

whole conceptual set-up that designates the “new” global reality), acquired much more dramatic and traumatic dimensions in the former socialist world than in the Western countries. On practically all levels of discourse, the notion of *identity* took centre stage in the post-socialist post-traditional world, where a restructuring of the complex symbolic order took place. In most former socialist countries, which worked their way through the political and economic transition, there were (and still are) visible cultural movements and semantic displacements pointing towards new constructions of a range of meanings within the framework of the notion of *identity*. In most Central and Eastern European countries (with the above-mentioned extremes), supposedly old traditions were reinterpreted and historical texts were rearranged in order to fix new/old identities. Hence, we can say that culture is playing a very central role in a string of activities constructing a new order of so-called “new democracies”. Of course, in these countries the public discourse on the general level, but also on the expert level and especially in the educational speech, points towards some newly “invented traditions”. These discourses are becoming a basis of political rearrangements since a newly acquired statehood or just a new context of intercultural relations, formed a decisive hyper-framework in the field of symbolic social and political “language games”, as this field has been called by Francois Lyotard in the Wittgensteinian manner. Most of the Central and Eastern European “new democracies”, which survived largely rather unpredictable transformations of their legal systems (changes to property laws were the most crucial) acquired a form of society, which Giddens defines as post-traditional. However, this is just another level of transition, which is nowadays being experienced by all those countries that already underwent deindustrialisation. The kind of society that Ulrich Beck (confirming Giddens’ description of society) defines as the “risk society” moves the central constituting agencies from the notion of class differences to “values”, which means that cultural categories are gaining a new decisiveness.

We can now see that the sociology of risk society also brings about a turn in perceptions of the social realm with all its conceptual innovations. From its understanding of the reflexive constitution of post-traditional society (which visibly shows how a society constructs itself), Beck and Giddens are actually pointing in the direction of a search for inventions of new social bonds. It looks like this consequence is broadly compatible with the political left, but in the context of globalisation and in a post-traditional pattern, conservative thinkers are inspired to construct ideas of a society