

## October in the North

Dear All, finally I arrived home, sitting in the train - the beautiful Finnish landscape outside; and I am looking forward to a dip in the sauna and perhaps visiting granny, somewhere out in the countryside. Sure, home is something very relative and equally sure is that it is weird to say "Finally home" when you arrive in a place where people speak another language - and here people really speak still their own language. Also sure, visiting granny is for me here as much visiting granny as much I visit granny when Aghabullogue - just an adopted one, the one of the friends with whom I stay over the weekend before I move into the hotel which will then be "my flat" for some time. And not least visiting granny in the countryside is something that deserves qualification. Lapinlahti, the village where I stay, is itself a tiny place (the only remarkable the lake and a church build from timber, an amazing public library - amazing for such a small place and the little coffee-shop which is also a place for arts exhibition) - and "somewhere out in the countryside" is then something where it is more likely to meet bears and reindeers [yes, Joe, still some around, x-mas can go on in the old way ;-)] than people. And granny, residing there at the lake, residing already this time of the year in a place which is bright by the sparkle of the snow is always keen to have visitors like me: serving a meal for a huge family, heating the fire in the sauna and keeping the towels ready ...

- her public. And actually it is this what amazes me. We do not speak much - sitting there for some time, saying nothing: "And this time you will give a presentation as well at Kelevi's University?" I adapt to local habits, don't answer immediately. Only later I say: "Yes, Hannele invited me to contribute to the MA." She nods - silence for a while; the sound of the TV from the neighbouring room is audible but not really present. "Well, it will be interesting. I think the students are nice." Kalevi says these words - and though this sounds as lively as a remark on how to fix a screw when fixing an electrical plug, I know that he says it with some emotional engagement.

Whenever I travel I am amazed by meeting the different publics - market places of producing and exchanging and processing information.

Shortly before I left I had been on to Sibel from Ankara - with her and Kezban I am working on a book on Religion and Social Policy. Chatting to her on this, I asked then: "Actually, we are going for a study trip to Berlin. Any ideas on Neukoelln?" - "Leave it with me. When are you going?" Short clarifications and only little later I received a mail: Mustafa had been already in touch with Cengiz - I should give her a call. She lives in Berlin, works there in a kindergarden. She is Turkish but apparently already a long time in Germany - I concluded it from the way she speaks German: without the slightest accent and with more ease than I do at this stage: "Did you try the senates office?" - "No, I didn't. And actually I am more interested in hearing about the reality. These official representatives ..." -

"Right, I know. I could immediately talk about that one ... . But lets stick to the point: organising your trip ..."

The quietness of this place north of Helsinki; the modern train bringing me there: spacious even in the second class of the two-storey wagon, the special compartment for comforting toddlers and as well the 'kindergarden' from where I hear the laughs and noise of the playing kids (I cannot stop me to have a look: its a little bit a paradise - but isn't hat always the case if one looks at a lace where people can unfold their creativity, their joys?) and the 'restaurant carriage': the rye-bread with cheese and the smell of cinnamon finally making me weak: I enjoy the lovely taste of the warm pastry, I remember the words of a friend who once visited me in Aghabullogue on the day of Tom's cross-country event - though he lived already for some time in Ireland he said only then: "Well, finally I really arrived in Ireland!"); the coal quay market in Cork with its 'conservative-alternative flair': the stands of those people who had been doing there business there for decades and the stands of the 'alternative farmers', having one license for several people; the phone and mail network of my Turkish friend Sibel: perpetuating with modern means of technology a stunning network of traditional integrity, probably translating communitarian of the Islam into the world in which we both and most of our friends live: an anti-religious world - these worlds are so different - and still just dealing with one point: producing the social, giving space for activities: enforcing them and making them possible, places for exchange of information and more.

Niklas Luhmann meant that society is nothing else than communication - though he had been one of my academic mentors I dare to doubt. We frequently discussed this issue. But it is definitely right that society is nothing without communication and information.

It is nice to be home - here in Finland; and nice as well to know that Umut has now a fixed position in Ankara. Somewhat strange as I don't really know her - we only saw once for dinner; and little worrying to see Nollaig, my neighbour in Aghabullogue, being frequently tired; making me angry to see that some friends of my own party in the EP voted apparently recently for Jose Manuel; and looking with some hesitation at the work of the new food-coop in Graz about Brigitte mailed me the other day ... and strange to see the different information and the different relevance in different places  
- though sometimes they seem to be the same: as on market places or as when they sing a birthday song as they do in the train, next to me. And though I cannot join in the refrain (at least not in their language) I can join in the clapping.

Information, networks, public spaces - the inclusion and exclusion and the most fundamental challenge of to where we can move from here.  
Eväät myös mukaan - take away: you have to take it with you to be able to take it away, to overcome it. You have to fully understand these places to carry on with the inclusion, with building up social spaces and overcome exclusions and privatism (privacy would be the wrong term though it is a wrong privacy I am talking about).

May be strange idea to think about this while seeing mostly trees and lakes outdoors and while I should actually finish the preparation for the Social Policy Day of the Finnish Association of Social Policy. But perhaps it is not really strange - at least not for a stranger.

Take care,  
Peter

## Mosquitoes

Ever thought about these little animals and (social) policy?

At least I have to think about these beasts - though only by looking at the lake. When I had been here in Finland some time back, I stayed for a while on a tiny island. And if I ever said that I had been there on my own, it is not quite true. Just on the shores there had been a seal, occasionally saying hello and there had been ants, busy in following their protestant work ethics and ...., yes: these little and nasty animals, flying around in large groups, in seemingly unordered ways and still showing at a closer look a well structured formation. Fortunately, they didn't like my blood which allowed developing some kind of peaceful coexistence. But later, when I visited briefly friends in Lapinlahti (before going to my workplace in Kuopio) they exhibited the limit of such coexistence. Canoeing across the lake and landing on the shore for a little walk, they proved to be an utter nuisance. There had been spots, one nearly couldn't breath without inhaling a "full meal" of them, enough to serve as starter, main course and dessert.

Blood and light - they have the same effect on them as magnets on iron: providing a nutritious centre which makes their life.

Strange ideas here, halfway in the north of a country with its approximately 5 million inhabitants – a country which is located at the periphery of the European Union like Ireland. Finland, a country that exists in itself (roughly) of three parts: Helsinki and its immediate surrounding (well, yes: it is Finland as much as Dublin is Ireland); then the part north and east of Helsinki: scarcely populated, the larger towns and cities like "metropolitan Cork" - surely meaningful; and then the part north of the north: you can see bears and elks long time before arriving there, and even I met them (or at least there footprints - they are even less sociable than the ordinary Fin); but as further you go north, as more you find three things, extremes: ice, days, nights; and do not really wait for day and night, watch out for day or night. And as much as we like as tourists a visit to such capitals - be it Helsinki, Dublin, Berlin or Brussels - we love the remoteness of the countryside - be it really a countryside, or the shores of the open sea and lakes or the mountains and hills. And we are fascinated for instance by the remoteness of places like Lapland - a remoteness that means even distancing from what we know as nature: instead of the change of day and night we find there the "eternal light" during the summer and the "eternal darkness" with a fascinating twilight of the winter near to the Arctic. Remote from "nature as we know it".

Usually I do not have to talk about this. If I talk to friends and colleagues about working in Finland they think about Helsinki (as much as they think about Dublin when they hear Ireland). And though we all know that these capitals (heads, as the Latin origin "caput" suggests) are only part of the countries, they are the centre, pretty much the blood and light for humans. And they are attractive as little light bulbs: shiny enough to gather, and still being in a shadow of the larger lights: Paris and Berlin as centres of the economically strong

countries, Brussels as the newly emerging political centre of the European Union; Luxembourg, Zurich but as well for instance Frankfurt as the centre of banking and financial services; Washington as the centre of world power, still much brighter if compared with world centres like New York, Geneva, Vienna as different places hosting the United Nations. In other perspectives still being in the shadow of the centres of an ancient world: Rome, Athens, Damascus, Istanbul - to name but a few and to limit myself (unjustifiably) more or less on the so-called Western world.

The problem with the light is: coming too near, you may burn the wings. And this means we find in many cases these complex relationships and socio-environmental links: centres, and the urban poverty. People moving towards the centre full of hope, still: remaining without perspective; the sub-centre orienting towards the centre: like Dublin or Helsinki, possibly asking questions like "Berlin or Boston".

In reality a rather complicated mixture, full of tensions, full of exclusions and inclusions: multicultural enrichment at times, blunt racisms and harsh competition at other times.

And as happy as I am for Oxana whom I could help to get a position at the United Nations, I am a little bit worried about her, seeing the attraction of power and the same time the danger of loosing it when absorbed by an uncontrollable machinery of regulations and uncontrollable long chains of interaction. Looking back at the long years of my struggles in the corridors of the European Institutions and the final decision at some stage: no way of staying, no point in remaining involved into a court society which equals the glamour and mendacity of the Court Society so nicely depicted by Norbert Elias.

If you ever travelled to and through Finland, the most stunning feature of the country is ... - well, it is not really a "country"; it is more like a sea with islands; its many lakes, being kept together by some landmasses in between. The birch trees, in many areas another feature and little mountains: as low they are, they are rocky, often seamlessly linking into some of the many archipelagos. The beauty is about its emptiness, its remoteness which forces to cope with nature. And it is in these places of the beauty of remoteness, the confrontation with bare nature where we find actually a stunning openness and connectedness to the global world. A still high economic (GDP-based measurement) growth-rate; a highly-concentrated economy with many large firms starring; a highly concentrated industry as well in terms of the sectoral structure: electronics, namely Nokia [funnily enough Nokia produced rubber boots before blessing the world with mobile phones], playing a major role (though the overall picture is dominated by service industries); and finally a highly concentrated industry as well in terms of space: Helsinki (larger area), "the Finnish light bulb", making up for about a third of the GDP.

A highly concentrated industry - and while typing a typo slipped in, corrected now, but worth to look at: "concentraded" - concen-traded. And this economic success is indeed something that is traded across the country. I had been once sitting for a couple of weeks on "my own little island": remote, dealing only with

nature (and writing a book on global social policy): the excitement of the timber fire in the sauna, sweating in temperatures near to hundred degrees and then leaving for a dip in the cold water of the lake, just in front of the hut; swimming there every morning: a seal somewhere nearby, though rarely seen; during the afternoons picking the berries - and hoping that it is a beery and not by accident the nose of a bear who is hiding in the shrub; tasting the freshness of the fruits while sitting in the middle of nature, listening to the light wind, shaking the tall trees. And all this meant as well: dealing with my own nature - nobody else being around. You can imagine, how close we got: me and I (or I and me?), meeting everyday and not having anybody else to talk to. And nevertheless knowing that this "me and I" is just a part of the permanent involvement into relations and processes, only seemingly and temporarily taken out, put into another context. The only thing we could do: I talked to myself and myself had been talking to me who actually was I. Sounds weird and it had not been pathological, not really talking. But it had been an interesting experience for a couple of weeks (and so was the "re-entering into social culture"). An experience as well about how connected on is even here in this wild and lonely place. And it had been an interesting experience as well in other terms: as remote as this place had been, as well it had been connected to the weird wide world: the world wide web to which I had been magically linked via wirelessly.

And actually you find many such connections - surely not often on such islands (there it had been "only" electricity and Internet) but as standard in the small municipalities: free public libraries even in rather small municipalities - imagine a general public library, larger than the one in Cork, for a municipality of about 7,000 inhabitants; imagine perfect bus service making it possible for children to reach safely and comfortably the next school; imagine health centres in such municipalities, being free for everybody.

Sure, little light bulbs: education does not take place in the individual families as it had been the case a long, very long time ago in all our countries. Now education is "professionalised", taking place in schools; libraries replace the story teller at the indigenous fireplace; and the healer is replaced by the medical profession: GPs, specialists and a nursing team. Sure, all as well a matter of economies of scale. And so I am now brought into lecture theatres across Finland: "teaching" a course that can be visited in nine Universities of the country. I came from Ireland to stand in a lecture theatre in front of a camera - the result now magically located in a virtual world: the new VW: Volkswagen (it translates from the German into "People's Car" - right: the PC). - And all is in this way again about striving to the centre - though it may be even by a kind of imitation.

All this leaves this magic beauty of the country rather intact. And all this leaves the people as they are: if I can trust locals, we Finnish are little bit shy, not talkative and ... - no, not stubborn. The term in the Finnish language is *sisu*. It cannot be translated, only being described. It is the hardness for instance of sitting in the sauna, sweating in extreme temperatures and staying there for really long times, throwing water on the hot stones to make it even hotter; and going after that in water which is just warm enough to not fall on you on form of little ice-cubes ... - *sisu*: even after this you smile: you made it and it doesn't

matter if nobody else knows that you made it - Sisu has something to do with just you. Finnish sociability is not about talking, anyway. - And all this does not by any means say that Finish people are not friendly, that they are stubborn, that they would be cold - look into the face of some of them and you will fall in love, being attracted by a warm and attractive smile (though there is always the danger that you are getting aware of this smile only after you already walked away).

Concen-traded. Of course you did it, at least as child. It is a little game of "arts". Do it again: Throw a stone gently into a lake - the water calm, unmoved. You will see the concentric circles, the power moving smoothly to the periphery, moving but also getting weaker. Throw two stones: and you will see how the concentric circles move into each other, smoothly perhaps or violently, building a new "power structure", building a picture with different colours changing and exchanging and merging and disturbing. Throw three equal stones and the same will happen - and now throw two stones again: different in seize, or different in the power (energy) you use in throwing them; or throw the second just with a tiny delay. - You see what happens? Try it. And if you don't like to play this way, just look at the mighty power of the United States of America and how they throw themselves into the global lake of negotiations: "peaceful negotiations" (for instance by cutting money or giving money to specific activities by the United Nations; for instance by bullying Mary Therese Winifred Robinson out of the office as UN High Commissioner for Human rights) or negotiations that are brute violence against other countries and against people.

It may be that we, as humans, could overcome at least to some extent many limitations, establishing long chains of interdependency as Norbert Elias used to say. And this means as well that we are able to transport ideas, products and wealth to the periphery like we transport electricity to the light bulb. With this we may allow the peripheries shining in bright lights. But still, it is the question to which extent we actually allow the regions to enhance their power as this usually remains in one place: the person and group that controls the power switch is usually much more in control of the situation than the person and group that may be able to control the bulb, that shines - but that cannot reach the switch.

There is much truth in what Norbert said about these chains - but there is equally much truth in what for instance Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank or Giovanni Arrighi said: it is not so much about long chains but it about concentric circles: the centre-periphery structures, the concentration and centralisation of power and the establishment of dependencies. - Chains are as strong as the weakest link - but concentric circles are depending on and colonised by the centre.

Still, there is one thing left to be said: Ever thought about paradoxes? The bulb is more likely in the centre. And a tiny experience here with my Finish fellow citizens (strange people, aren't they:

<http://dpoetz.intereduc.ch/blog/archive/2007/12/05/hard-to-digest-but-good-for-you.html>) may be somewhat remarkable in this context: If you enter a sauna, one of these special places that are in this country in their own way public

spaces, everybody being naked, so to say reduced on pure existence, you come across people who are actually talking quite a lot and who are not a little bit shy. Not near to the bulb but far away: where power relationships are of a different kind, not attributed by formal status nor going back to contracts.

So, it may be that the real centre actually develops sufficient strength to limit the power of the switch?

In the meantime, tomorrow morning, I will move on - not much, but little bit more to the centre: for a short time only back to Stockholm.

Take care - of yourself, and the world around you,  
Peter

## Familiarity

though the term is not really correct: finally it is the first time I am flying out of Kuopio airport.

But I should start at the beginning, not in the middle of the story. The flight is scheduled for 6:15 a.m. and Juhani says he will collect me at 5:45 from the hotel. I gaze a little bit worried, this time not because he always turns up at least 5 minutes late. It is more that I think it may be a little bit late to catch the flight. "No, that is OK. It takes us only nine minutes to go there." - "Right, but ..." - "No, it is OK. A domestic flight and there are definite rules ...". A more or less long sermon and I am not sure if I am the worrier or if he is the worrier, knowing all these rules and sticking to them, making it in many cases impossible to stick to all the rules, for instance the rule of punctuality: if you have to complete so many forms, if you have to do so many things according to specified rules there is not much space and time left. Somewhat after 5 hrs I collect my early breakfast - take-away: rye bread with cucumber, reflecting well our breakfast habits here in Finland. Too early for me, though I worked already a little bit after the long evening I spent with Juhani and Leena: I urgently had to send the stuff for the meeting in Poland though that will take place only in December.

Anyway, I sit down, having at least a coffee and leave at about 5:43: downstairs, opening the door and ... - the car is already there: "Good morning." - "Good morning to you. Sorry for finally being responsible that you don't get your sleep." I put the suitcase into the boot, we drive and just before 6 we arrive at the airport. Only few people are around; I check in and we go together to the security check. "Don't forget to send me the document." - "No I won't. Will work on it today." - Well, thought I would have a day off but that spare time seems to be reduced. The security check goes smoothly, all this seems to be a little bit like a one man show - and actually it is: the two other people working here are women. I do not have a boarding card, I didn't get one though I checked in: "You just show your passport." Familiarity - one knows each other. So what is the point in all these documents, really?

No seat allocation either. So, another low fare airline? Couple of minutes later the door opens to the airfield, the few passengers show their passport and walk to the aircraft. Actually, as I am the last who arrives, I just walk through, and I am the second who walks through the glass door. Just this second I see a light being switched on: the light of the large garage, accommodating the fire brigade. So there it is a two men, two women show as there is a man in the garage whom I didn't see before.

I enter the aircraft, take the seat in the first row where I have a little bit more leg space.

The usual: "doors armed and crosschecked"; security announcements; "captain - crew. Take seats for departure." Language kind of criss-crossing: Finnish, Swedish - our two official languages; and English, the latter the official language of the world of flights, the world of the sky, heaven. So we may be lucky that, if we finally go to heaven, we are still able to communicate - and the really poor

souls, down in hell, will be suffering by not having a common language, not being able to talk (but this is probably not true as I know a couple of English speakers whom I will meet down there when time is ripe for me to go).

The flight is too short to start something serious, so I take the board magazine. Here, in this part of the world: international air traffic, things change: not least as the Finnish board magazine, communicating globally, seems to be much more consume-oriented than the "real world" of Finland, a somewhat egalitarian country. At least my impression in Helsinki or Kuopio (and let alone Lapinlahti) is that the brands are present but really not central, don't matter. Different here: "Travel in Style" - and it means travelling stylish: well thought-through, well designed including the design of the brand name and asking to be well paid for.

I flip through the journal: I pause, looking at the headline An article on Chamonix, the Vallée Blanche. ...

... I don't really read the article, lean back and glance over the photos; my thoughts are turning back to my time in the snow. Little bit coaching and then, actually several years after leaving skiing behind, my first real tour experience. Barbara convinced me: "Sure, you can do it. It is one of the things you don't really unlearn." Yes, girl, I am still grateful that you convinced me with this ease, that you said "Sure, you can do it" in such a way that I didn't resist. - I can still remember my hesitation: a rather dull day. Preparing for the tour: "Fix this somehow to your chest." - "???" - "Don't look. It makes it easier to find you if you are buried under an avalanche." - "Oh, that is great. What a relief." - "Well, unlikely that we will be hit. It is more like the seat belt in the car. Do you worry about that every time you fasten it?" - "Sure I don't. And in any case, I trust you. Even if it would be only as I assume there is some self-interest in not being buried together." She smiles: "Good." A dull day that didn't stop us climbing uphill, the fur under the ski, making it easy - well somewhat easy. About 2 hours later, there are nearly no trees anymore, we finally reach the border: between "nearly no trees" and "really no trees" there seems to be a world: breaking this border, we break through another border: The sky is opening, the sun is blazing and three peaks are unfolding in front of us: unbelievable beauty, a stunning look at grandeur which impresses at least me: the untouched nature, the openness which invites one to stop and which also invites to move on, go for this endless walk to the - only seemingly - near peaks we are looking at. Only half an hour later we sit down. A little shelter, during the summer probably used by herdsmen. I do not follow Barbara's advice - and will pay for it by being heavily sunburned the next day. Exposing oneself to nature is one thing; lack of reason an entirely different one. After the "Jause", a special sort of snack, we move on. Another 4 hours walk uphill, only far away we see somebody else, already on the way downhill: A small dark, spot moving through the snow, and a white cloud of snow behind. Another 3 hours climbing - not used to it, I feel comfortable, acquiring the technique quite well - and .... Another 3 hours climbing: yes, as stunning it is to go here, as enjoyable the way is: it is the goal, standing here, having achieved this, and looking around is simply "a life-time experience". Another 2 hours climbing: I look at my skiing partner - she knows, that she didn't promised too much. And she knows as well that such life-time experience still doesn't allow one to stop and one always longs to more of these experiences.

Another hour left climbing: She knows that what is coming soon is not less exciting though it lacks a clear goal, this kind of goal. We arrive on the top, and the view seems to be endless, the world of mountains unfolding in front of the eyes, the feeling of being "on top": not on top of just this peak which looked so impressive as unique giant, bit on top of the world and still feeling to be in the middle of it. A rest - to rest this view, to settle, lock it in the memory. Still, it is soon about going down, sliding through the deep snow. Due to the speed we never dive deeper than to the hips. And actually, even if we are sliding through it, its lightness suggests that it is not really deep, lightness translating into buoyancy, hindering that we are definitely caught in the snow masses.

I awake from the daydream, from the memories of dealing with nature, checking out power. Pouvoir: abilities - pouvoir: strength and might. - And I experienced all this after three days seminar of a European "practice research project" on service provision and their marketisation - a project which finally turned into a power struggle with the European Commission, bringing me finally at one stage into the European Parliament for a presentation on failures of short-sighted attempts of standardisation. And paradoxically pushing me to demand a stronger European engagement rather than the simple rejection of Europeanisation. At least I could win one struggle with power - an exciting one which I will never forget as long as there is some memory left. But it may well be that the loss of the other battle - if it actually is a final loss at all - caused so much distress that I will forget sooner than later.

I turn away from the daydream - turn the page over from Chamonix to an article on India and a clean water project. Another adventure with nature, though not as playful as the one I referred to before. An article on a UNICEF project: "determined to influence behaviour towards water usage and sanitation." It strikes my attention again to think about the difference between behaviour and acting - and the sometimes fluid, sometimes rigid borders.

Again, I am reading the article and recall at the same time what Sibel wrote the other day from Ankara, in the context of discussing a recent EU-report on the financial crisis and its impact on Turkey. She mentioned that the impact of the crisis is somewhat limited. There is still some fundamental issue: (a) the Turkish economy being a "real" one, having to cope with establishing a productive basis and being in this sense a "developing" rather than an "overdeveloped", turbo-capitalist system, (b) some marginal utilities from ongoing trade and (c) not least the coping strategies: people being permanently confronted with real and potential economic crisis, apparently better able to cope due to the preparedness. Well, something we discussed recently in Brussels, when I criticised Vladimir saying that the crisis came unforeseen. He agreed, one could have known, one could have prepared better - but he agreed by seeing it only as matter of mechanisms of regulatory mechanisms on high levels and he dismissed any reasoning that coping is a matter of a wider set of social quality: of bringing together economic, political and everyday's life under one heading. Sure and of course I agree: a strict regulative system would have helped to cope with some excesses. But that is the problem with any cancer treatment: as long as you fight the cancer cells by cutting them away it is hopeless battle and the fight can only be won by expunging the root.

Approaching 7 a.m., we are approaching Helsinki - a short stay, just enough time to look for a reindeer - but there is none left. Soon I am sitting again, ready for take off: leaving Helsinki at 8 hrs., arriving Stockholm at 8 hrs.. Apparently a rigid standstill, not moving by a single minute. And still, there are about fourhanded kilometres between the two cities. And leaving Helsinki means changing the tune: Kiitos, Suomi. - Välkommen Stockholm - two smiles, three kisses. Every language is such tune in its own way, a special melody. And a Swede is sweet, the language like kisses and smiles: Välkommen Stockholm. I have to smile - not because I am "pronouncing a smiley" but because I remember a meeting with Henrik, Sven, Inga-Anna and Marcela, many years ago. Four Swedes - but only three of them native, the other a migrant from Macedonia. They towed me once away into a pub in Brussels. And talking about smiling sweet Swedes, I have to think now especially of Henrik. As said, we had been in a pub, Marcela standing with us, slightly but obviously moving with the rhythm of the music. Henrik looked at her, then at me, saying: "But mind, if you want to join us in this team for some time in Sweden, you have to be prepared. Look at her: she is lively, enjoying herself, adapts to what is going on around her. And than look at me: a kind of sad figure: a little bit chubby, a grey suit, a grey shirt, a grey tie. And looking like a shelf full of files." I laugh, Sven and Inga-Anna smile and Marcela laughs, takes Henrik and moves him around like a dancing bear until he has to laugh as well, hesitant, not able to resist - the rigidity of his social mask loosing its ground.

Anyway, this October day in 2009 there is still an hour to go to finally arrive in Sweden. Again I am privileged, have plenty of space, as actually there are only few passengers with me on board. "Armed and crosschecked. Captain - crew, take seats ..." - we depart in time, rigidly keeping rules and procedures which enable the system to work. Little later I see on the display that we reached 30,000 feet, I look at the announced speed on the screen. Bizarre - an unbelievable speed but looking out of the window it seems that we are standing. The clouds are getting darker and surround the aircraft. Although the light is switched on it is dark. It is a slightly bumpy flight but nothing to worry about until ... - a scream somewhere in the back, the aircraft falls into a turbulence: a couple of feet, some yards or even more? I look out of the window, can see how the wing gives in, resilient, while the aircraft regains its stability. Reassuring flexibility - rigidity would have killed us, a wing, not being able to flexibly adapt would have broken away, leaving us without support. I feel sorry for the person who screamed, no sitting pale, inwardly sobbing. Still, I cannot do anything - and definitely not more than the board assistant who is there now, a little bit trembling himself - perhaps that is only because the aircraft regained stability but is still slightly "bumping over the clouds".

It may seem odd, but I am back to the skiing experience, the flexibility requested by moving, well: dancing through the snow. And I am back to the power struggle with, in and against the European institutions. And I am back to the long discussions we have had many, many years ago: classical theories on Marx: the relationship between basis and superstructure, Althusser and his proposal for

structuralism and within these debates somewhere Antonio Gramsci and his considerations on political struggles: static warfare, supporting leg, kicking leg. - Back to normality - the storm is over and we are back to daily life. "Ja, tack. Kan jag och ha mjölk också?" I answer the board assistant's question as she offers me more coffee. At least with the few phrases in Swedish I feel sufficiently safe; probably with mistakes, I am using one of the official languages of Finland - at least an attempt. Anyway, we are nearly there: in the country of smiles and kisses.

7:42 a.m., 237 mph., 3,000 feet 12 C ---- 7:46 a.m., I look through the window, we are through the clouds, I see<sup>1</sup> the airport in front of the aircraft, we approach the runway, opening in front of the aircraft like an artificial throat. It is only seconds later: I see the aircraft touching ground - elastically - a smooth landing after an at times turbulent flight. "Please keep your seat belt fastened during taxi. The mobile phones have to remain switched off ..." 8 o'clock sharp I am already at the gate. I walk through the glass door which automatically opens in front of me. Välkomna i Sverige. I am captured by Silvia's smile who is there at the gate, Carl Gustav standing a little bit in the background. - Indeed, it is not so easy to stay away from the politics and policies, from the political struggles and from the EU even if one wants. "Please, join." And I do not really have an excuse not to follow. It is long way out, it may be that it is actually not possible at all and we can only think about certain ways, remaining on the path, once chosen.

Anyway, I am now finding myself in one of the EU-capitals - one of the capitals, located at its periphery and nevertheless this weekend being the centre: the periphery hosting the centre; the centre: a major EU-summit meeting here in the periphery; the centre not staying rigidly in place, but showing at least on the surface its flexibility, encapsulating the periphery not by enforcing integration by power, i.e. might and force, but by offering some space for power, i.e. by allowing in some way the capability of the long chains and concentric circles. Flexibility allowing a firm grip.

But now it is already time to move on - after a weekend going to two kisses, one smile: Örebro, there being in the firm grip of a conference organiser. One of my last EU-activities in this position.

The first time I had been here in Sweden in this context had been probably in 2000, at the time having been invited to the honourable task of helping to prepare the Swedish presidency of 2001. It had been meetings in Belgium, but as well in Sweden. A relatively small working group; an exciting undertaking aiming on resembling two sides of *pouvoir*, an undertaking that is now institutionalised in processes of governance, caught in structures and barely allowing action. The result not of that presidency in 2001 but of a long development: the institutional system opening: participatory democracy being offered in the Treaty, governance instead of a ruling government: a political runway, opening like an artificial throat in front of some political actors - or a catwalk?

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<sup>1</sup> life-video displayed on screen

Örebro -Two kisses, a smile - I hope they will never poisoned for you.  
Hälsningar och lycka  
Peter

## Tricky

At least in my opinion: we celebrate history and are celebrated by kind of indulging into history ... and we loose history.

Ever thought about it? How many historical churches you visit while you are on holidays? How often do you look at parades and the royal houses and royal families? Do not say it would not be often as it may be simply due to the fact that there is no king or queen around. But then you go across the water, you will stand soon in front of one of this folks. - As said, Arlanda welcomed me with Silvia's smile and during the short time in Stockholm I had been more or less forced to attend two ceremonies in her favour. And now I arrived in Örebro - briefly going to the hotel, a first working meeting, scheduled for speakers and then the official welcome in Örebro - there had been two receptions, the one to which we as speakers had been invited to took place in Örebro Castle.

Oh no, of course I do not complain. This treatment is nice, without question. But nevertheless it is tricky. Distancing people by taking them out of life - rather than bringing these outer spaces into real life.

Sure, Rose-Marie - she can currently look at the castle as her official residence - definitely didn't come across as arrogant. Actually on the contrary: elegant and down to earth, open and in a positive talkative, socialising - I had been surprised when I learned later that she is Christian-Democrat. But then again: we are in Sweden. Though we didn't sit down in the kitchen - but then again: though there hadn't been too many of us we had been enough to fill casually the Reception Hall, having little snacks in the Banqueting Hall or chatting in the Yellow Room. Why stay put in a single place if there are so many rooms available: one for the small speech, one for the chat, another for the snacks and again one for the coffee. And as mixed as the crowd had been, as down to earth all this had been it is somewhat strange to be in such a place not like being in a museum, exhibiting the puppets of the past but to be there in the place where the past emerges as presence. Latest when I step by accident in the Royal Bed Chamber and see the alarm clock (looked a little bit like a special offer from IKEA) I have a strange feeling: is this still the centre - one of the centres that actually are ruling us, a present centre which is with all qualifications the mighty power, being build on our lack of capability to change our thinking and being? Is this what some people call postmodernity and that is actually caught in a seemingly iron cage of premodern limitations? - Kafkaesque.

The day before I talked with Eva about all this - well, we had been drawn to the topic when .... - well, yes, just at the palace. She had been cursing against the monarchy, expressing her unease especially against Silvia who seems to be particularly snobbish and demands to be recognised as Queen (bourgeois little girl as she had been when still living in Germany). Anyway, we talked about this bizarre stubbornness of political systems, Europe, claiming to be the most enlightened and secular region, having a catholic church being based in Rome, to be precise: in Vatican City, outside even of the Shengen area, the most fundamentalist Christian messages heralded by the pope, claiming caritas in

veritate; Europe, accommodating ... - well, have a quick look: though I cannot guarantee correctness, the following gives a reasonable overview, if linked to other EU-topics on the various agenda of these days, a possible title could be: EUrope - A futile soil for a new monarchy - EmporiUm.

Austria - monarchy until 1919

\* Belgium - monarchy

Bulgaria - monarchy until 1946

Cyprus - n/a

Czech Republic - monarchy until 1918 (as annex to Austria)

\* Denmark - monarchy

Estonia - n/a

Finland - presidential republic since 1919

France - monarchy until 1848 (though already before interrupted by the First French Republic)

Germany - monarchy until 1919

Greece - monarchy abolished in 1975

Hungary - monarchy until 1918/1946

Ireland - part gained independence in 1919

Italy - 1946

Latvia - n/a

Lithuania - n/a

\* Luxembourg - grand duchy

Malta - n/a/

\* Netherlands - monarchy

Poland - n/a

Portugal - monarchy until 1910

Romania - n/a

Slovakia - n/a

Slovenia - n/a

\* Spain - monarchy

\* Sweden - monarchy

\* United Kingdom - monarchy

So currently 7 out of 27

EUrope - A futile soil for a new monarchy - EmporiUm - a story to be written at the begin of the first century. I am frequently wondering about the strong and persisting meaning of all these glamorous scenes. To be honest, I cannot believe anymore that it is just a means of distracting people. It is our enlightened inability of truly thinking "the social". As I said in my presentation in Kuopio on occasion of the celebrations of the Social Policy Association in Finland, I see the values of the French revolution very much translated: "reinterpreting the liberty of rights into the freedom of contracts, the redefinition of equality on the basis of exchange and the understanding of fraternity in its capitalised form: as matter of social capital."

And even more, these values, as spelled out at the time, had been already the root for this interpretation: A revolution which established long chains of interaction, finding its roots already in the Renaissance: the invention of the telescope, an instrument for enhancing trade; the invention of the flight-

machine: an instrument for "overcoming" the law of gravity (funnily enough, Leonardo worked on his machines before Issac explained that "Every point mass attracts every single other point mass by a force pointing along the line intersecting both points. The force is directly proportional to the product of the two masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the point masses" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_gravitation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_gravitation)).

All this work by Leonardo and its later scientific consideration had been about looking far, reaching beyond the reachable and even in some ways - as I said in Cork: "humankind developing skills and the notion of replacing god and making and shaping the world".

And still, all had been about individuals and their performance, wealth being - seemingly - rooted in circulation (Fugger, Medici ...) rather than in production.

Makes a bell ring? A (seemingly) financial in 2008 crisis; a global system, synchronised but not coordinated. Systems being build on Manchester morals, Casino behaviour and moving in turbo speeds.

And leaving those who cannot cope with this system outside: excluded, in poverty or precarity; self-excluding as intellectuals, not being able to cope with the flow of time, time flowing away in front of their eyes as Dalí's clocks which I could see the other day when visiting the exhibition in Stockholm.

Yes, as Jan hinted upon, it is "the dandy, first noted in his time of intellectual upheavals in England, later in France and Germany. Dandyism had been an expression of protest of an outdated nobility, loosing increasingly its leading societal role to the bourgeoisie and the industrial mass society. This surfaced by being distinguishably dressed and in pronouncedly elegant forms, and partly as well whims: So it is known that some walked, having tortoises on the lead, scornfully demonstrating to the bourgeoisie their exorbitant time (Karen Hoffmann: *Der Dandy bei d'Aurevilly und Baudelaire* ; <http://www.hausarbeiten.de/faecher/vorschau/10047.html>).

A capitalism based on circulation rather than production; a capitalism based on ...

... - at least on some ways on derivations of the Machiavellian prince: *Il Principe*, with only one principle: the principle me, the pure individualism.

This makes governance so attractive: the principle me being asked to enter the stage, being challenged to compete there: gaining power as matter of capabilities for instance by attaining internet-literacy, making every document, even the president's e-mails, available only "one mouse-click" away. However, paradoxically squandering power comes along as as effective action. The increase of technicalities undermining the understanding of (its) meaning.

Isn't the reception in the castle, in this light, as well a little bit worrying? The poisoned smile, the gain of power as claimed in political calls for the self-responsible, self-maintaining individual, the denial of "such thing as society" (Thatcher) and ...

... and the loss of the conditions which make it actually possible to live up to it.

The resurgence of the one-dimensional man. Not sufficient but futile for the Übermensch [overman] Zaratustra spoke about. A new dictator.

Too abstract? Too bleak? Sure, we didn't reach dictatorships again in "our" worlds. But yet, we face Berlusconi for a long time in his power-position: The patriarch, "father of his people". And most of us accept seamlessly Sarkozy, if we believe the Financial Times (24/25 October 2009: 6) he is "well positioned to be the dominant political figure, not just in his own country, but in western Europe. He has energy, charisma, intelligence an international profile and a strong political mandate at home." All these appearances reflecting the misled search for truth. Then, Caritas in Veritate translates well into - again quoting the Financial Times - "placing the veteran conservative at the centre of a new coalition government that will juggle a strained budget with delivering tax cuts", a person of which "Dirk Schumacher, an economist at Goldman Sachs, said, Mr. Schaeuble was 'not a genuine fiscal expert but he has all you need to be a success [as finance minister]'."

Power replacing power - the charismatic leader rather than the expert. Not really better than the expert who masters in a perfect way instrumental reasoning without any sense of a subjective dimension.

Tricky, sure; the sequencing of DNS is a cinch if seen in the light of attempts to sequencing society; the latter stands just at the beginning again, requiring to dethrone machines and and charismatic leaders alike, making social space and social time in the same way available in the same way availed of time and space as physical entities.

You don't believe? - Lean back, look at the trees outside of the window while passing through the Sweden: the birch trees showing their colourful autumn clothes in endless forests, interrupted by the evergreen of the pines; the clearings with the bizarre forms of the stubs - surreal as the paintings by Dalí; the lakes, covered by the soft cloth of the fog of the still young day; the little islands, little peaks inviting for rests; farms that seem to be neglected at this time of the year: pretty but quite; the small houses, the timber painted in a warm red, promising at least to those who lived here the same warmth coming from the fire in the tiled stove. And look at the old man sitting opposite, the skin marked by physical work, the voice expressing experience and ambition at the same time - ambition to tell his story, and ambition to learn more. What is against all this excitement the traffic jam which that blocks the zebra-crossing and forces you to wait in the rain while you are going to the hotel or the annoyed receptionist in the hotel when you at your destination.

And it is here as well where the ugliness of the functional building gains attractiveness: the attractiveness of functioning for the people living there, offering space for people gathering, offering room for children to play, challenging the pure individualism to open.

You are not in Sweden? It doesn't really matter - Pippi Longstocking lived in Sweden; but really, she could have lived anywhere. But she had to do. As she knew that only then she would not be alone.

Just try it yourself - finally we may see the castles disappearing as we can all enter, together.

Just try ....

## Official Residence –

– Of course this sounds to be a matter of another world – and looking at Rose-Marie it surely is as weird as it is a different world when we step into Silvia's Carl Gustav's bedroom. The Ikea (like) alarm clock doesn't really make a difference, makes it perhaps even more surreal.

But is it sur-real or sub-real or counter-real? Or really simply Kafkaesque?

Actually it is not so devious as it actually seems – and it has history. I remember another visit in such residences though now I am talking about another times, when I still worked for the party, when I still lived in the West of Germany, when I still had been student and later, trying to enter working in the public services. The party had not been illegal but it had been a “black sheep”, unwanted and though the party had been legal, members had been illegalised – the time after 1972. It had not been possible for us to work in any kind of public services. And though our newspaper had been legal it faced various forms of bullying. So we went out: Saturdays, selling the paper and talking to people about politics and policies. And living near to the (in those days) so-called Kohlenpott, the industrial area near to the Ruhr, characterised by coal and steel industry, we went frequently there, supporting the local group. Where we went? Well, where workers resided. Small houses, many of the originally built by Krupp, one of the industrial giants. Industrial patriarch in the heavy industry. And he actually built these houses – long rows with a very typical shape for the region, in some respect very much like the houses for instance in Barack Street in Cork: one story, small, long rows and in many cases with a tiny garden – for the workers: my home is my castle – and so, if I loose my job I loose my home: my castle and my reign. Finally, this imagine of “my house – my castle” had been very much as well about “my reign in the family”. It had been an entire culture, encapsulated in the buildings: family reign and neighbourhood rules and the industrialism as supremacy. Princedoms, kingdoms and empires.

It is the experience I still gain occasionally, when visiting France – though the situation is different: when we go there from house to house, to people whom we know, selling the newspaper it is about keeping in touch, engaging in debates, listening ...

– The governor's castle being in this light somewhat comparable now with the workers' home, isn't it?

And the workers' home surely with its own beauty: small rooms – yesterday, while being in the castle, I had been talking with Ariane, joking about the bedrooms, about the reception halls: offering enough space for a kindergarden, the kitchen, being large enough to host a restaurant kitchen ... . And I told her about Sue Townsend's The Queen and I, the queen not being able to squeeze the large carpet from the palace into her “new home”: social housing. The workers' home with the small rooms, the belling stag as the typical painting: expressing the longing for nature and strength. Everything tidy, over the top as tidiness had been demanded: punctuality and servility in the working place being passed on, “materialised” in the own home: my home is my castle. And the same kind of tidiness reflected in the servility of the character: half of the life is order:

protestant order, protestant ethics ... – the ethics of fulfilling demands of the system: subordination in this world as promise of freedom in the other world, thereafter.

And any attempt to break out of this world had been penalised: not performing in the job meant loosing work and home alike; and as well: not joining in the streamlined thinking meant disciplinary action – it had been the communists who had been taken first:

“..., and I did not speak out—because I was not a communist;

Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist;

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist;

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew;

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak out for me.”

(Martin Niemoeller)

– think about this when hearing next time about the trade-union free enterprise, part of the global economy, making child labour possible and even inviting to it. But think as well about something else: all this had been as well about the other side, being kept away, being swept to places outside of the visible – the dandy, showing decadence in sur-realism had a counterpart, the urchin, the sub-real. A playful melody, presented by Franz Josef Degenhardt – it can be playful as it suggests in “Vaeterchen Franz’s” protest song – the perspective of the at the time real, the dominant and well accepted: the establishment of the good bourgeois and also the good worker. And the playful melody carries the text:

Spiel nicht mit den Schmuddelkindern,  
sing nicht ihre Lieder.

Geh doch in die Oberstadt,  
mach’s wie deine Brüder,

...

Don’t play with the urchins,

Don’t sing their songs

Go uptown,

Do it as your brothers did.

All this is not about wills and norms – it is very much about structures as well. The no-go areas of society: I remember times when in Cork the “good citizen” had not been allowed, or welcomed to go to the northern part of the town; I remember living for many years in Hamburg – only when returning to the city on my bike, it had been many years later, I saw an area which I never saw during the years I lived there: a kind of “slum”, the ghettoised migrants in Harburg, being housed in protection buildings from the war, but now being used to protect society from the urchin. They had been simply invisible.

This is another danger of the museum-like cultures: we dive into history, visit the past and it makes us forgetting the present, the ongoing the injustices and exclusions around us, in the presence. The sur-realism of the castle – and its celebration, for many remaining a matter of glancing through the high-gloss pages of Hello-type – is very similar to the sub-realism which is exhibited in

some galleries or museums: places that “blame history” without acknowledging that we are makers of history. Sure, we cannot be blamed for the historical past – but we surely have to be blamed if we do not learn from history.

And this means as well that we have to transcend history – have to transcend the closure of thinking.

As closed and closing as public and honourable receptions are, as closed and closing are some of the presentations these days: the political class looking more for how to sustain the borders and to sustain the mighty powers; the closure of thinking as well on the side of some academics: the closure of thoughts by the borders of slides of PowerPoint presentations. – Actually I feel some relief after my rather complex and philosophical presentation: Marilyn, academic as myself, from the West of England, and also Elsa from the local city council somewhere here in Sweden appreciate it, for instance the link I establish between participation and contribution – the question of the interlinking the dimensions of power.

Again: We cannot be blamed for the historical past – but we surely have to be blamed if we do not learn from history.

“Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.”  
(Karl Marx, 1852: The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.)

– Well, talk and think and ... stop, just for enjoying yourself. After the debate we just have half an hour, briefly dropping the documents (and the laptop, of course) in the hotel room, then dinner in the convention centre. Everything in style – though one thing is somewhat distracting: the stage. The usual stuff: little speeches, honours and toasts and finally, after a lovely dinner, a final toast, more precise an announcement: Maria Johansson. A whole range of music: rock, jazz, blues – even the Piaf as tribute to the French friends. And it opens apparently doors. Next: Aretha Franklin, a Beatles/Hendrix merger, back to Aretha. Ludvig is the first on the dancing floor – well, the second, having been asked by somebody I don't know. It takes some time, but solely but surely ... - I still resist, talk to Marilyn: academics ... - she is the first, leaving with Victor the table. I remain stubborn, though my body imperceptibly swinging, though also trying in a strange way to hide. I see Ariane, waving, and I pretend not to see anything but she comes to my table, waves, undeniably at me: I cannot resist – I do not want to resist – a dancing bear, having been used to dance through the snow. I feel a little bit uncomfortable: the pin-striped three-piece suit and gaining security, self-esteem. Diane, Patrique, Conny, Anne ... and many, many people I never saw before and probably will never see again. Only few “partner-dances”, few “classical dances”; instead a movement striving for freedom – and what seemed

to be a bizarre bunch from so many different ways of life, mixes now in an equally bizarre confidence.

“Oh freedom (freedom), freedom (freedom), freedom, yeah freedom  
Freedom (freedom), freedom (freedom), freedom, ooh freedom

There ain't nothing you could ask I could answer you but I won't (I won't)  
I was gonna change, but I'm not, to keep doing things I don't

You better think (think) think about what you're trying to do to me  
Yeah, think (think, think), let your mind go, let yourself be free”  
(Aretha Franklin: Freedom)

Yes, it is a natural thing ...  
... just shake off the nightmares.

What thought to go finally to bed with, before a new working day will start soon.

Wednesday

the second and last conference day – half a day left in the town of two kisses and one smile: Oerebro. Supposedly the cradle of democracy though nobody said why.

I sit at the breakfast table – on my own and only few people are in the large room. I assume they are workers who are accommodated in this hotel for the time of working here on the specific job. Reading about Globalization ... – do Elmar and Stephan really believe what they write?

“To bemoan the fate of democracy in globalization, or to call for more democracy to control a seemingly unleashed economy, is to ignore an important point: the conditions that are currently described as globalization were created and advanced both in terms of their institutional foundations and their dynamic by parliamentary, democratically legitimated decisions. Globalization was and is subject to an ongoing plebiscite of consumers and voters and is shaped by this perpetual plebiscitum.”

(Rieger/Leibfried: Limits ...: 31)

– Gosh, and the world is flat and Hitler had been democratically elected or what. I am frequently puzzled by the ongoing difficulties of my colleagues while walking on the ice – apparently moving between breaking the ice and slipping on the surface.

Well, I suppose they really believe what they write – at least Stephan is rather easy going in bending reality as long as he manages to look reasonably elegant. Having been recently in Bremen, meeting him, I really could not believe seeing him there, the usual behaviour – still the same arrogance as I remember it from the time from the time when we both had been working there: he left us in the department doing the teaching work while he “took time off”, being on his own hobby horse: building up a kind of “public career”. – And I am frequently puzzled by the blind acceptance of authorities not least in our so-called scientific community. Or shouldn't I be surprised at all? Finally it reflects much of the authoritarian character, bred by so many communities: Mutual control and lacks of borders going hand in hand with each other.

But I switch off, remember just the nice evening, have to smile – about what I simply enjoyed last night. Though I am definitely not a dancer (though sometimes a dreamer), I like it, especially if it is such an experience as the recent one: Different rules: from strict “classical dance” to the move of the body, hands and face in expression of the music; the overstepping of rules and living permanent change; individuals merging into a group – it is a fascinating process of merging beauty and movement; structure and process – the beauty through movement.

Well, I switch off this dream too: have to work a little bit before the conference resumes and I have to prepare the suitcase for the journey back to the centre later the day: Stockholm, from where I have to get the evening flight to the even larger centre: Brussels, the final meeting in the position in which I had been involved – always slightly changing, but having maintained it for about 20 years – actually for 24 years now.

On the way to my room I chat briefly with Thobias who replaced Helmut for the presentation, hear some news about the 'Centre for Social Innovation'. "And regards to Helmut." – "Yes, I will definitely pass them on. He will be glad to hear." I nod towards Victor who had been sitting at my table during the evening before – seems to be that it would be extremely interesting to meet him again, then hopefully having more opportunity to talk.

Sitting in front of the computer, writing up some stuff I urgently have to send to Finland, I hear from outside the noise from the street: children, waiting in front of the school, just opposite of the hotel. They are back after a short break – excited, much they have to talk about when coming now back to their little centre.

Then, during the conference, a reasonably heated debate – though it is apparently easier to get close during dancing than during debates. Overstepping of rules and living permanent change. Here it is difficult again. Now, difference seems to be hindrance not least because we are looking again at a centre: the central conference document, being open for debate and coming to a vote; the moderators of the meeting, centring on the stage; and the policies, geared to the centre – in this case not least to Brussels: looking for the role of participatory democracy.

The way back is scheduled for the afternoon: I am lucky to have a reserved seat in the packed train. As there are a couple of us, we go on arrival at the airport together for dinner: even a candle and nice tableware would not make the airport restaurant a cosy place. Still, it is nice to sit together with Anne and Patrick: after working for many years in different ways together and against each other it is probably the first time that we talk more than five words privately. And of course, we speak as well about Hubert – friendships, not meaningful, not close and nevertheless still meaning a lot. Erdmute joins later, already at the gate – representing a new network, apparently one which may be interesting when it comes to the new project we are now approaching at the University of Eastern Finland.

It is some time left until I get my dessert and coffee on the plane. The kind of gingerbread reminds me: yes, probably difficult to avoid: again Christmas – this year as every year before. The only time I could avoid it had been when I had been over this period in Asia. Though even then it imposed on the passer by: money-makers that lost their centres and their meaning, reached out and as much as "they", Asian people begin to celebrate Christmas, we begin celebrating the year of the rat.

A long day, indeed – finally I arrive in Brussels, the newly emerging political centre of the European Union; or is it more to correct to say the centre of the newly emerging European Union. Are we here actually back to "state building". I take the key out of my pocket, open the heavy door to which I got so used over the many years, the door to the old house at the Rue de Pascale: a place which was getting a kind of home. I switch off the alarm system, go to my room. Everything is well ordered, tasteful. Everybody knows: the devil can be found in the details; but here we find also little angels. Still, though it had been a long day,

and the environment invites more to relax it is nevertheless time to look at least after a couple of things: checking mails – good news: apparently small political action at UCC being awarded and students “getting the money back”; getting the agenda ready for the next day; writing a quick comment which I have to send when properly connected to the Internet again ... - and having a shower.

Getting up again the morning – after some work and breakfast a chat with Nicole; ready for the meeting with Jacob, a colleague from the Commission with whom I discuss some publication; a quick stroll through town, getting some chocolate from friends – already a tradition; a surprise: I meet Susanna, a colleague from Finland – standing in a shop for a chat is as cosy as the airport dinner last evening; on the way back the confrontation with this extreme gap: extreme wealth and extreme poverty in the same spot, the grandesse of the global capitalist world and the limitation of not having sufficient means even for surviving in dignity – and nevertheless representing worlds apart ...

Being here again I am wondering another time about the difference: an entirely political class again; but moreover, an entirely different life. Of course, the difference between centre and periphery or as well city and countryside: the peculiar cold and rigidity of the glass front of so many buildings here, compared with the smooth surface of the many lakes I pass the day before while sitting in the train from Oerebro to Bromma; the rather flashy sunlight, shining on the concrete and marble ground, compared with the warm light reflected in the colourful leaves of the autumn trees; the seemingly well-ordered moves on the streets in the Belgian and European capital compared with the vibrant moves of the birds that move from tree to tree; the window displays compared with the small timber houses on which I look, looking through the window of the train they appear as display of toys, inviting to wait for Pippi Langstocking and proposing that Lisa, Bosse, Lasse, Inga, Britta, Ole and little Kerstin would be somewhere around; still, the urban mildness compared with the cutting cold last morning when still jogging in Oerebro; the local market with its limited offers against the small market in the quarter, adding diversity of the offers of the global brands, the visible and open poverty and the visibility of huge gaps between the rich and the poor on the one hand and at least the image of an egalitarian setting on the other hand ...

But it is as well the difference between powers: spaces of action that are manageable compared with the anonymity behind the European glass palaces: visibility, hiding the impossibility of reaching there; the variety of languages that welcome me at Brussels airport and in the streets of the city seen against the one melody of kisses and smiles – and the question what it actually means to say we are speechless: Having lost the “own” language or being limited to only one language?; the extensive police security in Stockholm last weekend for the “Days of Development” and the low-key measures for today’s meeting of the “heads” in Brussels; the new castles: NATO, Council, Berlaymont, Parliament and the old castle with walls as thick as rooms on the as two forms of Court societies ...

Might dispersing towards the centre, abilities being covered, undermined in further and open development but as well fostered, finding a ground, fertilised for their specific development.

Nearly two weeks for me, but not yet the end of the journey. Ahead lies a full working day here in Brussels; an evening going out with Nicole – not yet knowing more; leaving early on Friday for a rather long working day with Laurent, trying to finalise the work on a book; in the evening visiting the Neapolis Ensemble & Ensemble le Nuove Musiche.

Another early morning raise to come: getting ready for the way home. Home then to a centre of life: first the remainder of the day in the office, catching up with some things, and hopefully as well being able to catch up with Franziska – and back in Ireland just in time for Tom's "hunter trial" on Sunday: cross-country horserace in Aghabullogue. But I will only take part by some kind of "administering", leaving the race to others.

– Occasionally needed: leaving the race to others. Surely exciting work and fields of experiences in several respects, though also surely demanding, requesting as well some kind of sacrifice. May be justified to say: "Well, if I wouldn't know it better, you one could be jealous."

But really, it is not about knowing and not about envying. It is just about acting. And it is about the difference between behaviour and acting – and the sometimes fluid, sometimes rigid borders. It is in any case about the words we will find when we stand in Berlin, Unter den Linden, at the stairs in the Humboldt University:

"Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

But remind as well – I read this in yesterday's L'Echo (28/10/09: 15):

"L'économie, et notre société, n'est pas correctement définie par les modélisations standards d'équilibres compétitifs utilisés par la majorité des économistes." And contradictions will never be eliminated by ignoring them.

So let us change ...