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# IDENTITY AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR INTERPRETING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

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## Abstract

When studying the complex issue of identity, it is necessary to decompose it into individual parts or contexts that reveal partial identities. Since they are connected to each other, a particular change in a certain identity may induce further changes in others, or even all of them. Together they create a configuration of complex Identity that is unique, original and variable in time and space. Identity is a system that can be managed. Human being can be converted into an instrument of satisfying needs, a consumer of products. People are open to what is considered and labelled as legitimate in the social world. The social world is primary; it is a cultural text, in which the processes of defining and self-defining are ongoing. It is therefore essential to view a person or society as a holder of multiple identities.

*Keywords:* contexts of identity, deconstruction, variability, configuration

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## 1. Introduction

The term 'identity' is of Latin origin and means sameness or consistency. The identity is a feature of something that is the same (identical in uniqueness), although it can be named or perceived in different ways [1]. Identity is a result of the identification process – formation of the subject according to another model or example. By identifying, a person acquires features of another person or a group, and exhibits similar behaviour [2]. Fay denies the substantial identity as just atomistically understood, elementary encapsulated entity. Relationship between the subject and the other is interactive. Identification of the entity consists of its own identification (feeling different from the others) and of being seen as different by the others. If there is a coherence between individual (subjective) identity and the group (objective) identity, the identity is formed. This two-dimensional interaction determines the subject and its environment. Ability of the subject to interact can also be named as *porosity* – the ability to suck [3], which is one of the major anthropological attributes of human.

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The answer to the question **WHO AM I?** significantly determines our behaviour, opinions, attitudes, value orientations and acts. Generally, the answer to this simple question can be very problematic. It is because there is usually more than one correct answer. But the main problem is not the number, it is ambiguity and diversity of the answers. Complex studying of identity requires to deconstruct the issue into individual parts, depending on the socio-cultural situation in a particular time and space. (Derrida's interpretation of deconstruction means the demolition and removal of traditional ideas in thinking and structuring. It is a deep analysis of usual semantic units until the hidden or suppressed assumptions appear. Criticism of tradition is done in the name of tradition. Compared to classical structuralism which worked with the idea of a static structure, dynamic nature is now essential [4].) If the general Identity (with capital 'I'), as the main subject of interest, is deconstructed, partial identities (contexts) are revealed – generic, ethnic, religious, local, regional, state, national, sexual, gender, generational, social, professional, political and cultural. (Eagleton uses the term Culture as a paradigm for distributive examination of culture. Existence of something specific (culture) is determined by existence of something general (Culture) [5].)

A characteristic feature of identity is its interpretativeness [6]. It results from the individuality and variability of the identification process, which can even lead to the pseudoidentity. (Identification is an efficient way to remove certain types of frustration. Political or military features of a national hero can become familiar to a frustrated and chronically unsuccessful *small man* [2].) By identifying with the dominant, exhibitionist or highly liveable model, an individual or a group can acquire certain features of dominance, exhibitionism or sociability. Identification is a natural reaction of humans in meeting their needs. Lawless identified seven basic human needs (living existence and its security, sex regulation, care for offsprings, relations to the unknown and unknowable, protection and management outside of the kinship, use and management of leisure time, treatment of maladjusted members of society) [7] while Malinowski distinguishes three universal levels of human needs - 1. basic (biological), 2. instrumental, 3. symbolic and integrative needs that determine cultural reactions (supply, kinship systems, security and defense...) [8]. In order to satisfy them, social organization (system of social roles and social status) and social institutions (economic, educational, family, religious, state-administrated, recreational and rehabilitation) were created [7]. They consist of various social structures (family, school, Church, work groups, etc.). In this environment, the identity is formed as one of the results of socio-cultural processes. Participation and/or absence in these structures may cause that the person acquires and/or loses specific identities. In symbolic interactionism, identities are arranged hierarchically. The socio-psychological theory is based on the fact that the mind and personality are not included in the initial human 'equipment', but they develop throughout life [9]. Man can have as many identities, as in how many groups he/she feels to be a member.

## **2. Contexts of identity**

### **2.1. Generic, sexual and generational identity**

Primary, undeniable, biological and static identity is **generic identity** (species identity) expressed in the identification: I am human. Only in cases of mental disorders, diseases or under the influence of drugs, a person may identify himself in another way. There is some uncertainty related to the initialization of a generic identity, which arises from the continuing correlation between auto-identification (since one realizes himself) and definition of the beginning of the human as biological and spiritual body. Intense disputes about the earliest days of human existence are still ongoing in anthropological, biological, philosophical, axiological and theological studies [10-13].

Primary and biological identity is also **sexual identity** that defines women and men. Depending on their cultural identity, they are given/dictated various social roles and cultural patterns in their lives. Traditional tendency to understand sexual identity as a synonym of gender identity is no more considered accurate and true. Moreover, since there exist opportunities for sex change in the developed world, it cannot even be defined as static. In connection with the research of masculinity and femininity, the agenda of sexual identity was more or less excluded from Biology and Anthropology and integrated into gender studies. It was transformed into gender identity, originally discovered and named by cultural and social anthropologists.

#### *2.1.1. Example 1 - gender studies*

Is woman only sex? Is that all what distinguishes her from men? Is it a motherhood which defines a woman? If yes, what about childless and infertile women? Should they be considered as 'less women'? The concept of woman and man today seem to be more socio-cultural than biological phenomenon. Is sexuality formed by the type of sexual organ? Is sex identity defined by the libido? If the first assumption is true, what about women trapped in a male body and vice versa? If the second case is true, are lesbians less or more women? And what about bisexuals who do not fit into traditional gender dichotomy? As they are in minority, they can be written off as minor variation or system error; or they can be seen as a natural part of the biological spectrum and every socio-cultural space. This encourages a popular, and nowadays even scientifically relevant hypothesis, that even sex itself is just a cultural construction [3]. In some communities, the contradiction between gender and sex is not a defect, but a positive. Transsexuals in Mexico are considered as a gift or a blessing. They are respected for their sensitivity and intense relationships with family, because they care about their parents for a whole life, do not get married, do not have babies and do not leave.

Under the influence of gender, psychological and sexological approaches, **gender identity** lost its stigma of stability and traditional bipolarity, which is nowadays more attributed to cultural determinism, ignoring the biological determinism (and its sexual identity). The current philosophy of culture and society is characterized by individualization and individual perception of reality. It prefers self-identification from the social and cultural pressure. In the Euro-American culture, homosexuality, transsexuality and transvestism are no more officially considered as mental illness, congenital incapacity or consequences of childhood traumas. Transgendered describe their problem as a biological defect when the right soul is in the wrong body. Opponents say that the body is correct, but the soul is wrong and it needs to be treated.

An important factor that encouraged the separation of sexual and gender identity, now sometimes seen almost as unrelated entities, is the socio-cultural change. Forced as well as natural endogenous or exogenous diffusions led to the creation of new life strategies. They also changed the traditional social structure, organizations, social roles and the way of life of individuals and societies, originally based on bipolarity and a strict separation of male and female world. Citizenship, as the primary organizing principle of modern society, cannot be built solely on the abolition of serfdom (or another autocratic-oligarchic system), codification of the rule of law and the adoption of constitution (by *bringing* the democracy). It must be implemented by the penetration of brotherhood, equality and freedom to all *corners* of socio-cultural reality and minds of all individuals. This process may take several generations and even in Western societies, which are proudly called modern, it has not been finished yet. This can be demonstrated by the unfinished emancipation of women, gender equalization, continuing problems in understanding and defining of sex, gender and sexuality [14, 15]. (But perhaps the existence of this discourse and the opportunity to live in such a *disordered world* are a characteristic feature of modern civil society).

In the process of creating the identity, a question of origin is one of the most important. Through socialization, enculturation and intergenerational cultural transmission, **generational identity** is formed. It expresses the affiliation to family, community and ancestors. Family satisfies many human needs. As a primary social group, it significantly contributes to the formation of all partial identities. In the family, a person acquires fundamental 'cultural equipment', which is at disposal for all life. If the own family is absent or has no interest, it can be replaced by various institutes (foster families, adoptive families, foster parents, other relatives, orphanages). In some cases, generational identity may have direct relations with other identities. It is even possible to transmit some identities (ethnic, religious, cultural, state or national) intergenerationally. In conservative communities with a low vertical social or occupational mobility, even social and professional identity, are intergenerationally transmitted. On the contrary, in modern societies built on greater individuality and various types of mobility, identities may have no intergenerational relations (e.g. political, cultural, local, regional, even ethnic, religious or national identity).

## **2.2. National, state and ethnic identity**

Similarly, significant progress has been made in the definition and differentiation of **national, state and ethnic identity**. National identity refers to ethnically homogeneous communities that reached their emancipation and territorial-political objectives in the form of the own state. Ethnic identity is designed more broadly, as it is built on social, historical, cultural and religious basis. This identity relates even to such groups which were not established as nations or, vice versa, they exist(ed) without a regard to national borders (e.g. some Middle Eastern tribal structures). State identity is the result of organizational transformation of society from *societas* to *civitas*. The more 'civitas' prevails, the more significant is the nationality (modern civil world). If the 'societas' prevails, the more important is the origin, tribal or ethnic affiliation (mostly in traditionalist, conservative or less developed geopolitical regions). In some approaches, societies and historical periods, there are made certain efforts to understand the ethnic, national and state identity as identical.

### *2.2.1. Example 2 - European history, dynamism of the importance and relations of ethnic, national and state identity*

It would be naive to claim that a national revival in the second half on the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the major driver of collapses of European monarchies and their transformation to national states. However, use of the national identity (constructed from the ethno-culture of a particular majority) for these purposes is undeniable. (The main drivers were, as always before and after, socio-economic conditions and perspectives, military-political interests of elites, global international political situation and consensus of the competent). National revivalists used the concept of national culture even in justifying the ethnic sovereignty of particular European ethnic groups. One of the European transformation processes was the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy which resulted in the creation of new states. In 1918, Czechoslovakia was established. The original project of federation between Czechs and Slovaks did not come into practice, although it was one of the most important ideas and arguments of political negotiations. The Slovaks were eventually defined as part of Czechoslovak, respectively Czech nation as *another identity project*. Cultural and political ambitions of Czechs and Slovaks were already demonstrated in 1895, at the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague. The aim was to provide a picture of village way of life of the Czech people. Slovaks were presented here as a branch of the Czech nation [16]. Next realization of the idea of the own (national) state of Slovaks succeeded only in 1939. But its clerofascist background (similar to other European countries) still raises some doubts and divides society according to attitudes towards this historical period. The issue of the Slovak state is still presented as traumatic and/or a taboo.

Post-war division of the world *solved* the identity problem for nearly half a century. Ethnic, national and partly state identity were overshadowed by new identity formed by the Cold War and ideologies. On the *east*, it was the communist ideology, on the *west* - the capitalist. Geopolitical and socio-economic changes in the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century launched democratization and integration processes in Central and Eastern Europe. Nowadays, this area is presented as a whole, consisting of several separate and individual nations/states, with their own (free) and also European identity (as another project). But together with integration, many new problems have occurred. Most of them raised from multiculturalism and multiethnicity. Nations/states have to give up some exclusive competences for the benefit of the European idea, new political and economic system and administrative arrangement. At the same time, they have to deal with the pressure of minorities that are established or revitalized in the framework of pluralist minority policy. Certain 'echoes' of the original function of national and ethnic identity are present even today at all stages of the imaginary scale. From separatist, extremely nationalist and revisionist tendencies, to cultural heritage of variable communities, which are historically, ethnically, religiously or in another way different.

### 2.2.2. Example 3 - The Lowlands - historical geopolitical and socio-cultural multiethnic and multireligious area

To this day, there are communities of descendants of the inhabitants of the former Hungary, which became ethnic minorities literally *overnight*. Lowland Slovaks, Hungarian Romanians, Vojvodina Serbs, Slavonian Croats, Romanian and Vojvodina Hungarians are full citizens of new states, patriots, but also members of numerous specific communities existing today, although not in a former original whole [17].

The problem with ethnically, religiously and culturally different population was almost *solved* in Europe through repatriation, assimilation and homogenization on the basis of socialist/civil principles. But soon a new problem occurred, caused mainly by global development, intense mobility and immigration. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, national, ethnic and state identity in Europe began to operate almost as an integrated system. But this emerging symbiosis was interrupted at the turn of the millennium by immigrants and their descendants who were born in the country of destination actually as locals. The problem is caused not only by individuals, but the communities as a whole. Sometimes their presence is sophisticatedly and deliberately interpreted as problematic, because ethno-politics, cultural policy or minority policy are important elements of the European agenda. They can therefore serve as a proper ethno business tool and useful policy instrument.

Presence of ethno-religious minorities (immigrants or underprivileged communities of local people) is frequently used to *clarify* many economic and social problems. France, Italy or Germany were based on a national principle and until recently, they were presented and perceived as national states. But

current migration processes show that this is just a myth. Nationality and ethnic/national identity have no more practical ties and civic principles do not even allow them in the democratic world. Current criticism of immigration does not dispute the legitimacy of the presence of foreigners, but more likely the process of legitimation of residence and the acquisition of citizenship. Is the administrative right of residence (sometimes even automatically given) sufficient for the integration into society? Is it possible that a possession of passport can create or compensate the identity which was formed by the long-term, multi-generational participation on the formation of socio-cultural, geographical, historical, political and economic potential? Does the acquisition of the citizenship guarantee building and sharing of foreign values on foreign territory, with no relationship to people, history and genius loci? [18] Are these questions and considerations even relevant, in today's global consumer and materialistic existence? A partial answer is provided by the research of ethnicity (preservation and use of ethnic features – language, culture, ethnonym, identity, history and territory) [19]. E.g. in some communities, ethnic language is the only communication and official language. In others, it may be just one of a number of other languages. Culture also determines daily and ceremonial life in each socio-cultural area. In some of them, historical, territorial, ethnic or religious parameters are strictly defined. In others, culture is tolerant to diversity, it is based on plurality and offers some options.

The response in globalized and open world is the ongoing dispute between anti-multiculturalism (requires a strict definition of the limits of the own culture and creation of mechanisms preventing the penetration of foreign cultural patterns, values and norms into the body of the own culture) and the supporters of multiculturalist concepts of an open world based on enriching cultural, religious, ethnic and other diversity. Similarly, but in a less exposed way, there is ethnocentrism and patriotism against globalism and liberalism.

### ***2.3. Cultural, religious and socio-professional identity***

What now comes to the fore is **cultural identity**, which slowly replaces or even absorbs ethnic, national and religious identity (as too hot, dangerous or old-fashioned relics). In cultural studies, this is called the cultural turn. It is a response to de-ethnication, de-confessionalization, demythologisation and de-location of culture in a growing part of the world. Furthermore, it is a kind of defensive reaction to migration and diffusion movements, characterized by the development of massmedia culture, mass production of cultural values (kulturindustrie), transnationalization of media products, cultural imperialism, and global free flow of information. Globalization and mass media culture have such an intense impact on particular national culture, that it may be openly called as a destructive cultural change. Cultural identity is formed by what is important for the survival/preservation of the culture/community. It is an opponent to hegemonial tendencies and to what is dominant. However, it is sometimes only a purposeless, empty category, a covering manoeuvre of

national cultural industry and a Trojan horse to left-wing politics and nationalism [20].

Cultural identity is expressed by affiliation to culture. But the main question is, to which one? A particular person or group does not exist in one, but in the intersection of multiple cultures, which may differ in types and forms. Local culture is represented at the level of villages, towns, town parts and it culturally homogenizes all the people on the base of *genius loci* [21]. The intersection – the point of cultural identity - is also formed by agrarian/industrial way of life, urban/rural culture, ethnic and religious culture, minority/majority, regional, national, European or global culture. The cultural identity of each community is original and unique result of this intersection, which is changing in time and space.

**Religious identity** is a result of adopting the content of a particular religion and it means the integration to specific religious community. A person can obtain this identity even without any personal efforts, by birth and adoption of initiation ceremonies (e.g. christening). Religion may also be adopted unconsciously/ unintentionally (the baptism of newborns), or knowingly/intentionally (at their discretion). Slightly different option is the possibility of converting, accompanied by various reactions of the society. It may vary from tolerance, through a postulated confessional endogamy to penalties (even the death penalty). Particular religions exist in their own interpretations, which have developed under the influence of geographical, political, historical, economic, ethnic and cultural factors. They are placed on a scale which is passing from tolerant heresy to orthodoxy, representing dogmatism [22, 23].

### 2.3.1. Example 4 - *fundamentalism*

In its essential form represents the limits of the extreme orthodoxy. However, it is sometimes mistakenly referred to a pseudo-religion, which is presented as religion, but actually, it is not. Labelling some of the current militaristic criminal organizations as fundamentalist is not correct. It is offensive to all other legitimate fundamentalist movements. Members of these *fundamentalist* movements violate basic principles of faith and that is why they are not considered as faithful, not even by the members of the specific religion. Particularly sensitive is the question of existence and perspectives of Muslims in Europe and the Middle East. This topic is often abused and purposefully misinterpreted, mostly by media. The aim is to create a desired image and expected attitudes of Euro-American public, which would legitimize military business activities and prosperity of the countries included in the arms industry. It is necessary to clearly differentiate between orthodoxy/fundamentalism and *fundamentalism*. The link between *fundamentalism* and Islam is similar to Satanists and Christians. If the boundaries are blurred, it would be possible, on the same principle, to identify medieval inquisition with Christianity. Similarly,

burning of witches could therefore be seen as a normal practice of Christians, which is definitely not an objective evaluation of Christianity today.

When studying religious identity, two new phenomena must be taken into account: 1. declining religious endogamy and establishment of mixed families, 2. changes in the extent of realization and implementation of religion. Despite the fact that each religion has its subjective and objective implementation parameters strictly defined, in a real changing world, it is essential to adapt to current circumstances. This results in a situation in which not all members of religious communities are equal in their approach towards religion. Without a proper study of religious issues, we have at disposal only vague and irrelevant, sometimes even misleading statistics of religious structures.

### *2.3.2. Socio-professional identity*

**Socio-professional identity** comes to the fore especially within the materialistic point of view. It defines and fills the contents of all other identities. It is one of the most significant identities in practical life and social relations. Generally, it is shaped by socially established source of livelihood and related social status. When culture reached such a level of development that production specialization became necessary and possible, division of work occurred. Neolithic man changed from hunter and gatherer to a farmer-shepherd, who later became a worker-employer. Development of agriculture later allowed the emergence of a surplus and its sale/exchange. Accumulation of resources, capital formation, private property, processes of inheriting and property ownership occurred. At first, they were managed by – at that time creating - ancestral and social systems (*societas*), later by policy and legislation (*civitas*). As the spiral was spinning, new sources of livelihood emerged (from crafts, through manufactories, to industrial production). Division of labour initiated the formation of **professional identity**. In many cases, this identity was even hereditary, determined by father's employment, local communities or historical and natural conditions. Intergenerational transmission of professions was also stimulated by the absence of formal education system. In historically traditionalist communities, socio-professional identity was even closely linked to ethnic, generational, gender and social identity. Modern communities, based on civil rights and equal opportunities, manifest that education and individual skills are the primary preconditions. However, cases of the link between generational and professional identity are relatively normal and systematic even today (e.g. families or family clans of lawyers, judges, businessmen, doctors or politicians – mostly lucrative jobs with high power and influence on society). This happens also in a legitimate way, e.g. if it is necessary to pass on the capital accumulated by previous generations.

For modern societies with a high socio-professional vertical mobility, autonomy of this identity in relation to others and its frequent changes are typical. Many people repeatedly change the place of work or even the type of work during their productive age. Older generations often have difficulties to

cope with this dynamics, because this area used to be considered as one of the most static. Sometimes for centuries lasting generational continuity of agricultural or worker families living in relatively closed communities (enclaves, some of them even ethnically or religiously different), is distorted by external changes. They deal with consequences of these changes according to the given cultural equipment and adaptation/accluturation mechanisms. Moreover, this development cannot be considered as linear (what once was, never comes back). It is cyclical, as it is evidenced in the past and by revitalization of some trends under the influence of socio-economic and global political changes [24, 25].

Formation of socio-professional identity at present is generally influenced by the labour market, regional and national strategies (business plans of towns, villages, states) and global strategies of international companies. Apart from these, also cultural predispositions of certain communities (and their (non)compatibility), self-realization and self-satisfaction are playing certain role in dissemination and adaptation of professional strategies. Influence of a materialist basis on the existence of modern man is sometimes underestimated and forgotten in anthropological, ethnological and culturological trends. Socio-professional identity is often a tool for creation of all other identities. Depending on this identity, a person or entire communities are willing/are forced to resign from all other positions, presented and previously considered as fixed, stable and almost sacred.

### **3. Identity management**

By managing the identification process, it is possible to change a human into a tool for satisfying needs, means of production, power for promoting interests or a consumer of products. Socialization/enculturation fulfil exactly these goals. Besides this, they determine the quality of human life and they are an unquestioning condition of survival. A pessimist would say that each individual is a prisoner of his own society/culture with no other choice. An optimist would emphasize the position of man as creator of the culture (arts, knowledge, and inventions) and the progress of civilization. Under the guise of identity, millions of people were killed. According to C. Geertz, what makes it impossible to understand what people are doing is the lack of familiarity with their universe of ideas, within which acts are signs [6]. This is undoubtedly true, but sometimes too humanistic and optimistic. Analysis of reasons for these acts is important as well. Ethnocentric nature of man together with unfamiliarity and *ignorance* are only a partial prerequisite of explanation of traumatic events and threats at present. It is because some people are more active than others, due to their place in social hierarchy or their skills and predispositions. They can act more or less effectively. Some have more space for the application (of power) than others [3]. Elites have the support of others, they have a mandate to represent, to lead and to work in their interest. They are role models. They have the trust of the population (state), trust of employees (management), trust of worshipers (religious and spiritual leaders). But members of the elites, however,

are also members of other groups and holders of many other identities, like everyone else. They also have their (own) objectives and activities that should be taken into account.

Intentional identity management is present in every society, because it is necessary in fulfilling its objectives. According to certain inputs to the identification process, it is possible to estimate the outputs. McDonaldization of culture and various subcultures aimed at economic profit and consumption, are characteristic features of the contemporary way of life.

### **3.1. Example 5 - current hip-hop subculture**

Is based on a transparent fraud (paradox) is a very efficient investment. The credo *is to be yourself*, at all times, in all situations, have the courage, be independent and *cool*. What is ironical, is the fact that all forms of expression, vocabulary, intonation, gestures, phrases, music, lifestyle and clothing are strictly defined, in detail. To be a legitimate member, you have to live the hip-hop culture exactly as it should be. It is opposite to the main slogan to be yourself and it is even contrary to the very philosophy of subcultures. This applies not only to hip-hop, but for all teenage trends (countercultures) in consumer society. Due to commercialization, a counterculture changes to the *counterculture* – a subculture which is a result of commercial strategies of show business. Target groups are sophisticatedly chosen. Identification process is well-defined and (medially presented) results - identity and consumption are ensured.

In terms of countercultures or discriminated groups, the situation is different. Such a group may use four universal solutions in the struggle for identity: 1. minimalize of contacts with other (better) groups; 2. dust off old myths (explaining the low status because of hardships in the past or injustice of outside world); 3. the use of famous ancestors, uniqueness of the group and changes in the comparing criteria so that its strengths (such as musical talent) would be highlighted; or vice versa; 4. intensify contacts in order to change stereotypes, attitudes and opinions, if this is chosen as a better way [26]. Example of using the work with identity issues is also the application of multicultural approach in practice, integration of minority cultures or strategies of discriminated groups. The process consists of three stages: 1. formation or update of the identity project (based on the aim and the group), 2. actual process of identification, 3. result – identity. To be adopted by potential addressees, the project must contain essential attributes. Usually, there are some of these - previously verified - ideas:

- highlighted human nature, or vice versa, divinity and excellence of the addressees,
- characteristic features of the recipient interpreted as positive preconditions,
- historical events and successful personalities in the past and the present,
- comparison between the positives of the recipients and the negatives of the others,

- positive perspective,
- affirmation of the project positives by repeating and emphasizing its fundamental ideas.

### **3.2. Example 6 - European Union – applied identity management**

At present, identity management is a tool for creating and establishing the European citizen. The process is a response to socio-economic changes in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and it is inevitable. Costs spent of the project of *European identity* can be analyzed even economically, based on the prices of inputs (educational projects of EU institutions and other national institutions, various projects and grants, promotion events, campaigns, advertising), like in any other product. The value of European identity, however, cannot be quantified. There are several examples of a relatively successful application of the identity project in the past – it was the creation of collective identity of originally very diverse groups (identity of Americans, Czechoslovak communists in socialism, Yugoslavs). During the Cold War, Europe was divided into two warring sides. Their inhabitants had to adopt the dictated ideological identity. In case of refusal or resistance, consequences were well-known: in the *eastern bloc*, it was all kinds of physical and mental terror, even the death penalty and persecution of family members. In *western bloc countries*, elites and society were seemingly more tolerant to the opposition. Punishment was usually in the form of social condemnation or embarrassment (propagandistic film production, etc.). Opposition activities were monitored and eliminated on both sides of the *Iron Curtain*, albeit in different ways. Till 90s, socialist identity with the perspective of the communist identity was presented as totally stable. People lived according to clear objectives and preferred means of their achievement. For forty years, purposely constructed socialist identity with precisely defined attitudes, beliefs and behaviour stereotypes, was the only option for a – not insignificant – part of the people all over the world. In opposition, there was a society with its own identity, built on a different principle, today called as democratic. Although these two ideologies were seemingly contradictory, based on different principles, they had something in common. Their identities were identified, managed and represented equally purposefully, consistently and professionally. Finally, the ideology of one side collapsed and its inhabitants rather quickly adopted the other one.

According to Foucault's holistic explanation, history is a succession of periods formed by dominant discursive systems with their one logic. Historical change was not caused by acts of people, because they are only keepers and products of this discursive system [3]. This expression, together with Lawless's stress model, when a change only comes when the group gets into existential stress [7], may be, when accepting the importance of opposition elites, considered as relevant and concise explanation of the changes discussed above.

#### 4. Conclusions

**The identity expresses the existence of man in society.** When studying issues of identity, a particular subject/entity itself is not so important. Human being is open to what is considered as legitimate, normal and relevant in the surrounding world. Even though, the identity of a person cannot be defined solely according to its content. **Social world and cultural text, in which the processes of definition and self-definition are ongoing, are the primary [27].** Identity is what a person can say about himself/herself that it is. It is built on what the others say that he/she could be [28]. People are what they believe they are. And their beliefs about what they are established on what the authorities told them about it [29].

Identity is always contextual, situational and interpretive. Sometimes static, but mostly dynamic. It is integrated, because its components (partial identities) are interconnected. A certain change in a particular identity may induce changes in others, even all of them. Identity is adaptive, since its internal configuration is variable, depending on the identification situation. Enculturation and socialization show us how brilliantly we can handle our own identities in real time and space [30]. Identity is shared, because it exists only in interaction with *others* (both similar and different to us). Individual identities form a configuration of complex Identity, which is unique, original and variable in space and time. Therefore it sometimes can be rather controversial and inconsistent. In a real scientific research, man/society must be always regarded as holder of multiple identities. There is no man or group existing only in one identity, although it sometimes may seem like that.

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