THE INTEGRATION OF "EAST" AND "WEST"
SLOVENIAN "EUROCRATS" AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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This paper explores the politics of identity construction in the institutions of the European Union after the European Union began its expansion to the east in the year 2004. To do so it will present an analysis of the career narratives of first generation of Slovenian EU officials. Approaching the issue of identity from the perspective of career narratives provides a constructive complement to existing anthropological theories on the construction of identity in the EU institutions that have been based primarily on an exploration of the relationship between the national and the European.
Keywords: *anthropology, European Union, identity, integration, cultural constructions of expertise.*

Besedilo raziskuje vprašanje konstrukcije identitete v ustanovah Evropske Unije po njeni širitvi na vzhod v letu 2004 na podlagi pripovedi o poklicni karieri prve generacije slovenskih uradnikov v EU. Spoznanja o identiteti, kakršna omogočajo analize pripovedi, so konstruktivno dopolnilo znanim antropološkim teorijam o pojmovanju identitete v ustanovah EU, ki so temeljile predvsem na analizi razmerja med Evropo in nacijo.
Ključne besede: *antropologija, Evropska unija, identiteta, integracija, kulturna konstrukcija ekspertize.*

This paper will explore the politics of identity construction in the present European Union (EU). With the expansions of 2004 and 2007, the EU realized a project of historic proportions with the integration of Eastern and Western Europe after the end of the Cold War. How did this expansion of the EU to the so-called East inform processes of identity formation in the EU institutions themselves, which experienced an analogous integration process when they began welcoming EU officials from 12 new member states in 2004? In order to address this question, I will present an analytical discussion of the career narratives of the first generation of Slovenians working in the EU institutions, or "Eurocrats." In doing so I will focus on the strategies of identity they employ to make sense of and narrate their experiences in the EU institutions.

This paper is based on ongoing research among the Slovenian EU officials in the major EU institutions based in Brussels, Belgium: The European Commission (the Commission), the Council of the European Union (the Council), and the European Parliament.[1] Slovenians could assume permanent positions in these institutions only upon Slovenia's formal accession to the EU on 1 May 2004.[2] By 2006 there were approximately 120 Slovenians permanently employed in the European Commission, the largest of the EU institutions. To place this

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[1]   The research mentioned above forms an integral part of an ongoing research project entitled *The Anthropology of European Integration* (J6-9245) funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.
[2]   Slovenians had the possibility of become interns or working as temporary staff in the EU institu-

number in context, there are approximately 1430 officials of the approximately 22,000 persons employed in the Commission from the United Kingdom (Eppink 2007: 36–37). However, these figures do not include the large numbers of Slovenians working within the EU institutions that are not permanent EU officials, or *fonctionnaires* but are either national, temporary or contractual agents. The majority of Slovenians — except for the translators, interpreters, and those working the cabinet of the Slovenian members of Parliament or of the Slovenian Commissioner — are sparsely and unevenly scattered across the different EU institutions. There are some Directorates General of the European Commission in which one will find that there is still only one Slovenian permanent official; on the other hand, thee are sectors where you can find there Slovenians working on the same floor.

The Slovenians that are employed in the EU institutions comprise a heterogeneous group that includes persons with diverse professional profiles that are at different stages of the careers. They also assume an entire range of positions within the major institutions of the EU, which in turn have distinctive work environments. Their life and career histories also reflect this diversity. However, what they do have in common is that fact that they decided to pursue a career in the EU institutions. The following discussion will focus on the ways in which they construct idioms of belonging and difference as they become EU officials and fashion for themselves a professional identity as Eurocrats. In addition, I will place these articulations of identity with a broader context of existing ethnographic theories of identity politics in the EU institutions.

"BUILDING EUROPE"

Given the structure of the European Union as a supranational entity, it thus seems logical that the issue of identity has permeated anthropological research on the EU institutions. Another important reason for this lies in the nature of the project that the EU has assumed for itself — the building of Europe — a project that is itself inextricably linked to an ideal vision of a unified Europe and particular articulations of "European spirit" and European identity. Maryon MacDonald (1996) argues that the historic mission of "building Europe" is also based on what she terms a "moral historiography" developed by the founders of the then European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the institutional precursor of the EU.[3] The short term purpose of the ECSC was to create a common market for coal and steel for its member states, thus employing economic measures to prevent the possibility of war between Germany and France. Yet the founders and early members of the ECSC also had

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tions from 2003 onwards, but they could assume permanent positions only after 1 May 2004 upon completing the complex selection process known as the *concours*.

[3] The ECSC was founded in 1950, which by way of a number of changed and additions became the European Community (EC), which with the signing of the Treaty on the European Union in Maastricht in 1991 became the European Union (EU).

a much more ambitious purpose in mind, which was to resurrect what they considered to be a "properly" united Europe. They were motivated to this end by a belief in Europe as a united continent heir to a historical legacy, a past that stretches continuously from Greek and Roman times through to the establishment of the present-day European Union. Those who were involved in putting the fledgling institution on its feet were convinced that reuniting (then Western) Europe through the then ECSC would set the "historic" European project back on track.

Thus from its inception the official discourse of the EU was based upon the construction of a unified, peaceful Europe against the backdrop of the immediate past of war and dissension. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this European idea thus concerned hinged on its operation in the context of a dichotomy with the negative concept of nationalism (MacDonald 1996). Particularly in the early years, nationalism was regularly equated in official and unofficial discourse with war, aggression, or, at the very least, a limited construct of the past. This dichotomy operated so effectively and unquestioningly that it was virtually impossible to question the European project in any fundamental way within the European institutions, just as it was difficult to develop a positive discourse of nationalism that would be deemed acceptable in any way.[4]

The fact that the understanding of Europe particular to EU institutional discourse is based as well on a particular conceptualization of nationalism has meant that diversity and difference have represented a perennial challenge for the EU institutions not only at the level of discourse but also at the level of practice. One such site of tension concerns the experience of integration at the institutional level, when enlargement becomes reality with the arrival of EU officials from new member states. Much has been made of the first expansion of the then European Community in 1973 (to include the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark) both in the academic literature on the EU as by longtime EU officials. In the academic literature emphasis has been placed on the fact that the administrative culture of the then EC, steeped in large part until then in the German and French traditions of public administration came to terms with the arrival on the scene of new officials trained in the distinctive (and different) style of the British tradition of civil service (Ziller 1993; Stevens and Stevens 2001 among others).

Anthropologists have called attention to an additional issue: that the first enlargement of the then EC made EC officials realize the extent to which the institutions themselves comprise different visions, styles, cultures and languages, thus questioning the universalist nature of the European idea as well as the moral binaries upon which it is based (Bellier 2000). Longstanding EU officials who witnessed the arrival of the first generation of new EU officials described their experiences of surprise, irritation and disappointment when trying

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[4] See Doug Holme's Integral Europe (2000) for a careful analysis of the discursive and conceptual roots of EU integration and the rise of what he terms integralist discourse, which is developed and employed by political actors such a JM Le Pen as a result of an intelligent exploitations of the binaries and discursive structures upon which EU integration is based.

to reconcile their vision of reuniting Europe with the reality of accommodating the new and diverse worldviews as well as work practices of new officials into the fold. MacDonald (1996) has defined such feelings as experiences or incongruence, in other words, experiences of dissonance when one is confronted with differences in behavior or ways of thinking that causes feelings of chaos or disorder (see also Abélès 2004). These sorts of experiences are at the foundation of the process of setting boundaries that structure practices of identity, definition and difference in relational terms.

The reason I have dwelled at length here on the moral historiography of Europe and its relationship to a particular construction of nationalism has been to outline the ideology of identity that has been identified by anthropologists as the heart of EU institutional discourse. What is particularly interesting about this dichotomy is that it not only has played a formative role in the development of the EU institutions but it also is an example of a powerful myth that exists in academic discourse as well – a fact that poses an additional challenge for anthropologists. Here I am referring to what sociologist Gerard Delanty (2000) terms "the myth of cultural cohesion" that exists in integration theory: namely, that cultural cohesion is a prerequisite for social integration. Delanty argues that the notion of cultural cohesion prevalent in theories of supranational integration such as that of the European Union is very much based on particular conceptualizations of the nation-state and on essentialist views of culture. Instead of the creation of an essentialist concept of European culture, Delanty argues for an ethos of cultural pluralization to be the basis for Europeanization: in other words, that there should be a reconfiguration of the relations among the diverse cultures and nations of Europe instead of a homogenization of cultures at the level of the EU. I would develop Delanty's argument a bit further by focusing also on the other half of the dichotomy Europe : nation. In addition to maintaining a critical distance from essentialist constructions of European culture one should also not naturalize the role of nationality as a natural, essential component of identity, a danger that Delanty's vision of cultural pluralization does not necessarily avoid. The politics of identity within the EU's distinctive environment may not necessarily unfold solely along national lines and should not be analytically reduced on account of an essentialist construction of national identity.[5]

Field research in the EU institutions has gone far to explore the ways in which EU officials engage in the politics of identity on a day-to-day basis. Through an analysis of such practices, anthropologists have developed analytical counterpoints to the system of categories that structure identity on an official level. This inevitably implies engaging the dichotomy Europe/nation on some level, either by researching attempts on the part of the EU to "build up" European identity (Shore 2000), exploring the development of European transparent statistical indicators (Thedvall 2006), and the practice of European science (Zabusky 2000).

Those who have focused explicitly on EU officials and their identity politics have

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[5] See Thedvall (2006) for a discussing concerning the reification of nationality and the nation-state in EU studies.

had to walk a fine line in approaching the issue of nationality. While they are unanimous in arguing that Eurocrats primarily interpret difference in national terms, they strive to refrain from essentializing national identity, maintaining instead a focus on identity in relational terms and exploring the role of nationality as a potential marker of identity in a multicultural, multinational work environment. This entails analyzing the role of nationality stereotypes (MacDonald 1996, 1997; Zabusky 2000), the role of nationality in a multilingual or transnational environment (Abélès 1993; Bellier 1995, 2000b), the use of nationality as a moral explanation (MacDonald 1997) and the strategic use of stereotypes on the part of Eurocrats in daily life (Abélès 2004).

I propose that a focus on career narratives and discourses of professionalism comprise an ideal site for the creation and recreation of a professional European identity on the part of Slovenian Eurocrats. As relative newcomers to the EU institutions, they have had to make cultural sense of their move to Brussels in both professional and personal terms in an effort to refashion their identity as EU officials. Focusing on their career narratives in a broad perspective provides the possibility for understanding how Slovenian EU officials situate their experiences in their own referential universe as well as for identifying the contexts and terms in which they create links and negotiate perceived disjunctures. Finally, these career narratives also potentially represent a relatively neutral terrain for exploring the ways in which Slovenians engage the politics of identity outlined by anthropologists researching the EU institutions primarily before the EU's enlargement to the "East."

STRATEGIES OF IDENTIFICATION

When relating to me their first experiences within the EU institutions, many of my interlocutors would mention the introductory seminars that were mandatory for all new employees. Not only would they bring up the issue of the seminars because they formed part of their initial experiences at the EU institutions, but they would also mention them in the context of describing the on-the-job training program in general, which they evaluated in very positive terms. As a EU official one is required to spend between one to two weeks a year attending training seminars, and each EU official is responsible for drafting one's own training plan for the year. They would particularly single out the initiative accorded to officials in defining their own training and the range of possible seminars available as significant features of the training system. One could attend seminars on a range of topics, including specialized training in one's own field, IT training, management training, and of course language classes.

The material that was presented at the compulsory introductory training courses was in great part of a practical nature, including basic information meant to aid people moving to Brussels for the first time to information about the particular nature and operation of the EU bureaucracy. Furthermore, for those who did not do internships at the EU institutions

before assuming their positions in Brussels, these seminars would represent the first time that they were exposed to the EU's official ideology of multiculturalism. A significant part of the introductory seminar involved classes about multiculturalism, which were meant as an aid for all new employees in their transition to the distinctive work environment of the EU institutions. The ideology of multiculturalism represented the way that the EU institutions dealt with the issue of national diversity, recasting problematic national differences in positive terms as cultural diversity and cultural richness. The discourse of multiculturalism does not propose a vision of European history and unity so much as a mode of harmonious cooperation among culturally diverse actors.

Abélès (2004) argues that the talk of cultural diversity has become an official discourse of moral and political correctness that provides the means for maintaining the idea of European unity while sidestepping the issue of national difference to which it is otherwise inextricably linked. From the point of view of relative newcomers such as my interlocutors, the concept of multiculturalism as a discursive strategy for integrating newcomers is effective to the extent that it is inclusive of difference and unimposing as a theory as well as a mode of practice. The vast majority of my informants interpreted their first experiences in the EU institutions as empowering instead of disconcerting or foreign. They singled out the mechanisms set in place to integrate new officials, from the dissemination of practical information to being assigned a mentor from their department to whom they could turn for assistance. They felt that they were taken "seriously" from the very first day of work and that they were received in such a manner that allowed them to officially "fit in" the institutions as Slovenians on their own terms without their nationality being a significant issue. In fact, their being a citizen of a new member state was the very characteristic enabled them to embark upon a career in the EU institutions.

The fact that the EU's discourse of multiculturalism presumes the existence of diversity creates space for the articulation of potentially diverse constructions of identity and difference. This potentially means that such a framework could facilitate the development and coexistence of specific, even conflicting understandings of nationality and multiculturalism. For the majority of Slovenian Eurocrats, especially those ranked in higher positions, employment in the EU institutions was not the first "international" or "European" experience. Instead employment in the EU institutions was the culmination of a series of experiences abroad, often including university study or employment. Many had either even completed a postgraduate degree at one of the Colleges of Europe, for example, or completed an internship at the EU institutions. Such experiences potentially provided them with the means to formulate their own conceptualizations of multiculturalism on the basis of their own experiences with cultural difference.

This of course does not mean that Slovenian officials upon assuming their position within the EU institutions did not need time to find out how things work in their new work environment — either to decipher EU jargon, or to learn how their particular institution operates or to decipher the work culture in their particular department. Many of

my interlocutors would explain that it would take them a few months to get the hang of things in order to work effectively. Furthermore, they needed to learn how to work with colleagues of different nationalities in a particular institutional context[6] — how to interpret the ways that people from different countries spoke English as a foreign language, how to interpret emails depending on the sender (for example, interpreting different understandings of urgency), and how to develop a certain sort of flexibility in order to accommodate differences in working practices. In this context, differences in nationality were recast — as per the official multicultural discourse — almost as personality differences to which one needed to adapt as well as even anticipate in order for work to run smoothly. Many in this context also added that the attribution of certain characteristics to individuals along lines of nationality inevitably led to the development and implementation of national stereotypes, which are quite prevalent in the EU institutions (MacDonald 1997; Bellier 1995).

While Slovenians would argue that the stereotypes did in effect coincide with certain observable differences between colleagues of different nationalities, these stereotypes served predominantly as a means for classifying as opposed to evaluating diversity among one's colleagues. Yet as citizens from a small new member state they would also observe that differences between colleagues of different nationalities also implied varied interpretations of difference. Namely, colleagues of different nationalities can in effect have different or even conflicting understandings of multiculturalism just as they have different criteria for cultural difference and even different levels of tolerance for certain instances of difference. In addition, certain differences can be interpreted in diverse ways. One of my interlocutors argued that multiculturalism can mean completely different things for large member states and small member states, who deal on a daily basis with the homogenizing tendencies that unfold in varying contexts both within and beyond the borders of the EU institutions. This person jokingly made a comment in relation to the institutions being a multilingual environment, remarking that accepting the fact that English is becoming the *lingua franca* of the EU institutions means something very different to a Slovenian than to a Frenchman, given that French had been the dominant language spoken within the halls of the EU institutions since its foundation.

Slovenians thus noted distinctions among their Eurocrat colleagues in terms of nationality and became versed in reading nuances or distinctions in the understanding of difference along national lines. Yet for the most part they did not consider national differences to represent significant or essential differences among their colleagues, which itself can be considered on their part as a strategy of identification, which could be expressed in a number of ways. One such way would be through a particular understanding of multiculturalism, which would be cast in global terms and thus place the differences among EU member

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[6] I have to qualify this statement because there are some Slovenians — such as translators — who spend a vast majority of their time with other Slovenians, as their department is composed solely of Slovenes. They do have contact with EU colleagues from other countries, but not in their immediate work environment.

states and officials in a different light. For example, some of my interlocutors claimed that they did not consider the EU institutions themselves to be "really" multicultural, as they felt that there were not "real" cultural differences separating the persons working in the institutions. Instead they would set EU nationalities in opposition to the scale of diversity that one could find beyond Europe's borders: "We are all European: we all belong to the same civilization. What if we had someone from China or from Iran working our department?" The differences among nationalities within the EU were conceptually resolved at the level of a broader European identity constructed in terms of civilization. On the other hand, such a statement is also an example of marking nationalities in a differential manner while recognizing the existence of distinctions among nations: the distinctions between EU nationalities are unmarked while the distinctions between EU nations and non-EU nations are marked as a means of emphasizing the existence of a social border on the part of a relative newcomer.

Another strategy of identification employed to relativize the significance of nationality among Eurocrats was the development of a transnational professional identity particular to the institutions themselves. One of my informants would argue that the EU institutions attract people of a particular professional profile and that this professional profile was more significant than the existence of national differences within the working environment of the EU institutions. The entire hiring process is structured in such a way that it enables EU officials to choose a certain type of professional, which entailed choosing candidates that fulfill all the formal and informal requirements considered by the relevant authorities to enable a prospective employee to best "fit" into the existing institutional environment.

Furthermore, the relativization of nationality enabled my Slovenian interlocutors to compile positive career histories and transnational constructions of expertise. As mentioned earlier, Slovenian Eurocrats comprise a heterogeneous group of civil servants of different ages, diverse professional backgrounds and varied professional experiences. This diversity is also reflected in the varied narratives that they relate when recounting how they arrived to Brussels. Some structure their careers in linear terms, guided by a constant interest in Europe and EU affairs, an interest that is successfully realized by meeting the ritual challenges presented by the EU institutions' selection process know as the *concours*. Others base their narratives on a continuous need for professional challenges and variety, the fulfillment of which brought them to Brussels and the EU institutions. In such narratives, challenges are successfully met, mobility and versatility important values, and narrators have a large degree of control over their careers. Even negative experiences are recast as learning experiences to be valued as constructive in career term. While some of my interlocutors raised the question as to whether they believed that the EU institutions were the appropriate career option for them, such questioning was always done from the position of expertise.

IDENTIFICATION AND DISJUNCTURE

Some may argue that such positive, even ideal narratives are evidence of the particular position of Slovenians as relative newcomers making their way in the EU institutions. Do Slovenians encounter situations that they consider to challenge these ideal configurations of identity in daily life? When do differences become significant for them and how do they deal with potential challenges to their identity construction? Exploring such questions ethnographically necessarily implies dealing with certain features of the configuration of Slovenian Eurocrats that one faces upon trying to conduct research in Brussels. One such challenge entails dealing with the fact that Slovenians are scattered across all the EU institutions and departments; furthermore, they assume a variety of positions — from the political to the technocratic to the service-oriented positions. Thus taken as a group, they exemplify not only the heterogeneity of experience that one can observe in these institutions but are also evidence of the fact that there does not exist one single EU institutional culture. It is thus very difficult to ascertain if there are sites of tension that are common to all Slovenian Eurocrats.

However, there is one issue common to all Eurocrats that I have observed to have taken on a new dimension for all the EU officials employed after the expansion of the EU — this includes as well all the Eurocrats from the new member states. Here I am referring to the perennial problem of the EU: hiring practices. Numerous analysts have written about the tensions created by the ways in which the institutions hire employees and the role that nationality plays in this process, despite the official position of the EU institutions being that nationality is not a factor in either hiring or promoting EU officials. Yet at the same time the EU administration needs to have effective mechanisms at its disposal in order to maintain what they officially term "a geographic balance" in the representation of new member states within the EU institutions at all levels of the institutional hierarchies. It is for this reason that hiring practices as well as de facto criteria for promotion — despite official discourses based on meritocracy and multiculturalism — are fraught with tension, tension along national lines that analysts across disciplines argue have been literally built into the system despite its claims to being a supranational institution.

Maintaining a "geographical balance" becomes a particular challenge after each new enlargement of the European Union, which brings with it the need to ensure equitable representation of each new member state in accordance with its population at all levels of the institutional hierarchies. To this end, the EU administration through the services of EPSO (European Personnel Selection Office) would organize open competitions for positions only for the new member states as a way of ensuring this representation (Stevens and Stevens 2001). Yet before the enlargement of 2004 the institutions had to deal with the fact that the number of member states would almost double overnight. Partially in response to this reality the EU institutions upon the expansion of 2004 adopted a new set of Staff

Regulations,[7] which including a restructuring of the ranking system of Eurocrats as well as a new pay scale that would be valid for all Eurocrats but would not adversely affect the salaries of Eurocrats employed before 2004. This pay scale was interpreted as being substantially different from the one that existed before 2004, and some of my interlocutors argued the changed in the ranking and system and pay scale often resulted in situations where an "old" Eurocrat and a "new" Eurocrat doing the same kind of work would have substantially different salaries.

Furthermore, while each new member state informally has a certain number of civil servants allotted to them at all levels of hierarchy, the vast majority of positions made available to potential applicants of the new member states are mostly at the bottom of the hierarchy, requiring little or no previous professional experience. Such a strategy structurally protects the pre-2004 institutional hierarchy and builds into the structure of the EU institutions a significant distinction between old and new Eurocrats. The only "mitigating" quality of this built-in asymmetry is that the distinction between old and new Eurocrats that is not based explicitly on nationality, as it is valid for all EU civil servants that are accepted into the EU institutions after the adoption of the new Staff Regulations, regardless of their country of origin.

The problematic issue outlined above represents for my Slovenian interlocutors a classic example of a feature of the EU system that causes what MacDonald (1997) termed experiences of incongruence between the official EU discourse of multiculturalism and its implicit undertones of an egalitarian footing among all EU officials and the differences created between old and new Eurocrats. The issue of the distinction between old and new Eurocrats is a delicate one. However, some of my more open or loquacious interlocutors would bring up the issue themselves, though most often in the form of an oblique side comment. However, even such side comments were expressed when the speakers would be on the "nationality neutral" terrain of career narratives and when talk would turn away from their initial experiences at the EU, which were systematically defined in the most positive of terms. They would often touch on this issue when evaluating or planning their career in the long term, trying to reconcile expectations and prospects for constructing a "proper" career as a Eurocrat.

One of the most common mechanisms that my interlocutors employed in their narratives to deal with this disjuncture when placing their careers in a broader temporal context was to also expand their perspective in spatial terms, placing their career dilemmas in a context that would include Brussels and Slovenia. I purposefully use the word dilemma, as I had some informants who would literally outline a list of pros and cons, comparing their prospects in Brussels and in Slovenia in order to assess whether it was worthwhile to remain in the EU institutions or not. Furthermore, they would evaluate certain features of the job from different perspectives, assessing certain features both from a Slovenian

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7   See: http://ec.europa.eu/reform/2002/chapter07_en.htm.

and a EU context. For example, Slovenians are conscious of the salary differences among Eurocrats. Yet they would continue their train of thought by saying that their "new" Eurocrat salaries are high for Belgian standards and more so for Slovenian standards. Why would they return to Slovenia to become a civil servant if in the EU institutions they made as much as a minister in the Slovenian government here in Brussels? Some would also in such contexts mention stories to me, citing as an example the story of a woman (from a different new EU member state) with a Ph.D. who took the *concours* to come to Brussels to become a secretary in the EU institutions because the salaries are still so much higher in Brussels than in her home country.

Yet the question of salary does not represent a problematic issue for my informants; instead, the most difficult issue they had to negotiate in their narratives concerned the extent to which this disjuncture challenged their identity as professionals in a EU context. For example, several interlocutors were involved in EU affairs during the exciting years of Slovenia's accession to the EU. Given the dimensions of the accession project and the small number of existing EU specialists in Slovenia, Slovenia's accession provided an opportunity for many young professionals who were able to work on important projects and gain singular professional experiences. They succeeded in finding a professional niche. Many of interlocutors who belonged to this group looked to working in the EU institutions as a logical step in their career, but very few of them were able to capitalize on their professional experiences in a way that translated into more than an entry-level position at the EU institutions simply because so few higher level positions were made available for Slovenians. For this particular group of Slovenians, taking an entry-level could even be considered a step "down" in certain contexts. Many related to me that they had been idealists when they applied for their positions in Brussels, thinking strategically that it was a priority simply to "get in" and work one's way up, building a career. However, they then related that upon settling in their new job in Brussels and after a number of intense years working on Slovenia's accession and being delegated important responsibilities, they had difficulty adapting to the tempo and dimensions of the EU bureaucratic machine. For some the slow bureaucratic process at which projects are realized was a disappointment, particularly for those working in the Commission, an immense apparatus compared to the Slovenian civil service. Some would in effect look on Slovenia's civil service with positive eyes despite the differences in salary, remarking that its size enabled it to be more flexible and agile, and one could actually "get somewhere," while in the Commission one would have to work hard for 10–15 years to move to the lowest level accorded some decision-making authority and become Head of Unit. One of my informants, employing a different tack, recast this problem as a future problem for the EU administration. In their view the hiring policy implemented for new member states was a mistake, as it would in the long run create a "brain drain" from the EU institutions of these "new" Eurocrats who would not see for themselves any real career prospects at the institutions. In this context, working in the EU institutions in their present position was recast in terms of a professional investment that would provide

my informants with the necessary skills and experience to assume an "interesting" position in Slovenia (or elsewhere) when such an opportunity would arise.

The commentaries that I have sketched out in brief above form part of the strategies of identification and differentiation that my interlocutors employ to claim their position among their colleagues as well as to compile their particular sense of identity as Slovenian Eurocrats. These strategies include a specific "multicultural" approach to difference when defined in terms of nationality, in some contexts a particular sense of European-ness to relativize differences among EU member states, as well as a transnational sense of professional identity developed within the context of the official EU discourse of multiculturalism. Their narratives provide evidence of multiculturalism, nationality and difference to be constructed as well as contested concepts, thus drawing into sharper focus the operation of EU official discourse.

On the one hand, the way that Slovenian Eurocrats engage the issue of national difference can be relativized as a strategy of identification on the part of a newcomer who is claiming their place within the EU framework. However, against the backdrop of the official EU discourse of multiculturalism, the comments of my interlocutors about Eurocrats being the same as they are all "European," which can be interpreted as a response of the EU's official construction of multiculturalism, can shed light on the operation of multiculturalism as a strategy of identification in official, institutional terms. Defining the differences among Eurocrats by employing a particular construction of national difference — one that defines nationality solely as a character trait — in effect depoliticizes national difference. This sort of strategy thus also operates as a mechanism for redirecting attention away from existing asymmetries to national differences among Eurocrats understood in very specific terms. Upon focusing on the career narratives related Slovenian Eurocrats, significant, essential differences are not conceived predominantly in terms of national difference, but more in terms of the status differences accorded to "old" and "new" Eurocrats that has institutionalized a dimension of inequality between those who became employed before and after 2004 in the EU institutions. These distinctions cannot be reconciled either with the official EU discourse of multiculturalism or the egalitarian, nuanced discourse with which Slovenians construct their identity as EU officials. The career narratives outlined above provide a relatively neutral terrain for the negotiation of problematic processes of differentiation as well as the creation and recreation of professional identities across different contexts, as Slovenian Eurocrats make their way in the daily operation of the EU institutions.

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INTEGRACIJA »VZHODA« IN »ZAHODA«
SLOVENSKI »EVROKRATI« IN POLITIKA IDENTITETE V USTANOVAH EVROPSKE UNIJE

V raziskavi o vprašanju identitete v ustanovah Evropske Unije po njeni širitvi na vzhod v letu 2004 avtorica analizira, kako je integracija »vzhodne« in »zahodne« Evrope v Evropski uniji (EU) vplivala na pojmovanje identitete tistih družbenih akterjev, ki delajo v samem jedru ustanov EU. Raziskava temelji na analizi pripovedi prve generacije slovenskih uradnikov EU oz. evrokratov. Takšne pripovedi ustvarjajo idealen kontekst za preučevanje postavljanja družbenih mej, razvoja strategij pripadnosti ter diferenciacije kakor tudi ustvarjanja transnacionalne poklicne identitete v širšem kontekstu uradnega diskurza EU o multikulturnosti. Spoznanja o identiteti, kakršna omogočajo analize poklicnih pripovedi, so konstruktiven dodatek k poznanim antropološkim teorijam o pojmovanju identitete v ustanovah EU, ki temeljijo predvsem na analizi razmerja med Evropo in nacijo.

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