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Regaining Dignity in Europe

The fact that Eastern Europe is an invention, a western imaginary does not need to be repeated. Hence what never existed cannot be reinvented, still the expression itself validates it into existence. The concept however is harmful only if the depiction intends to denote lesser quality or worth. This is counterproductive if Europe wants to pose as a whole, integrated package to the world, first we should have order at home and then present ourselves to the outside.

Still, it seems that alterity making is a natural process, it happens nationally, the city versus the country, the north versus the south, the capital vs. non-capital cities carry various levels of imaginary worth. To my mind, the east-western Europe is a similar dichotomy. Yet, alterity making is not in itself a bad thing, it is part of identity creation and negotiation of worth. Looking at the *raison d'être* of the phenomenon and analysing it can be helpful though.

Obviously seeing social and political phenomena in dichotomies is not a fruitful approach. The distinction between the “west” whatever that means, and the “east” Europe was often explained by a ‘twenty year gap’, in speed of development – where the measure is the level of democracy and capitalism – it was realistic in terms of economic and political development, but that was twenty years ago. As a result of communism there also was a detectable difference in the mentality of people a generation ago, but of course on a human level we cannot talk about a qualitative distinction. Overcoming the legacy of communism is one thing and it is just as difficult as overcoming Nazism, yet we don’t talk about post-Nazi Germany but we talk about post-communist East Europe? Can a country or region be defined by its past? If so then how long? If the gravity of the (political) system is the benchmark than the UK should be post-colonialist, Germany post- Nazi. Obviously the problems with the rhetoric remain.

Can we talk about regaining dignity in eastern Europe? Is there indeed a collective dignity? In my opinion there are certain political systems in which it is impossible to maintain dignity. The question remains: If such a system is over does dignity reappear automatically?