, values, and even new objects of worship always meant the destruction of the existing symbolic world and immediately initiated an effort to bring back its lost cohesion. In order to maintain the cohesion of the symbolic universe or to restore it when necessary, humans use a variety of instruments. Among them most important are probably myths, ideologies and—most of all—philosophy.

Cultural variety also means a variety of symbolic universes. At the same time, however, every symbolic universe is a “universe,” which means that it is perceived as a total, complete world for a specific individual or for a specific social group. Therefore, every confrontation with different symbolic elements may disturb its cohesion, as soon as those new

elements aspire for inclusion in the given symbolic world. The theory of the diffusion of culture usually shows the movements of individual cultural elements only, leaving behind the problem of general cultural change which involves reconstruction of the whole symbolic universe. It is clear, though, that every culture, which is a composition of different elements, is a system, and as in every system the change of one element may cause the change of the whole cultural totality. From this point of view some contemporary phenomena look like real problems. Probably the most significant is globalization and regional, transnational integration.

### **The Influence of Globalization and European Integration on Symbolic Universes**

Some years ago the first references to globalization were dominated by the perspectives of economics. At present no one would limit this concept to economics. Although economical aspects are still important, it is quite common to admit that the concept of globalization covers many spheres of contemporary civilization. Therefore the impact of globalization on symbolic universes appears as a complex process involving both direct and indirect influence. According to Anthony Giddens “we have moved into an era of ‘super-diversity’” (Giddens 2014: 124). In a variety of localities we observe the direct confrontation of traditional worlds with foreign symbols which have entered those worlds due to the new communication facilities that have become possible thanks to modern information and communication technology. We observe indirect confrontation, due to the variety of technical devices entering everyday life. The role of communication cannot be overestimated. Already 50 years ago, Karl Deutsch believed that “If there were enough communication in a particular historical period, the term ‘world civilization’ might be justified” (Deutsch 1967: 38). At first glance globalization seems to confirm this assumption. However, new problems arise together with increased trans-cultural communication.

As it happened, the globalization process does not mean a unification of the world. On the contrary, it tends to increase the awareness of cultural differences and barriers in social communication that were earlier invisible. In a sense what we observe is a clash of different symbolic universes. Within such a perspective the failure of the policy of multiculturalism was inevitable (Fomina 2010). When it comes to politics, globalization may even be perceived as a polarizing factor (Nižnik 1999). In the globalized world it is more and more evident that the world situation is slipping out of our hands. From this point of view European integration appears as an attempt to grasp control over the area which still seems to be manageable.

Although globalization opens the way to new symbolic resources by expanding access to the globalized world, this process discloses new areas of communication incompetence. The limited knowledge of foreign languages and technology gap are the most often cited reasons for this incompetence. In effect, globalization has an ambivalent effect on symbolic universes. It opens new potentials in the construction of the symbolic world, but at the same time it can radically disrupt the cohesion of the existing symbolic universes. In fact, what we observe in the case of globalization used to happen in the past at many instances, but usually such aggressive interferences into the symbolic universe were spread out in time

and were limited in space. It is no coincidence that globalization appeared almost at the very moment when the state of our civilization became described as “postmodern.” The impact of European integration on European societies and individuals shares many effects with the process of globalization. One of them is the transformation of the symbolism of a local space.

### **The Symbolic Potential of Space and Memory**

There is no doubt that part of the world of symbols is our location in the space we share with others, or any space which affects the meaning of our social relations and builds emotional attachment to certain segments of reality. “The symbolic dimension of space should not be taken lightly, since it is what gives internal coherency to the living space of each person,” writes Jerome Monnet (Monnet, Jerome 2011: 2). This is well demonstrated by commonly used phrases like ‘the home town’, ‘the land of my childhood’ or ‘the homeland’. Those concepts reflect both the signification and significance of certain categories of spaces of special importance (Morris 1964).

Probably the most important is the relation of space and national identity, although close analysis shows that this relation is far from a simple causal dependence (Smith D. Anthony 1991: 8–15). Our initial assumption would be that space identification is equally important for civic and ethnic national identity. However, the overview of the process of developing national identities in the core European countries like France, Germany, and the UK shows significant differences in the role of this aspect of identity (McLaren, Lauren 2015: from 27 on). Nevertheless, it is hard to deny the important role of territorial affinity in the symbolic universe. This is especially significant in our spontaneous distinction between those elements which are part of our world and those which are outside it. In addition, this mechanism of inclusiveness and exclusiveness can be adapted to the changing context no matter how much individuals are free to choose it.

Territorial distinctions appearing beyond the will of individuals are able to impose a kind of unappreciated identification. For example, during the time of Europe’s political division along the Iron Curtain people on both sides had no choice but to identify themselves with the space of communist or noncommunist Europe, even when rejecting the principle of this division. This was not only a matter of political/territorial necessity. They simply could not do anything but to stay attached to their most intimate affinities mentioned earlier, like ‘home town’ or ‘homeland’. These are categories of space which go beyond their geographical reference and certainly have an important emotional and symbolic load. Henri Lefebvre suggested that it is symbolism which turns a physical space into a ‘mental thing’ and produces a space equipped with social significance (Lefebvre 2000: 3, 141). When people cannot change the meanings attached to the imposed territorial divisions (e.g., by political or civilizational factors), one of the mechanisms to repair the disintegrated symbolic universe is modification of their memory, which further on affects people’s perception of space.

The different perception of space and the transformation of its social functions in effect of changes in contemporary civilization have been studied by social scientists and geogra-

phers. Special attention in this has been given to the impact of globalization on localities. In June 2001, in Ljubljana, a thematic group on the sociology of local-global relations (hailing from the International Sociological Association) organized a workshop devoted to localities and the effects of globalization observed in local frameworks (Hočevár and Trček 2002). The place of this academic encounter was symptomatic. Slovenia had just experienced the disintegration of Yugoslavia and was on its way toward accession to the European Union. At the same time this tiny, beautiful country had to cope with a variety of challenges introduced by globalization. One of the crucial problems which occupied sociologists was that of space-related identity. Together with globalization and the political changes in the Balkans, “the multiplication of spatial identities” seemed at that time obvious (Kos, Drago 2002). Drago Kos inquired whether in this situation space became an irrelevant factor for the identity of people. He opposed the thesis which diagnosed the end of spatial determinism and suggested that what was taking place could be better called “a changing spatial determinism” (Kos, Drago 2002: 9).

The material representation of a space can change only within certain limits. What can more fluidly undergo transformation is its perception and the related content of memory. Changing the territorial or political dimension of a local space can be as destructive for the whole symbolic universe of people as the influence of many other factors which directly affect the symbolic order.<sup>1</sup> However, manipulating space, due precisely to its symbolic significance, can be one of the most important instruments of power that can deliberately modify our symbolic universe. “This is why the symbolic dimension of space is both a power issue and a power instrument,” writes Jerome Monnet: “The person who manipulates symbols can also manipulate processes of identification, and thus have influence over the constitution of the group that legitimises the exercise of power” (Monnet, Jerome 2011: 3).

As suggested earlier, one of the repairing mechanisms which can be used to regain the cohesion of a symbolic universe, shattered—for example—by radical ideological or political changes, is that of refurnishing our memory. Usually this comes relatively easily, although mostly beyond our awareness: some elements of the past can disappear from public discourse and even from individual memory, while others can be brought in. Sometimes modification of memory becomes a matter of state policy. The very recent history of Poland offers some illustrations. After the end of the communist period, when Poland was aspiring to membership in the European Union, it was desirable and possible to bring back some forgotten facts from the common history of Germans and Poles who were to become members of the same community. This might explain several official cultural initiatives, for example, one that was organized at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, and boasted an exhibition of artifacts remembering the German Saxon dynasty on the Polish throne. There is no doubt that this event (as well as the whole political context) created by the access to the EU was also altering the perception of the European space in which Poland had been a significant part for centuries.

In general, after accession to the EU, which in both media and political speeches had been labeled a ‘return to Europe’, in the perception of most Poles both Europe and Poland appeared quite differently than before. We lost the feeling of our country’s isolation and with

<sup>1</sup> A good example in Poland is the reform of territorial/administrative structure carried out in the late 1990s, which deprived over 30 cities of the status of voivodeship capital.

the accession of Poland and other ‘new’ members to the EU the European West became the part of a broader area which included us newcomers. This change provides a good case to show how relativistic are even the very most basic concepts. I have in mind the concept of ‘locality’, which is of my interest in the present text. We are used to applying it to small communities, settlements, or villages where face-to-face contacts are the most common interactions among the people. Is it possible to use the concept of ‘locality’ differently? What might justify such an extension of its meaning?

### **The New Dimensions of ‘Locality’**

What we tend to call ‘locality’ usually has functional characteristics which are not necessarily limited to a small area. First, ‘locality’ appears as a state of mind creating attitudes that make a certain area our own, one in which we feel in the right place and which in its social dimension seems to be predictable enough. Second, ‘locality’ always needs reference to a somehow ‘distant’ space—physical and social—which is experienced as ‘non-local’ as something being outside. Such reference inevitably creates emotional distance to this ‘outside area’. An important factor in this distinction is communication in both its meanings: as a meaningful interaction between people and as easily available technical facilities allowing the transport of people within a certain area. At the current stage of civilization, communication in those two meanings has shrunken both space and distances between the people. By plane we can reach a place hundreds of kilometers away in a time which in the past was needed to walk to the other side of town. Using Skype we can instantly talk face-to-face with a person on another continent. In consequence the perception and experience of space has been dramatically changed. David Harvey talked about “time-space compression” (Harvey 1989). I want to argue that with accession to the EU the whole country can be emotionally perceived as ‘locality’. Moreover, with globalization and the emerging awareness of a global context of European integration this new perception and new emotional experience is likely to be extended yet further to the integrating part of Europe, thereby making the whole EU—in certain situations—a ‘locality.’

Of course, the suggestion that Europe could be experienced as a ‘locality’ violates our everyday linguistic practice since such understanding of locality is lacking the usual characteristics, with face-to-face contacts on top. Still, adopting the category of ‘locality’ allows us to see some of the features which have been brought about by European integration and were easily, probably too easily, taken for granted.

The primary indicators of such extension of ‘locality’ is the new application of the word ‘we’ and new space reference for the extended experience of locality, whether it is Europe for Poland experienced as ‘locality’ or the world for Europe, mentally brought to the level of ‘locality’. One of the relevant factors is the institution of European citizenship. Although it could be debated how much experience of a common European citizenship became a matter of individual feeling, the institution of such citizenship has created a completely new situation for our thinking. Since we used to link of the institution of citizenship within the nation-state, European citizenship is often perceived as a category which was artificially created for administrative purposes only. However, the symbolism of the idea of citizenship,

initially developed indeed in the nation-state context, is present also in the institution of the European citizenship, and its power adds an important accent to the naturalization of the EU. Therefore, at least on some occasions, the word 'we' in our everyday language means all Europeans, living within the same political community and within a shared space. The space factor seems here more important than the legal-constitutional aspect of European citizenship.

From a theoretical point of view it would be best to study these functional indicators of the mentally-extended 'locality' by analyzing the altered symbolic universe and its new dimensions created by such a transformation of our experience of space. However, these changes are usually absent from our consciousness expressed in everyday thinking; moreover, some observations tend to bring both of them into question. Let us look at these objections.

Is Europe experienced as 'locality' when confronted with the rest of the world? World matters and global challenges are present in the media and relevant information is accessible at home to almost every European by television or internet. The essential message which comes out of world reports usually includes a variety of threats; indeed, the image of a dangerous reality outside the EU should make Europe a very close, common space for every European. Still, our awareness seems to miss the 'locality' of Europe, despite the fact that we take for granted the institutional arrangements which made the European Union a space of our everyday life; after all, it is difficult to show an area of life which had not been affected by the regulations of the EU.

The same objections could be formulated regarding the perception of Poland (or any other EU member state) as a 'locality' when confronted with Europe. Some observations, e.g., those noting the rise of nationalistic sentiments in many EU Member States, seem to support such 'localism' of the EU countries. Contrary to the intentions of the architects of European Union, we hear that nationalism is on the rise in most EU member states and that popular support for the European Union is weakening. Also, most sociological surveys show that European identity is still surpassed by national identities. However, those identities do not translate into feeling of closeness within the whole country, as the territorial identification of most Europeans is primarily linked to their closest communities. In fact, the differences demonstrated in culture and political attitudes between the regions of the same state are sometimes greater than between the regions of two neighboring states.

These data are true, but their interpretations against my suggestions regarding a new meaning of 'locality' are not necessary correct. The rise of nationalism and the weakened support for European integration may also be the result of radical changes in a symbolic universe which has lost its cohesion due to the process of integration. Some politicians conclude that this process has simply gone too far. From the point of view of the adopted theoretical framework, represented by the idea of a symbolic universe, the prospect of European unity might have sharpened the need for preserving certain cultural, ethnic, territorial, and other diversities. This could be the reason for the growing demands for greater autonomy or even independence of Scots, Catalonians, and other ethnic groups which have long been a part of established federal European states. The problem which we are now facing is not the return to an earlier symbolic universe, but rather that of regaining cohesion in the new symbolic configuration. Although national sentiments indeed seem getting stronger,

they may only indicate that European identity is just one step behind. We may feel more attached to our closest community, but the reason for this attachment might be the overwhelming presence in our everyday life of much greater areas of the whole country or even the whole Europe which, due to the process of European integration and the phenomenon of globalization, could appear as an immediate dominating environment. In fact, this is what can be identified behind the concept of glocalization, coined by Roland Robertson and popularized by Zygmunt Bauman, although those authors used it in a slightly different, narrower meaning (Bauman 1997). The mental transformation expressed by the concept of glocalization reflects exactly this situation of the broken cohesion of our symbolic universe, confronted with globalization and European integration which puts a question mark over the idea of locality. Globalization and European integration gave completely new meanings to the most essential building blocks of our symbolic world. Among them are such ideas/concepts/values as 'locality' and 'community', but also 'sovereignty', 'patriotism', 'citizenship', 'loyalty' and many more. Although we know that the old meanings are not valid any longer, we are still trying to fit those building blocks back together and thereby restore cohesion to our shattered symbolic universe.

### **A Cosmopolitan Imperative?**

It seems that the current course of development of the basic space frameworks we used to live in has already had a great impact on the mentality of today's people. I have in mind the space frameworks like our own country, which is open to other European nationals, like the whole of Europe in which the European Union created an unprecedented international environment both for the member states and for the rest of the continent—and indeed for the entire world tied ever so closely today by the network of links arisen through globalization. This course of development is inevitably making cosmopolitanism the most befitting position. However, the fundamental symbols of our universe, as well as the values deciding its configuration, keep us within an outlook which belongs to the past. Therefore, Anthony Giddens' 'cosmopolitan imperative' may appear difficult in implementation. "By the cosmopolitan imperative I mean the exigency of learning to live in a globalized world where the intersection of divergent beliefs and ways of life becomes an everyday occurrence" (Giddens 2014: 124). The rise of xenophobic nationalisms and opposition to the political solutions offering new forms of post-national governance reflect serious barriers for a new and cohesive symbolic universe which could accommodate the 'everyday occurrences' mentioned by Giddens. The concept of a symbolic universe, which is missing in his approach, could locate the problem in the right perspective in which 'beliefs' and 'ways of life' are only part of reality. There is no doubt, though, that Giddens is right in pointing out that a majority of people is unable to accept the conditions of a globalized world. In fact it is not difficult to find out who or what is mainly responsible for this situation. These are national educational systems stressing values rooted in the past and politicians who in their political struggles for power count on the well-grounded national sentiments of their electorate. In effect, for a substantial part of societies cosmopolitanism remains only a theoretical concept, whereas in order to become an accommodated element of a cohe-

sive symbolic universe it also needs to be an accepted value and a common attitude (Fine, Robert and Boon, Vivienne 2007).

What then are the chances for rebuilding our symbolic universe effectively enough to make it conform to the current social and political situation? Of course, in the present discussion I will limit my reflection to the problem of the symbolism of the local space. In the light of earlier arguments there is no doubt that the perception of what is 'local' belongs to the issues of a contextual nature. Another observation important for the current analysis suggests that the process of European integration leads to ambivalent effects. Apart from the naturalizing European community, it also enhances the need for the greater distinctiveness of a variety of its parts, whether these are regions, ethnic groups, or nations within Europe's federal states (like the Scots in the UK and the Catalonians in Spain). The demonstration of such a need can be interpreted as opposition to European integration itself. I believe this is a mistaken interpretation. To be sure, rejection of some institutional solutions in the EU is exactly what several Eurosceptic groups declare (Leconte, Cecile 2010)—however, these declarations can be understood as instruments of political discourse which are used in absence of something more appropriate in the current political reality. Eurosceptic arguments are simply well-suited to the outdated symbolic universe which promises the necessary cohesion of the world familiar for most electorates. Therefore, those arguments are expected to bring gains in the political struggle for power. In the long run, however, these calculations may prove incorrect. What might make them wrong are the parallel effects which already have irreversibly destroyed the old symbolic universe. The 'naturalization' of the European Union is expressing exactly this destruction.

This situation may be also grasped as the confrontation of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. One of the results of these contradictory tendencies is that of the open way for developing cosmopolitan attitudes which can be found behind the symptoms of globalization. This also means the coexistence of a variety of identities and flexibility regarding what is perceived as local. However, while locality understood traditionally has a solid background in existing symbolic settings, supported by both individual and group experience, the new scope of locality appears as a challenge which leads to social polarization. This is a polarization of those who are able to admit the beginning of the new symbolic order and those who feel safer in their old symbolic universe. The first ones are most likely to be found among supporters of the EU's course toward federalism, while the others are among those who demand greater sovereignty of the member states—or even the withdrawal of their country from the EU. The case of the massive influx of migrants and refugees across the EU's borders, witnessed in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, appears to support the latter. Lauren McLaren also suggests that among the effects of the inflow of migrants is the polarization of attitudes toward the state and a lowered level of mutual trust (McLaren, Lauren 2015: 1). This makes the rebuilding of a symbolic universe and developing cosmopolitanism a still more complicated prospect.

From the very beginning 'extending locality' was—in a sense—one of the goals of European integration and this goal was well served by several institutional initiatives. The 'four freedoms' (the free movement of people, goods, capital, and services) that have been present in the constitutional documents since the Treaty of Rome, and the later elimination

of internal borders by the Schengen Agreement—these were certainly important landmarks of the process of integration. The role of the ‘four freedoms’ was much greater than just constructing a common market. Although implementation of this rule is still not full, it is hard to overestimate its symbolic impact on understanding and experiencing what is the shared space. The elimination of borders appeared then as a physical proof of this commonality.

Of course, this mental extension of locality remained rather more a kind of potentiality than a real effect. For those who were living in the same limited, small place for generations, rarely leaving their village or town, the mental extension of locality was—so far—simply impossible. On the other hand, those who were actively engaged in the current civilizational and political changes mentally anticipated such extension for a long time and became its immediate users. In consequence, the new conditions for political and social transformation due to European integration and globalization were quite effective in destroying the cohesion of the earlier symbolic universe, but they have not been effective enough to enforce a new symbolic configuration which could reach all segments of European societies.

In Europe this tension between the old well-established symbolic universe, and the new one still in the making can be easily aggravated by the current developments. One of the examples is 2015’s unprecedented flow of refugees, as the scale of that influx caught the European Union off-guard and thereby revealed all the weaknesses (if not absence) of the existing EU migration policy. One of the immediate effects of this development was the narrowing of the area which could be treated as ‘local’ to the territories of the members states. This indeed may limit the possibility of perceiving Europe as a ‘locality’, but it has nonetheless underscored the option to see as an extended locality the whole country. However, drawing on this basis conclusions regarding the reconstruction of the symbolic universe and the symbolism of a local space may seem unjustified. The final effects of this mass flow of refugees will depend on the way this problem will be solved.

### **Conclusions**

The above discussion has shown the relation between the process of European integration and the perception and symbolism of local space. Memory has appeared as one of the instruments for coping with the effects of integration in this area. My analysis shows that the process of integration has initiated a number of mechanisms which lead to a refurnishing of the symbolic universe of Europeans, and one of them was the ‘mental extension of locality’. The current indicators of the crises of European integration and the sundry forms of Euroscepticism have been explained as belonging to the transitory period from the destruction of the old symbolic universe to a new one. There are good reasons to believe that the kind of cosmopolitanism which was born with European integration and globalization will, in time, become a constant element of the symbolic universe which is now in disarray. For with the preservation of cosmopolitan attitudes the perception of ‘local’ space will also tend to be extended.

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