Visegrad group
Shared Identities

Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Lund University, Sweden
Identity

• Conceptualised in the process of continuous construction (contestation, negotiation etc)
• Both the outcome of social practices and prerequisite for them
• A product of both choices of actors and of social structures
• Encapsulated in boundaries and bonds
Shared Identities

• Central Europe (legacy of Habsburg and ”Zwischeneuropa”
• Eastern Europe
• New Europe
Central Europe

• *Mitteleuropa* between Russia and West (Friedrich Neumann 1915)

• *Stredni Evropa/Europa Srodkowa* (Tomas Masaryk, Milan Hodza, Jozef Pilsudski and their political followers)
Central Europe

• Central Europe – united by democratic traditions, shared history and culture (Istvan Bibo, Jam Patocka, Oskar Halecki, journal *Kultura*)

• Central Europe – as cultural and political project in the 1970s and 1990s: Jenö Szucs, Gyorgy Konrad, Czeslaw Milosz, Milan Kundera and the democratic opposition
Central Europe

• Central Europe as a postmodern landscape in the eyes of Western intellectuals (eg. Claudio Magris ”Donau” 1986)

• Visegrád Four 1991.
East European Identity – Boundaries and Borders

• Physical and military border
• Political border
• Economic border
• Communication border
Fernand Braudel

• Les évenements

• Les conjonctures

• La longue durée
East European Identity – Boundaries and Borders

• Religious border
• Civilisational border
• Mental border of mutual stereotypes
Stereotypes

WEST
• Prosperity
• Development
• Technological progress
• order

EAST
• Poverty
• Stagnation
• backwardness
• disorder
Stereotypes

WEST

• Rule of law
• Work of ethics
• Belief in human dignity

EAST

• Lawlessness
• Sloth
• Contempt for the individual
Bonds binding East Europeans

• Commonality of geographical territory and its geopolitical consequences (Center – Periphery relation)

• Commonality of past experiences and memories (late modernisation, specific process of nation building, double experience of war followed by long total rule)
It was a principal theatre of the genocide of European Jews, of systematic social and ethnic cleansing policies, the terrain of deployment of the greatest military machines, and of burnt earth; of forced population movements, of flight; and of a liberation that was to a great extent the replacement of one foreign occupation by another. There is no point in the map of this region, no family, no biography that is not marked by this double experience.

This is the central zone of the "century of extremes"

Karl Schlögel, 2009

"Places and Strata of Memory. Approaches to Eastern Europe", Eurozine, published online 2008-12-19
Bonds binding East Europeans

- Behaviour patterns of ”homo sovieticus”
  - Moral relativism
  - Learned passivity, helplessness and the acceptance of state paternalism
  - Demand for egalitarian distribution as opposed to meritocratic justice
  - Blaming the system for personal failures and raising claims against the state as opposed to self-reliance
  - The emphasis on security as opposed to readiness for risk
Behaviour patterns of ”homo sovieticus”

• Passivism and escape to the private sphere as opposed to public participation (electoral absenteeism)
• Dwelling on the remembrances of the past instead of actively anticipating and constructing the future (pessimistic view of the future)
• Dogmatism and intolerance in thought as opposed to the recognition of pluralism and tolerance
New Europe or just Europe? New Dynamics

• The New East?
• Asymmetry of interest, perception and memory
• The Dissolution of Eastern European Bonds?
• Western Europe or New Europe?
Some recommended books

• Barth, Fredrik 1969 *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, London.


Some recommended books

Some recommended books


Thanks !!!