The Impending Collapse of the European Urban Middle Class:

The European Union's De-naturing of Space and Place

Guy Lanoue[1], Vincent Mirza[2], Jorge Pantaleon[3]

Abstract

The authors argue that the various middle classes of Europe, especially Western Europe, are being fragilised as a result of globalization, certain political tendencies and especially by the standardization of space and place following the implementation of a policy of Europeanisation. In particular, we concentrate on the ECoC (European Capitals of Culture) programme (launched in 1983, over 40 Cities have held the title since), as this embodies these changes and pressures. We argue that the middle classes are caught in a crisis of confidence in traditional institutional arrangements as local definitions of time and space traditionally grounded in individuals and neighborhoods are reworked and reoriented to favour national and especially European identities. The new difficulty of attaching a sense of self to public places and to local time has weakened the social Self and created resentment towards larger political institutions responsible for denaturing local time and place.

Keywords

Europe, cities, ECoC (European Capital of Culture), middle class

[1]Université de Montréal, correspondence author: guy.lanoue@umontreal.ca

[2] Assistant Professor in Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Ottawa

[3] Université de Montréal

Preamble: the Americanisation of the European middle class[4]

Even if the salient traits of the middle class first arose in the interstices of late Medieval politics (cf. Furet 1995), these were later overshadowed by the features that emerged full-blown after World War II – spatial and social fluidity, a willingness to experiment with 'traditional' social arrangements, a rejection of older (19th century) status markers, a wary attitude towards tradition, a belief that individuality is affirmed by transformations of the Self, and embracing (and even creating) 'popular' culture in the 1950s and '60s as a celebration of middle class status that thumbs its nose at 'tradition'. Nonetheless, many of these traits were seen as secondary. It is as if the attention directed towards middle class culture never went beyond reacting to Thorstein Veblen's turn of the century formulation (1953 [1899]), that the middle class is merely an 'in-between' category whose members are continually seeking to emulate 'higher' bourgeois status to which they aspire and distance themselves from the 'lower' working class from whence they came. Unable to accept that its many cultural permutations and manifestations could be the basis of its vociferous claims to recognition, analyses from the 1950s onwards of the middle class were often dominated by critiques of declining 'values' (though no one seemed to be able to define these) or of middle class complacency and crassness (cf. McCracken 2003).

Whatever its alleged position in a 'traditional' status structure, post-World War I American middle class social mobility and alleged freedom were admired by urban middle class Europeans, especially in Germany, Italy and France (Ben-Ghiat 2001), who saw American popular culture (as they interpreted it) as a legitimate means of escaping 'tradition'. European women in particular were eager to adopt some signs of 'American' middle class emancipation (De Grazia 1992), especially in an urban context that had already begun to furnish them with new opportunities – jobs outside the home, cinemas and strolling in parks (as venues for 'going out' with men – an evocative turn of phrase in several Western European languages – and escaping courtship traditions largely controlled by their parents), and the somewhat anonymous quality of large cities compared to small towns and villages, which, in many parts of Western Europe, formed the pool that fed urban migration. In the 1920s and 1930s, many Europeans still had kin in the countryside, which underlined even more the contrast with the city's size, emerging fluidity in social relations and a relative anonymity that favoured the public expression of markers of individuality.

In brief, some elements of the Western European middle classes that would later dominate the urban landscape after World War II were 'Americanizing' themselves by the

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[4] This is the first of a series of articles to emerge from a larger comparative study of the middle classes: in the Americas (Argentina – Pantaleon), in Europe (Italy, France – Lanoue) and in Japan (Mirza). The project aims to study the sometimes dichotomous forces that define the political culture of the middle classes and how these intersect with values and emotions that frame daily life.

1930s in order to contest bourgeois hegemony[5], which had not hesitated to make full use of 'traditional' traits (resurrected, exaggerated or simply invented), such as patriarcality and the notion of a homogeneous folk as the basis of the political community. It is not important whether this 'American' reaction in Europe was really transmitted through American films (which, in part, it was) or from letters from emigrants describing their new situation abroad (in fact, a not inconsiderable source of information in Italy, though perhaps less important in other countries) or was merely a local desire for mobility that had been projected onto an iconic America in an attempt to enrich the moral capital of a middle class increasingly loathe to answer calls for sacrifice in the name of the Fatherland. By the 1920s, however, many Western European governments had successfully fused centralised authority with 19th century forms of bourgeois hegemony by manipulating selected cultural traits to create an individually-embodied semiotic link that disempowered the 'citizen', itself a resurrected and redefined category with its own semiotics of subordination expressed as 'duty' towards the State[6].

The result for many middle class Western European urbanites was a continual tug of war between state-sponsored 'tradition' and a desire for greater social mobility fuelled by any available moral and political capital; in the 1920s and '30s, this capital was identified as 'American'[7], though it was not exclusively of American origin nor 'American' in its implementation; the European middle classes have never been as open to the idea of cultural experimentation and cultural mobility as their American counterparts. They seem to have been driven to augment their social capital to define new spaces from

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[5] 'Hegemony' is a sensitive word and a greatly-discussed condition. We use it here in its Gramscian sense of the domination of subaltern classes by bourgeois values and norms (Carnoy 1984), which is clearly the case for most of Western Europe between 1860 and World War II. 'Domination', however, does not mean that there is no social and political resistance or negotiation. For example, the paradoxical position of the urban middle class during this period of being locked in a struggle between mobility and stasis, does not contradict the view of bourgeois hegemony, since most interpretations of the history of mores suggest that most middle class urbanites seem to have implicitly accepted 'tradition' (bourgeois values) as one of the natural terms that defined one pole of the opposition that dominated their lives. 'Hegemony', therefore, is similar to Foucauldian 'normalisation' but more clearly stresses that 'values' implicitly refer to a political hierarchy.

[6] The crystallisation of individual resistance and government-fuelled hegemony around questions of 'taste', 'good manners' and 'hygiene' (to cite only three of its components) has been around for a long time, as Kelso notes (1929). For example, it is not the Minister of Health but the Minister of Education who in 1878 declared to the Italian Parliament:

> … when the body is healthy and strong not only does physical courage re-emerge in people … but also moral courage, as well as the temperament, character and honesty of people's behaviour, and the abhorrence of oblique choices. … We still do not place sufficient importance on physical education, which gives the body its grace, strength and agility. (Jacomuzzi 1973, cited in Socrate 1999:429; my translation).

[7] Later, this popular search for new cultural capital would be denounced as the menacing 'American Challenge' (Servan-Schreiber 1968).

which negotiations with hegemonic power could proceed while not sacrificing petty bourgeois 'respectability' gained by outwardly conforming to 'tradition'.

This struggle was perhaps the most important factor in explaining the historical ambiguity and weakness of the European middle classes after World War I: eager to embrace American-style 'individualism' (as they saw it) when it helped them step up the social ladder, yet paradoxically willing to preserve their status by appealing to an older (and 'traditional') caste-like system of values – the 'right' address, the 'right' schools (at least for the children of people making a jump up the social ladder), 'polite' manners, 'refined' tastes in music, literature and art (cf. Elias 1983). Between 'American'-inspired individualism and a struggle to acquire bourgeois and aristocratic traits, it is not surprising that its traits are hard to define.

Admittedly, this polarity between 'tradition' and 'innovation', between the national and the local, between the countryside and the city, between resistance and complicity, is not so simple as we have sketched it here, since European identities are a complex mix of ethnicity, religious orientation, gender roles and social class. Furthermore, there is no uniformity in the way middle classes are constituted in different countries, as Kocka points out (1995) in his salient overview of the problem of definition and boundaries. Middle classes in Eastern Europe in particular faced their own particular dynamics of exclusion and discrimination compared to people in similar professions in the West. As Melegh suggests (2006), it was clear to the (relatively small) middle classes of the East that established governments favoured maintaining a status quo in which aristocrats and large landowners (usually the same) dominated the countryside and the power structure. The urban middle classes were therefore forced to seek inspiration for their penchant for modernisation and modernity (in which they could carve out a well-defined niche for themselves) in foreign models situated in the West. They were thus more cosmopolitan and open to innovation compared to their Western European counterparts, though in some cases especially in the Balkans, it is certainly possible that an alleged cosmopolitan attitude was also sign of a colonial past (cf. Waldek 1942 for a classic description of "cosmopolitan" decadence in wartime Bucharest).

Without engaging in long and perhaps sterile debates about defining the middle class, it seems clear, as Kocka points out (Ibid.), that middle classes share a consciousness of distance from various aristocracies and nobles, and that they are also conscious that their social power and status is in part not inherited but due to their own efforts. Yet to those that insist on the undeniable diversity of the European landscape, we would reply that even if Europeans do not live in a completely polarised world, it is a fact that only European class politics gave rise to the extremes of Fascism. Other identity vehicles there may be, but this empirical complexity does not mean that today there is no sensation of being pulled in different directions by the underlying political forces that favour individualism and adherence to a well-defined community, especially since the ideological polarities of 1920s and '30s that indelibly marked so many European lives are the direct ancestors of the sentiments that led to the foundation of the European

Community. In other words, the fact that people enrich their social identities with any capital available is perhaps a sign of the underlying rigidity of the status system.

This long preamble is necessary to establish the inherent ambiguity of the European urban middle class so that we can present our point: its cultural flip-flopping has led the contemporary European urban middle class to a structural impasse from which it may be impossible to recover the traits that until recently defined its compromise between individual innovation and class conformity, between 'traditional' individualism and 'traditional' political conservativism. In this paper, we seek to use its ambiguous qualities as a point of entry to understand the dynamics of fear that have recently come to dominate some European urban middle class discourses and practices, especially their rejection of older nationalisms (associated with their subordinate position) and of newer attempts to define an European Union (EU)-sponsored 'pan-European' identity, coupled to a propensity to adopt a newer, 'cosmopolitan' identity. This third option, however, has its own contradictions, as we will argue, that further weaken middle class political power and social capital within the increasingly complex framework of power that has become hidden and impenetrable – shared power between national governments and the EU, and the rise of the new mobile transnational economy centred on information and image, though this too has made educational and, eventually, career choices more difficult.

We attempt to expose the way in which people react to the dynamics of de-classification and re-classification as the urban middle class is threatened by recent changes in governance. Although there are global dynamics involved, we argue that regional cultural dynamics play an important role, especially in the recent shift from 'popular' culture to cosmopolitanism among many sectors of the European middle class. In particular, recent shifts in EU political policies that favour a re-classification of older urban neighbourhoods have created doubt and confusion among the middle class as the changes to the signification of local public spaces has forced people to rethink identities in very individual terms, leading, as we have suggested, to a rejection of Europeanism and nationalism (and all this implies for 'invented traditions' co-opted by governments; cf. Hobsbawm 1983) in favour of cosmopolitanism. Inevitably, these changes involve how people identify 'tradition' and its groundings to place. In the midst of recent and very vociferous debates about identity, this essay concentrates on subtle but important manifestations of shifts in the social contract between governed and governing, especially in the definitions of public places, that, we argue, have long term negative effects on 'middle class' as an established category in State-level power relations as people are forced to rethink their relation to 'traditional' meanings of place.

Placing 'time-ful' tradition

Time, the past and history are not disembodied concepts. When people and governments argue about the salient points of history that they will use to negotiate the present, they often do so in terms of place and especially in terms of the length of time a

person or a group has allegedly spent in one place. The passage of time is a sense of spatially locally meaningful causality (cf. Gell 1992) that animates social memory. Time is a powerful metaphor of identity and a metonym of place.

Many scholars argue that State control of linear time is the heart of modernist governance (cf. Hüppauf and Umbach 2005:3-4), clearing the way for the imposition of national histories and for ideological and standardised readings of individual subjectivities and contingencies. This has been the subject of vigorous debates on the emergence and new roles of 'alternative', non-official histories tied to subjective and highly-politicised interpretations of place and its occupation. Are such alternative readings of grounded subjectivity emerging after the weakening of official histories (a tempting conclusion to scholars of the post-communist world, which after all includes Germany; see the pertinent example by McFalls, 1997, describing battles to establish which conflicted memories will define a reunited Germany's history), or are these alternative readings an intrinsic feature of the 'normal' construction of social life that have not been reported by anthropologists generally unconcerned with the middle classes, especially now that anthropological attention has focussed more attention on the margins of the world system? Even scholars who favour the latter position (cf. Walkowitz and Knauer 2004) do not explore the link between place and intersubjectivity. The authors in Christiansen and Hedetoft (2004) also ignore the 'solid' middle class and take for granted that people use only *political* and *collective* capital (such as alternate, discriminated or 'buried' ethnic identities) to position themselves in the fast-changing postmodern political landscape. Other studies on identity – too many to list here – also assume 'ethnicity' (insofar as it incorporates a degree of 'natural' attachment to place) can be used to oppose 'artificial' national identity. These, however, often look only at the political margins, where this opposition leads to disputes about the signification of place: Corsica, rural Italy, Northern Ireland, Wales, etc. (e.g., Macdonald 1993). Even pertinent studies of mainstream countries (Rapport 2002) such as Britain often concentrate (though not exclusively) on smaller towns and on marginal groups. Relatively few studies concentrate on how people use place to rethink 'tradition', at least those people who have invested the most in establishing 'tradition', the middle classes.

Public spaces (all sites to which people have free access) are managed by governments to project a normalised political culture onto their citizens. They aim 1) to impose on individuals a physiological sense of the grandeur of the state;[8] 2) to project the image of a 'national' architecture in order to legitimate an ideologically-attuned aesthetic field whose symbolism links the individual to 'national' history; 3) to control the

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[8] For example, Sixtus V's (1585-1590) arrangement of Roman obelisks in an arc to define the city's sacred space (Tobia 1996:176); not to mention more recent examples such as the Arc de Triomphe, Trafalgar Square, etc. Even more recently, the Centre Pompidou, the new Louvre and the Millennium Wheel are huge structures whose allegedly irreverent interpretation of architectural tradition nonetheless communicates a sense of communal grandeur.

displacement of citizens so they develop a physiological sense of social time that flows according to a linear politico-ideological model (for example, the zoning of post-1850 cities that condemns people to shuttling between home, work, shopping and entertainment); and, finally, 4) to underline the dominant role of State-sponsored rationality (which legitimates State 'management') by imposing a 'rationally-planned' spatial grid on civic space (Hüppauf and Umbach 2005), which nonetheless remains 'open' and 'free' so that people become self-governing and accept the hegemonic dynamics that favour the reproduction of elite power.

The unstated aim of contemporary 'urban planning' is 'rational' zoning, segregating people according to class and, more recently, by ethnicity. Perhaps this what Rabinow meant when he baldly stated (2003:353) that, "modern urban planning emerged under the aegis of French colonialism between 1900 and 1930" despite that the first overall plan for Paris was put forward in 1769 (Garrioch 2002:211)[9]. Urban planning, in other words, responds to the implicit rationality behind the political regime; the modernist manifestation simply stressed ethnicity so individual attempts to identify with a community would 'naturally' focus loyalties on the alleged incarnation of the community, the State.

Hüppauf and Umbach argue (2005:6) that the use of architectural idioms to create an aesthetic field of functionalism supports and reproduces State managerial governance by, "… portraying modernity as transparent and rational, disguising its cultural specificity behind a façade of universalism". To control space, therefore, is also to control time, because legitimating the rationality behind universal governance rests as much on establishing the narrative (and 'rational' structure of history; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1992) as it does on the physical control of place.

There is another, more intimate, aspect to governance, time and place, however. Public urban spaces help establish multiple power bases that become the basis of individual resistance to modern, 'rational' managerial governance. As Czaplicka states, "… the identification of a group with place can be wielded as a powerful instrument for political mobilization, for it allows for a concrete and territorial articulation of the social and cultural distinctions that lie at the core of political groupings" (2003:373). In other words, the same sites managed by governments are used by people who appropriate a 'public' space and transform it into a place of intimacy, 'their' place, to oppose these State mechanisms of spatial politicisation of the Self. These places are not 'private', 'secret' or offbeat. People can reinterpret government-installed monuments by inventing mythologies that contradict 'official' significations, using 'official' elements for their own purposes of publicly emphasising complicity or resistance, just as Herzfeld has described (1991, 1997) in his studies of Greece, or the many popular legends attached to Roman

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[9]Partial but nonetheless grandiose plans had existed for Paris from the end of the 16th century (Yarwood 1974:329). The same is true of London after the Great Fire of 1666, and I have already mentioned Rome.

monuments (D'Arrigo n.d.)[10]. People, therefore, not only attach memories to public sites but also construct parallel, non-official histories of local sites that become iconic points of reference in establishing individuality as a legitimate political category: like the State, people too attempt to 'control' space.

The longstanding cleavage (since the 13th century, in parts of north-western Europe and in north-central Italy) between central governments politically dependent on an agrarian feudal base and relatively autonomous cities controlled by bourgeois oligarchies has given rise to the category of the seemingly 'free' urbanite, who is of course not so much free as playing out a ritual whose complex semiotics blur the line between resistance and complicity. In other words, European cities have long been sites of a ritualised struggle to control place and memory, and, therefore, to control the behaviour and attitudes of urban residents who, for an equally long time, armed with the label of 'free' urban citizen, resisted being transformed into pawns of state centralisation. This institutionalised antagonism has today become much more complicated and ambiguous due to the effects of globalisation and EU cultural policies. It is no longer automatically "embedded" (Hannerz 1999:328) in daily life or "naturalised" in political culture (cf. Yanagisako and Delaney 1995).

Our methodology here is admittedly very loose, since we are concentrating on a sense of malaise that does not necessarily manifest itself as political action (for example, a change in voting patterns[11]) or even as a social trend (for example, more rave parties); indeed, it may be the opposite, as a sense of apathy and distrust. It is hard to measure sentiments and emotions but there are signs everywhere of growing polarisation and frustration. Certainly, traditional measures such as rising unemployment rates, migration and emigration rates, and crime rates are helpful in targeting the problem, but this essay is more a call for further research than a global survey of the situation in Europe.

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[10] For nearly every monument there are popular stories and legends that place the *popolo* – the 'little people' – at the heart of the attempt at government-sponsored monumentalism. For example, Rome has six 'talking' statues that were used during the time of the Papal States (till 1870) to display political pamphlets denouncing the papacy. These *written* documents were described in terms of orality ("the statues talk"), an act of political appropriation by the illiterate *popolo*. Street names have also received the same treatment, with many Romans believing that they are the manifestation of 'popular' or 'folk' etymologies. For example, the Street of the Armenians, over time, has been reinterpreted today as the Street of the Armorers, an elite craft guild belonging to the people; see Delli 1975.

[11] This has happened sporadically here and there, but a more detailed analysis would require that we examine who is voting and not voting, not to mention an analysis of particular ways in which elections are sometimes manipulated in favour of the status quo. For example, one could argue that certain recently enabled family legislation in Germany limiting child support is a sign of malaise with traditional views of the family as people, especially men, wish to start anew and cut ties with the past. Here is not the place to present this analysis, however.

EU policies, place and memory

Since the control of a defined territory over time establishes the legitimacy of State power, individuals react to perceived inequalities in power by claiming that individual memories attached to local places are the also legitimate means of establishing the autonomous Self. Invariably, this engages them in semiotic battles with the State for control of these public spaces. As Simon Schama argues in his analysis of memory and place, landscapes are not an objective backdrop to which human activities must adapt: "Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock" (1995:61). Schama, however, is describing tropes (forests, rivers, mountains) that are rural and bucolic, long-established and collective. We examine meanings and signs that are urban and banal, fluid and intimate, but whose role as signs of the past are nonetheless used by people to construct an individual identity in a larger political framework.

Admittedly, individual identity is as difficult to target as it is to define. We therefore concentrate on a manifestation that has become deeply rooted in Western European value systems: how individuals transform urban public spaces into sites where identity can be affirmed in 'traditional' reaction to coercive governance. In other words, these public spaces – parks, boulevards, squares, shopping areas, stores, bistros, bars – are sites of struggle between individual and political identity, between the official past and the subjective present. These places are sites where individual memories are projected and politicised to create intersubjective 'histories' that legitimate local resistance to official readings of the past while defining a degree of complicity with the technologies of governance. In other words, in order to legitimate a vision of the future, people politicise very local space in a way that intersects and sometimes opposes official readings of the past.

Over the last ten years, more or less, there has emerged a growing popular resentment to the EU and its meddlesome (and costly) policies[12], coupled to a rejection of older ethno-nationalist sentiments that the EU had vowed to eradicate by creating a 'European' culture. This resentment is admittedly hard to document, in part because the recent data are still subject to debate. In addition, there is certainly a popular tendency to demonise the EU and blame it for problems that have no direct connection with its policies, such as increases in the cost of living, increased difficulties in finding jobs, and, more recently, a sense of generalised malaise and fear of the future that is difficult to

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[12] In the words of an EU report (2005a:3), " … significant sections of the European public are not convinced that Europe is on the right track … Although the picture varies considerably between Member States, feelings of indifference to the European idea are widespread … The reasons for this reduced confidence are complex and include sluggish economic growth, heightened feelings of economic and personal insecurity, fears of loss of identity and a more general feeling of 'disconnect' between what happens in 'Brussels' and in people's everyday lives." This unease is not new; see Shore and Black (1994), who trace the complexities of EU identity.

document but nonetheless mentioned by many informants. Whatever the facts, and apart from the financial dimensions of its policies, the EU is viewed as intruding more and more in local affairs, which leads to resentment.[13] This must be qualified by the tendency of middle class citizens to exploit EU institutions to create new opportunities for social advancement. We are not proposing, therefore, that the EU has polarised the political landscape, but its presence at the very least has complicated lifestyle choices that were once linked to a clearer (albeit more limited) structure of opportunities for individual social and economic advancement.

In particular, there have been recent changes to the signification of urban public spaces in the development of new identities as members of the middle class try to cope with increasing financial and cultural pressures, especially those associated with EU attempts to forge a new pan-European identity and with new lifestyle choices (cosmopolitanism) that are fast becoming the norm in parts of Europe. Here, we will only mention one such policy, the European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) programme that was launched by the EU (then, 'European Community') in 1983 (as "Cities of Culture" till 1999). Since that time, nearly 40 cities have held the title[14]. Surprisingly, little research has been done on the impact of ECoC status, despite the fact that the EU has no formal monitoring system in place (Garcia 2004b:321) and so reports by participating cities are voluntary and naturally stress only the positive aspects of the ECoC experience.

Although the accent of the ECoC programme is on cultural events as a way of glorifying the past to revitalise the present (usually, through the tacit assumption that 'high' and 'formal' cultural events in a globalised context will attract large numbers of upscale tourists and entrepreneurial sponsors whose money will revitalise the local economy; cf. Evans 2003), there are usually unforeseen consequences and politically unwelcome conclusions, not the least of which is that the idea of cultural revitalisation as

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[13] Again, we are addressing very general tendencies that are admittedly hard to document. The dynamics we describe should be framed against the traditional policies adopted by national governments, and especially the standard measures adopted by researchers who try to document the 'standing' or development of a particular country vis-à-vis others. For example, see some Romanian statistics at http://culturadata.ro/PDF-uri/4.%20Studiul%20statistici%20comparative.pdf (May 2011), which tries to establish Romania's position by appealing to fairly standardised measures of culture : theatre, film, and opera production and attendence; number of libraries, books and readers; number of museums and exhibits. The question is not about a particular country's statistics and whether or not these can be improved, as it is a sign of how governments and their institutions insist on defining integration. In other words, our argument is that people still feel pressured despite the number of standardised cultural productions put in place by national governments; indeed, it may be, as we suggest that it is precisely these standardised cultural policies (subsidising national cinema; opening museums and subsidising exhibits) that may alienate people, whose sense of crisis is only underlined by national governments reproducing their standard technologies.

[14] More than one city can be named in a given year. See http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/other_actions/cap_europ/becoming_c_e_en.html (2-10-2007). The programme was launched in 1983, but the first city was named in 1985.

a panacea to revive moribund cities has an intrinsically destabilising on local identities since its aim is more to create a standardised and sanitised image for foreign consumption than to cater to local needs (cf. Gibson and Stevenson 2004).

These may include (but not always) engagements and changes at the planning stage[15]: typically, 1) expropriating some residents from targeted buildings and rerouting traffic flows (ECoC programmes usually involve building large "infrastructural hallmarks" such as opera houses and museums; see Garcia 2004b); 2) forming financial cartels (for example, £43 million in infrastructural investments in Glasgow in 1990; Garcia 2004b:319, though most was not from the EU) that combine EU, national and local funds (municipal and private), which can reinforce the power of already-existing elites but also create vicious infighting as players jockey for position in the newly-defined financial and political networks; 3) mobilising the political capital for dislocations that municipal governments know could be unpopular with some residents; this typically involves large-scale publicity campaigns that address civic pride rather than specific benefits, especially since most benefits seem to accrue to elites rather than to displaced and disempowered social categories.

ECoC cities may also have to deal with the aftermath: 1) rents and real estate prices in the historic centre can increase dramatically, since renovations, restorations and embellishments usually lead to gentrification that pushes some people from the centre to the suburbs, leading to a loss of prestige and status as they can no longer afford to live in the upscale centre; 2) people who move into the re-gentrified centre (though not all ECoC events are staged there) are likely to be newly rich, validating new status claims as they add the cachet of the historic centre to their social capital; 3) gentrification of shops and restaurants (a process that is also linked to cosmopolitanism) can also change perceptions of civic space, since a) upscale shops are less likely to offer local wares aimed at satisfying quotidian demand (for example, there are often fewer or no food shops left after such gentrification; typically, these are replaced by high end restaurants and clothing stores), and b) embellishments are popularly identified with hegemonic political processes imposed by central planning that ignore local meanings of public spaces (for example, the ECoC programme bestows legitimacy on developers, who were generally seen as surreptitiously influencing municipal governments to favour their 'developments'); 4) selective renovation establishes a temporal baseline – the high points of the city's history (especially since ECoC status is usually sought by cities to combat urban decay in the present) that validate claims to its 'capital of *culture*' status – that becomes normalised as *the* point of reference for establishing individual credentials in local status wars. Questions of genealogical purity and depth can increase in

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[15] See, for example Garcia (2004a), which examines Glasgow's 1990 ECoC experience, and Garcia (2004b), which examines general problems of cultural revitalisation as a political and economic strategy.

importance and in their semiotic complexity, especially since it is very often only people with *new* money – often, image and information entrepreneurs – who can take advantage of the historically-restored neighbourhoods and their more upscale shops and restaurants.

In 2007, one of us (Lanoue) spent nearly two months in Sibiu, a 12th century city of 300,000 in north-central Romania that was celebrating its status as a ECoC. The celebrations were lavish – public concerts, fireworks, and film and theatre festivals – and tied to Romania's newly-acquired EU membership. It was not Lanoue's first visit[16], and in recent years he had witnessed the preparations involved – mostly renovations of highly-significant 'historic' buildings on the city's main squares (especially those that played a role in local history, such as the seat of its medieval guilds), changes to the street plan to redirect traffic flow, embellishment of parks and fixtures such as 'period' street lamps. The overall effect was a de facto rezoning of the historic centre. There were many consequences: 1) many residents could no longer afford the increased rents after gentrification, 2) many had been outright evicted by 'rezoning'[17], 3) non-residents who nonetheless had their shops in the centre could no longer afford the increased rents, or their clientele disappeared once ground level workshops were converted to upscale bistros and shops, 4) even if some were exempt from these first three processes, many could no longer fit into the new social landscape and developed a sense of social malaise as traditional networks collapsed or were simply eclipsed by the new. Note that these effects were not only felt by the poor, since some older shopkeepers and residents had been well-off. For example, the local intellectual bourgeoisie, who for decades had attached their special status to the fact of living in the heart of the historic town, were often victims of their own malaise faced with a new centre even if they could afford to reside there.

A new mix of people started to frequent the embellished city centre; 1) newly rich 'entrepreneurs'[18]; 2) people from hinterland villages, some in search of simple

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[16] Eight months since 2002.

[17] That is, individual residential buildings were rezoned for commercial use.

[18] Most of the new revenue is apparently tied to deals involving 'Europeanisation': some former State companies have been privatised by an ingenious scam (my information comes from a senior Romanian manager): in the 1990s, people used political connections to be appointed directors of State firms, would run them into the ground by deliberate mismanagement and buy them at reduced prices from the government eager to get rid of its (by now) inefficient and obsolete physical plant to appear in conformity to EU pollution and safety standards. These new capitalists had private agreements with foreign firms. Once privatised, they would 'buy' (with shares in the new company) the foreign partner's older technology, increasing productivity and efficiency (by Romanian standards). These Romanians thus established their 'entrepreneurial' (and 'elite') status, while foreigners managed to sell outdated equipment, acquired shares in the new Romanian company, and remained globally competitive (many Romanian products were rebadged with foreign names for export) because of massive savings on labour costs (Romanian salaries are one quarter or less of the Western European salary scale).

excitement (to view the concerts and other activities, to shop in the newer 'European' and 'American' branded stores or to vicariously share the city's new 'cosmopolitan' and 'European' branding), 3) others come to exploit the increased numbers of legitimate tourists (mostly Germans). In brief, many categories became enriched, financially and politically: 1) building firms (at least one is allegedly owned by a highly placed architect placed in charge of historic renovations); 2) property owners with connections to City Hall who could negotiate good prices on their strategically-located buildings or whose buildings could claim 'historic' status and receive funds for restoration; 3) people with capital and foreign connections able to launch chic foreign lines of clothes and accessories in their high-end shops. Others became impoverished and forced to move into cheaper lodgings outside the core. Worse, the selective investments that enriched City Hall cronies also had multiplier effects on identity struggles, driving not only a new economy that soon became unaffordable to 'decent' salaried people (teachers, engineers and technicians, small shopkeepers)[19], but impacting on how these people saw themselves: once exemplars of successful jumps into middle class status but now doubly exiled to the suburbs and to the older pattern of struggling to get ahead by taking on two or three 'demeaning' jobs.[20]

The cosmopolitan city

Not all cities are ECoC, and not all members of the middle class have been affected by this programme. Nonetheless, the changes associated with it are emblematic of EU penetration into daily life and of the pressures that increasingly impact on urban residents. One reaction is to bolster individual capital by cultivating cosmopolitan identity markers.

Cosmopolitanism is an elusive quality. Rapport, for instance, refers (2007) to a dimension that goes above and beyond local cultural adaptations. He argues that cosmopolitanism is not a mere antidote to the hegemony of a particular cultural identity (Rapport credits Hannerz 1990 for establishing this position) but something deeper and transcendental that provides a key to understanding what is human. As Rapport states (Ibid.:226), "[anthropological cosmopolitanism] recognises individuals as possessing an

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[19] Approximately 20 new banks have appeared since 2005, too many for legitimate needs (in the same period, only one new factory was built, dedicated to producing car parts for export; it employed several hundred workers).

[20] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer who called attention to a report on the ECoC programme that was prepared by the Ministry of Culture (CCCDC : Centrului de Studii si Cercetari in Domeniul Culturii, Centre for the Study and Research in the Domain of Culture). It reviews the effects, and not surprisingly concludes favorably, that the ECoC was appreciated. The questions asked by the review, however, are biased only to the events and to Sibiu's profile as a tourist site. Clearly, the organisers, who represent a consortium of professionals and business interests, asked only questions touching their interests. It is not surprising that there is not one mention of people being displaced and of other socio-demographic changes. See http://culturadata.ro/Cercetari%20finalizate.html (May 9 2011).

'existential power' to construe their lives as their own projects," to which we would ask, when did humans lose this ability that it must be regained by politicising a particular research agenda, which in any case completely evacuates the anthropological subject? Admittedly, cosmopolitanism as a concept can describe almost any multidimensional identity[21], but in the context of Europe, where governments have long manipulated, transformed and politicised various cultural elements to create a clear (and hence ideologically one-dimensional) national identity, cosmopolitanism is an individual reaction to the hegemonic subtext of two such processes, national and European.

As Hannerz notes (1996), cosmopolitanism implies the capacity to choose identities and especially to emancipate (partially, we would say) oneself from the embodied complicity inherent in modern national cultures (cf. Buruma and Margalit 2004), though we would not limit this to instances when people acquire specialised and marketable knowledge and skills ("professionalization"; Isin 2002). Defining cosmopolitanism in allegedly objective terms, especially those derived from the market economy, belies its subjectively meaningful quality. Its sources may indeed be in transnational flows, as Appadurai argues (1996:49), but its transnational implications are irrelevant to people whose identification with local places is the primary means of establishing their political and cultural resistance to hegemonic processes of state-sponsored cultural manipulation. Appadurai, like many scholars of 'deterritorialisation' and of 'mobile sovereignties', carefully selects his examples from the margins of the world system, where people have fewer life choices and therefore have more limited responses to transnational flows. In the core EU region, however, members of the threatened middle-class add 'international' patterns of consumption to their personae without renouncing 'traditional' status hierarchies, hence augmenting their moral capital and bolstering their status in an effort to define a third option against older nationalisms and newer pan-Europeanism. Cosmopolitanism is no longer an elite phenomenon (cf. Friedman 1995), nor is it an inevitable reaction or a completely free choice. It is merely an enrichment of individual social (and moral) choices that is easily attainable to members of the middle class. Its appeal lies in apparently circumventing well-established patterns of complicity with and resistance to national hegemonies.

Admittedly, this tendency is hard to document because these trends are evolving and are polysemic. More income is spent on housing (including fuel and power) than on consumables such as food, clothes and toiletries, so we are examining changes to a relatively small proportion of total household expenditure. Nonetheless, nearly one-third of Europeans have changed their eating habits in the last three years (Kyprianou and Almunia 2006:79) to favour a more expensive 'Mediterranean' diet, despite the fact that food prices rose slightly more than the consumer price index (Ibid.:86). "Increased leisure, in the form of more foreign holidays and a larger number of trips to restaurants

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[21] Rapport mentions (2007:223) other uses of cosmopolitanism in a review article/debate. The list is too long to cite here. We refer readers to the original.

has resulted in higher consumer awareness as regards foreign foods and drinks" (ibid.:74). But from the same paragraph we find, "… the increasing share of Europe's population in active employment and the growing number of large supermarkets has generally led to a reduction in the average number of shopping trips that are made for food each week" (ibid.:74). In other words, the higher number of active workers and moribund productivity means that more workers are working less than before and so each has more leisure time, which is spent on more international holidays, which, according to this EU report, allegedly fuels the demand for 'international' foods (this is circular reasoning, obviously). There is also a phenomenal increase in the number of stores and restaurants with Italian names (except for Italy, of course, where American names reign), even when the stores and restaurants do not offer Italian products. Why these small but significant changes?

These choices, however freely made, are not without a price. The costs of the Community's Europeanization policies have made it difficult for the middle class to continue its usual strategy of climbing the social ladder by aping elite manners. Estimates of these costs vary from €32 (the EU claim) to €873 (claimed by a British think tank)[22]. This latter figure includes direct taxes and hidden costs to meet EU standardisation (house wiring, business systems, etc.). For example, many formerly 'grey market' smaller services are billed explicitly by people afraid of more vigilant governments now obliged to meet EU standards of fiscal responsibility. Moreover, EU agricultural policies of quotas offset by subsidies may have increased food costs by 25% to 80% compared to world market prices[23].

Normally, refined behaviour that signalled a jump in status had to be validated by material signs of superior rank – a country house, old furniture, elegant clothes, a tonier address, and vacations in the mountains. These are increasingly beyond the reach of the middle class. In fact, it is the older class dynamics described a generation ago by Bourdieu (1984) that are disappearing as cosmopolitanism and the EU create a patchwork of new identity signs. There is, however, a complication: choosing the more costly 'cosmopolitan' option – Bobo ('bourgeois bohemian') diets, exotic vacations, and imported designer clothes and music – limits investments in traditional markers that the middle class has not completely abandoned – good schools, a 'proper' address, etc. This dilemma weakens people's emotional investment in national political cultures seen as no longer able to guarantee traditional status structures and practices, pushing people further along the cosmopolitan spiral. It is the European version of American Bobo slumming with homeboy fashions described by Brooks (2000).

This dynamic is complicated by the standardised definitions of social space that accompanies Europeanization policies. Europeanization claims to celebrate national

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[22] http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/ (4-09-06).

[23] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Agricultural_Policy#Artificially_high_food_prices (04-09-06).

cultures[24], but only those sectors that are attached to very explicit ideological discourses – 'historic' period architecture, museum (or 'national') art[25], 'efficient' and 'rational' urban planning. Under the guise of celebrating local history by allegedly restoring public spaces, the EU is establishing a hyper-historically correct 19th century architectural baseline as a point of aesthetic reference that distances people from the immediacy of 'their' urban places. Moreover, the ideological subtext of 'high' culture (cf. Gellner 1983) targeted by the EU ignores traditional cultural dynamics ('cultural intimacy', in Herzfeld's felicitous formulation, 1997) that once blended 'official' and 'low' culture (eating, dressing and even sexual performance) to produce 'national' stereotypes, often complex and contradictory but nonetheless efficient in defining a nebulous space where the ritualised combat of complicity and resistance between 'oppressive' State and 'free' citizen took place. People are finding it difficult to claim 'their' traditional public spaces increasingly dominated by cosmopolitan signs yet semiotically denatured by EU policies of hyper-historic realistic restoration that establish a mythified *belle-époque* as an aesthetic baseline far removed from the present.

Our argument is that this vicious circle has transformed intimate identity into a new battlefield that undermines people's 'traditional' reaffirmation of the intimate Self vis-à-vis State management. This pushes people to break with 'national' culture and 'local' tradition to reinvent themselves *and* the public spaces they inhabit. The consequences for individual status and identity can be catastrophic as local spaces become redefined in terms of distant places (an individual strategy: cosmopolitanism that creates a demand for high end shops offering 'exotic' and imported items) and a distant time (a government strategy: visual hyper-correctness that validate *ancien regime* aesthetics). This process is inseparable from changes to more 'private' aspects of the Self: dress, food (usually associated with private space but also attached to the local in terms of shopping and by its 'traditional' regional signification) and entertainment. In brief, assaults to the traditional culture of place, which until recently normalised the antagonistic forces of State 'tradition' and citizen 'resistance', are today threatened as new definitions of intimacy and individuality emerge in response to growing EU intrusion. The result is perhaps immeasurable but nonetheless significant pressure on the urban middle classes, expressed as growing frustration and cynicism, which may be a prelude to its

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[24] For example: "Diversity is one of the defining features of the enlarged European Union. With the prospect of further enlargement ahead, differences such as those in living conditions, quality of life and cultural traditions are likely to be more pertinent than ever. While the nurturing of cultural diversity lies at the heart of the European ideal, fostering greater cohesion is also a central priority" (European Community 2005b:3).

[25] Of course, large museums display international art; curators and critics are often united by the reification of art as an allegedly classless and stateless category. However, museum *funders* are undoubtedly aware of the prestige of being able to brag about being able to house highly-coveted acquisitions from abroad. The Mona Lisa in the Louvre is a quintessential French painting.

disappearance as a significant player in traditional power arrangements within long-established politico-cultural frameworks.

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Guy Lanoue obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in 1984 and has taught in various universities in Canada and in Italy. Since 1994, he has taught at the Université de Montréal. His research interests are in pop culture, the anthropology of Italy and of urban spaces, and in the ideological dynamics of the everyday.

Vincent Mirza is Assistant Professor in Anthropology at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Ottawa. His interests focus on the dynamics of social transformations under advanced capitalism. He examines through various themes such as work, gender, popular culture and urban ethnography how political economy is linked to everyday life, to different modes of incorporation and (dis)incorporation, but also how the past, present and future are represented in the formation of a social order.

Jorge Pantaleon received his PhD from the Museu Nacional (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) in 2004 and since then he has taught at the Université de Montréal. His interests include economic ethnography and social and cultural transformations in Latin-American contemporary societies.