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European Identity: Europe as its own "Other"

Summary

This paper explores the question of European identity not in terms of a concept but rather in terms of a process. It argues that it is within the identity construction process one can find the answers whether or not the idea of European identity is feasible. The paper proceeds as follows. Initially some conceptual debates are critically discussed in order to clarify the mode of enquiry. This leads to a discussion on the identity construction process in the European context and in particular the role of the "Other" is analysed. Arguing that the process of European identity formation is so arduous because Europe is its own "Other," this paper attempts to shed new light on the hazards inherent to the Europeanisation phenomenon and in particular to the project of European identity construction.

Keywords

Europe, EU, European identity, identity construction, Other

TOŻSAMOŚĆ EUROPEJSKA – EUROPA JAKO SWÓJ „INNY"

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł rozpatruje zagadnienie tożsamości europejskiej nie z perspektywy pojęcia, ale raczej pod postacią procesu. Główna jego teza głosi, że to właśnie w procesie konstruowania tożsamości możemy odnaleźć odpowiedź na pytanie, czy idea tożsamości europejskiej jest możliwa do osiągnięcia, czy też należy do sfery marzeń. Na wstępie zostają krytycznie omówione kwestie pojęciowe w celu nakreślenia i sprecyzowania ram teoretycznych. Następnie przeprowadzona jest analiza procesu konstruowania tożsamości w kontekście europejskim. Szczególna uwaga poświęcona jest zagadnieniu „Innego". Dowodząc, że proces kształtowania się tożsamości europejskiej jest niezwykle utrudniony, ze względu na fakt, iż Europa jest swoim własnym „Innym", artykuł rzuca nowe światło na przeszkody będące immanentnymi cechami zjawiska europeizacji, zwłaszcza procesu kształtowania się tożsamości europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe

Europa, Unia Europejska, tożsamość europejska, konstrukcja tożsamości, Inny

INTRODUCTION

Only very rarely is the question of European identity approached in a balanced and neutral way. Usually the literature on the subject can be divided into two groups. The former is represented by those scholars who are so firmly in favour of the concept that they remain seemingly oblivious to the detriments of the phenomena. The latter brings together those academics who are so suspicious of the idea that they deny it has any merit at all. Consequently, as Castells observes [2002, p. 232], discussions regarding the construction of European identity became an empty ideological exercise. In essence, the debate revolves around two assumptions that identity either can or cannot be secondary to political structure. While the proponents of European identity claim that such identity can be created on the basis of economic and political integration without the people (*demos*, *ethnos*), in the latter view any identity must be rooted in a community of people identifying themselves with (but also outside) the political structure

in question. As to the reason why the idea of European identity is vested with such great expectations, it is quite straightforward. In the words of Delgado-Moreira [1997] "a widespread feeling of identity...is a desirable asset, believed to improve the odds of survival of a multinational and multicultural union."

But the crux of a problem transcends the tension between the political and the cultural aspects within the European context, and analysing the idea of European identity from this vantage point does not offer any meaningful answers. Against these reductive attempts, this paper proposes to explore the question of European identity not in terms of a concept but rather in terms of a process. It argues that it is within the identity construction process one can find the answers as to whether or not the idea of European identity is feasible. The paper proceeds as follows. Initially some conceptual debates are critically discussed in order to clarify the mode of enquiry. This leads to a discussion on the identity construction process in the European context and in particular the role of the "Other" is analysed. Arguing that the process of European identity formation is so arduous because Europe is its own "Other," the paper ends with some concluding remarks.

CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Identity is a recurring thread running across the borders of many academic fields. For psychologists, identity refers to inner processes and thus is determined by the cognitive capabilities of a given individual. It is also conceptualised as a reservoir of belief and value patterns [Eiser 1995, p. 161, cited in: O'Riordan 2001] or a set of definitions and roles [Baumeister 1986, p. 13] with social identity determined by primarily group membership [Kelly, Breinlinger 1996, p. 87] whereby personal considerations as well as situational factors also play an important role. Affective, normative and cognitive mechanisms contribute to the identity building process. From a sociological perspective, identity signifies a bond between the individual and a specific wider constituency in a clearly defined collective, while anthropologists, on the other hand, put more emphasis on the influence of culture on ideational constructs. Finally, political scientists focus on the way identities are created and embraced as well as the

way they influence the political behaviour of individuals, groups and peoples [Arena, Arigo 2006]. Thus, the realm of identity running along the continuum from the personal to the social, as Judith Cherni has observed, is a "complicated convergence of socio-political and psychological processes...connecting social, psychological, political and spatial dimensions" [Cherni 2001, p. 62].

The shortcomings of inquiries concerning the concept of European identity were highlighted by Bruter [2003] in his analysis which sought to explore the specific dimensions of this concept. He also pointed out [Bruter 2003, p. 1155] that identity and Europe have no common definitions. Murphy insists that the intellectual debate regarding the European identity is not very productive and amounts to "empty rhetoric." Quoting Wintle he concludes that "attempts to isolate and define European identity or [its] essence make clear that it is elusive and equivocal" [Murphy 1999, p. 166]. There is also the ubiquitous confusion as to how the concept should be understood. Politically European identity describes the sense of belonging to Europe in the institutional frame with its laws, rules and rights embodied within the European Union. Culturally, it denotes the social sense of commonality which Europeans feel with other Europeans (rather than non-Europeans) regardless of the political system that binds them together in a community. Discussions regarding identity are filled with cautionary notes and as Orchard has observed [2002, p. 430], culture is argued both for and against as a ground for identity and this, in her opinion [Orchard 2002, p. 431], leads to a rather unhelpful conflation of politics with cultural politics. Indeed, Wessels sees "European identity as a core element of political community" [Wessels 2007, p. 288]. Strath who explored the historical roots of the concept claims that "European identity is an idea expressing contrived notions of unity rather than an identity in the proper sense of the word and even takes on the proportion of an ideology" [Strath 2002, p. 387] and suggests that the idea is explored in particular in situations where there is lack of such feelings.

The undertheorised concept of European identity can be analysed from many vantage points. A careful distinction must be maintained between the individual and group identities. Whereas these two notions should not be conflated, they remain firmly connected. Group identity must be grounded in the individual one, but the individual

one can exist without the collective and does not have to depend on them. According to Risse [2003] in the theory of "nested" identities, identities are conceptualised as concentric circles. In this sense, "Europe" forms the outer boundary, demarcating the auxiliary sense of belonging, whereas the local (e.g. Basque) and national (e.g. Spanish) identities are of primary importance for a given individual. When identity is conceived not as overlapping but rather cross-cutting, whereby some, but not all, members of one identity group are also members of another identity group, "Europe" becomes an ideational reference point only for certain social groups. The holistic approach to identity must therefore encompass all these spheres identified aptly by George DeVos. For him there are four levels of analysis: the first being the subjective experience of identity; the second consisting of patterns of behaviour; the third understood as the social-structural level; and finally the fourth expressed via patterns of social interactions [DeVos 1983, p. 139]. This renders the notion of European identity increasingly problematic.

For the purposes of concept clarity it needs to be explained that this paper equates "European identity" with "EU identity" and looks at the emergence of an identity from society with the structural help of various institutions at the national and international levels. Among several political factions, and sponsors of the new identity, the European Commission is the most important but is not the only one. This cultural politic is implemented in line with the statement attributed to Jean Monnet, one of the EU's founding fathers, who allegedly said that "If we were beginning the European Community all over again, we should begin with culture." Monnet's remark again alludes to the link between "culture" and "identity," again underlining the notion of culture to be a precondition or at least an element of a political entity. This, in turn, renders political progress as depending on the deepening sense of European identity. Even if one conceptualises identity as participation [Delanty 2007, p. 127], Europe still looms in the background as an inescapable frame of reference [Murphy 1999, p. 62]. Thus, considering the "visibility of Europe as an ideological construct" [Murphy 1999, p. 66], the question should then be posed whether there exists a social process of European identity construction and what it actually looks like.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The majority of scholars [Anderson 1983; Murphy 1999; Risse 2003; Delanty 2007; Holmes 2009] agree nowadays that identity is not something constant, unchangeable and given, but rather something that is constructed and hence is mutable and malleable. While this constructivist view is undoubtedly right, several caveats must be set in place. Firstly, the fact that identity can be constructed does not mean that it can be created *ex nihilo* and the difference between the two notions must be carefully maintained. The Constructivist view argues that identities are shaped and reshaped rather than built from their foundations. In this sense, contemporary Polish identity and what was considered to be Polish identity 100 years ago are two distinct identities which might (but do not have to) have in common only the temporal dimension binding them. Consequently, there must be a foundation that can be suffused with a new meaning, weaved into a new narrative or granted new cognitive symbols. History is scattered with the graveyards of several experimental identities which turned out to be rather unstable forms of consciousness and/or social bonding. Among the failed attempts to engineer a new identity one can find the Russian quest to create *homo sovieticus* or the endeavours symbolised by the Cultural Revolution in China. Within this context European identity project resembles other attempts to create a supranational identity implemented top-down like the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nonetheless, it remains undisputable that there has been an "attempt to create a single, binding European cultural identity from above" [Foolbrook 1993, p. 266] based on the quite old idea of identity construction by making a new society. In this sense, Europeanisation is an illiberal identity project with a duty to integrate and foster the new collectivity. However, it does not mean that European identity is something necessarily constructed in opposition to the state identity and inherently incompatible with it as it can arguably be found at all the levels of identity and independently of national and other identifications.

The Constructivist view also implies that only very rarely do people have one identity. The overwhelming majority of people have multiple identities which are coexisting, overlapping and sometimes are nested within each other. This in turn seems to suggest that there

is no gradation of importance and that there are no overarching identities (or master roles) that are able to subordinate other identities. In a situation like this one's identity as an Italian would be equally important to one's identity as a woman, Catholic, mother, musician and so forth. It is of course true that each individual has several identities, but the argument that there is no gradation in the hierarchy of identities is flawed. Murphy [1999, p. 55-57] argues that the main difficulty in measuring the sense of identity is rooted in the fact that identity is contextually dependent. The easiest way to examine what is the order of importance is to juxtapose the identities in a situation when they are in conflict with each other. Identities may easily coexist if circumstances are not forcing the individual to choose by putting them in a position where the two distinct identities require different and contradictory actions. It can be argued that conflictual situations show which of the two identities is stronger and more important for a given individual. In salient situations an individual can opt for one overarching identity that influences to a great extent the rest of the affiliations.

Every person will enact a variety of roles depending upon situational context whereby individuals are influenced by identity but certainly not determined by it. Identity in this respect resembles a set of coloured threads that can be woven in many different ways to produce patterns which differ greatly from each other; canopies of social realities which, despite consisting of the same strings, are nonetheless composed in a different way. Furthermore, while multiple identities are emphasized to underscore the fact that each person has, so to say, many faces (i.e. that individuals are not homogenous creatures but rather are very complicated, heteronomous beings and that is impossible to ascribe anyone to only one definite category or organise social reality neatly in monolithic terms), some scholars [e.g. Sen 2006] seem to ignore the fact that some identities can only be acquired only on an either/or basis.

The deceitful relativity of identity infused behaviour that suggests each individual can have many identities, ignores the fact that majority of them are based on an either or foundation – one cannot be a dedicated vegetarian and a hamburger lover at the same time. In the same sense, from a political point of view, the preliminary choice of being for instance a conservative, contrary to what Sen suggests [2006,

p. 24], *a priori* excludes many other political choices even though they are potentially still available in the ideational pool. Consequently, while conceptually European identity exists on different levels and in many ways, the process of "Europeanisation" (identity creation) is more and more often presented, usually by the Eurosceptic factions, as standing in a direct opposition to other (national) identities, i.e. weakening and eroding them. Particular identities, Risse concludes [2001, p. 202], are unlikely to be forsaken in favour of a collective European identity; rather the European identity is to be incorporated into existing identity constructions. He points towards the idea of "consensuality of identity" whereby people internalise a given identity and perceive them as "their own" gradually taking them for granted [Risse 2001, p. 203].

Identities, being visible signs of more imperceptible ideas, symbols, customs, and rituals, necessitate social categorisation which helps delineating boundaries. These are meant to induce and reinforce the feeling of belonging and strengthen the identity which denominates a separating edge, a frontier that divides elements within and the ones beyond it. Self-identifying and self-defining is not a question of a single moment, and thus identity is not a border that is established only once but one that is faced everyday in a continuous, dynamic process shaped by active and conscious choices as well as by passive noesis and social influence. The negotiation of the shape and nature of borders includes both the practical daily praxis, as well as more abstract reflections on the meaning of their activities. European identity must be imparted to the lives of Europeans through their own practices, meanings and social vernaculars – otherwise the European identity will remain an artificial construct; a theory detached from the reality of daily life.

However, Europeanisation is an elite-driven project [Lowenthal 2000, p. 315] and hence the discrepancy between elite and citizen identification with Europe, i.e. the consensual support of the elites and the widespread scepticism among society in general. Lowenthal is among those who believe that "Europeanisation remains superficial, commonality little evident in everyday life" [Lowenthal 2000, p. 317]. Holmes [2009, p. 70] explains how articulations of identity respond to the exigencies of European integration, reacting in a reciprocal way to these initiatives. European identity might be an occupation

or a lifestyle in Brussels but there are few other places of this kind in Europe.

THE "OTHER"

The above analysis suggests that it is useful to conceptualise the process of identity construction as a process of delineating a territory with identity marking the borderline between the self and the "Other." In essence, identities involve how individuals perceive and define who are the "us" and therefore, by contrast, who are not [Bruter 2003, p. 1150]. The projections of the "Other" are made from political and normative positions and this distinction plays a pivotal role in the identity construction process. An individual decides what lies within and that lies beyond a defined ideational boundary. What is outside constitutes the "Other," the alien, the strange and the unwanted.

Thus, the study of ideational borders must start with the societal classification of "us," and "them" as being the most prevalent characteristic of the subjective social order. Consequently, one must consider in what sense the "us" is affected by the European identity construction process and how it affects "them." Does the individual switch sides and perceives the former "us" as present "them" or is it rather a conceptual increment that includes into "us" a new group that initially was not there? Irrespective of its multi-layered nature, the identity is primarily built upon the similarity-difference dyad and therefore it is a process of categorisation by comparing oneself with other people who are either like us and share our norms, beliefs and values or constitute the "Other" [Staples, Mauss 1987]. The more salient the "Other" is, the more it is defined by borders, and this renders the individual or group to always live in their shadow. Certainly, the nature and shape of the border will vary from individual to individual: in some cases it will be more porous, in some it will encompass more, while other boundaries will not leave much space for manoeuvres and will be harder to breach. For this reason it is essential to understand not where the border is but how the line of the border is drawn and what determines its shape. This boundary demarcates different worlds of meaning [Wilson, Donnan 1998,

p. 19]. While the conceptualisations of "us" and the "Other" are intersected and reinforce each other, in the ever changing milieu of modern society conducive to the feelings of insecurity, ideational borders are often erected for protection.

Boundaries, i.e. the sense of "boundedness," is a crucial ingredient for the perceived "realness" of a community irrespective of how "imagined" it is. With respect to the process of construction of the European identity, the question of conquering the border is left unexplained: Does "Europeanisation" enlarge the ideational space or is it a simple crossing where what once was "us" now becomes "them?" The main signifier is the nexus of acceptance and rejection: is the new self built on a rejection of the old or an acceptance of the new, and what is the attitude towards "them" in relation to the new "us?" Regardless of how rich and complex the importance of group membership is, its impact upon individual behaviour will depend on positive or negative attitudes towards social identity categorization (what I am vs. what I am not). These are crucial in reference to the way we react towards the "Other." When identity comes to be defined in terms of exclusionist borders, whose edges are sharp and definite, it shapes the discursive focus on the differences, both symbolic and material, and a construction of mythology. Sociological and praxeological components from an autonomous system of inclusion and exclusion, acceptance and rejection are structured through an ideational narrative.

EUROPE AS ITS OWN "OTHER"

Europe also is the spatial sphere in which the issues of "us" versus "them" are posited. Indeed, it can be argued that Europe is a reflection of the ideational mirror in which the "Other" has been seen both in terms of inferiority to Europe and in terms of a model to emulate [Strath 2002; Brague 2012]. The European "Other" used to be placed outside Europe; it differed in political, social, cultural and religious terms. It did not mean that Europe could not borrow certain elements from without and weave them into its own identity. Nonetheless, in the process of identity construction the strange, imported elements were incorporated, assimilated and even sometimes invented anew

within the ideational dimension of the core European identity. They were adjusted to the shape of ideational boundaries in place and grounded firmly in the foundations of the European identity which developed on the basis of continuity.

On the other hand, the new idea of "Europe" is presented as a future that is entirely different from the past and promises a chance for a better life for the whole continent. Consequently, those championing the concept of European identity are so preoccupied with escaping a past that they consider to be tainted; this concern became a dogma for the new identity in order that the horrors of rampant nationalism, conflicts and wars would not be repeated again. The drama of the past percolated with too much identity led to the concept of "identity without the identity" whereby the past constitutes a spectre to be avoided. Thus, the process of European identity construction hinges on rejection. There is no God but Allah, the Muslim creed announces; there is no past but future – the European creed echoes the rejective foundation of the identity in a very similar vein. The past becomes the rejected and denied "Other" or, as Weigel put it, "nothing but pathology – racism, colonialism, religious wars and persecutions, sexism and all the rest" [Weigel 2007, p. 116]. This requires a reflection as to how such rupture in continuity will affect the process of identity creation and how a negative identity built on rejection will project itself into the future.

In the cultural context should European identity creation be analysed within the diversity of cultures or treated as a singular European culture? If it is the former, the richness of diversity poses an inherent dilemma with respect to identity building; if it is the latter then the problems of defining a common European cultural heritage are furthered by the absence of a basis in culture, language, and peoplehood. These two issues pose an inescapable dilemma and the tensions between the diversity-homogeneity nexus amount to a "catch 22" of the European identity creation process.

Forging a common heritage is a classic instrument of identity building, but the larger the group, the more diffuse the identity and the more disparate sources of heritage, which Lowenthal [2000, p. 320] sees as comprising of "not only material artefacts and monuments of art but also the legacies of ideas." The paradox of promoting a common European cultural heritage is revealed by the simultaneous

laudations for its diversity. European identity becomes thus an emblem of a conglomeration of people which have nothing in common but an institutional form, while the content of identity is missing or is, in the best case scenario, very elusive.

Identity is built by sharing cultural and social practices [Castells 2002, p. 237]. In the case of Europe, the complexity of the process of sharing the cultures and practices of 27 different nation states is further complicated by the fact that migration changed the cultural landscape of many countries and the ideology of multiculturalism was invited to embrace all cultures and treat them as equal building blocks of identity. Recently the societies of many European countries have been challenged to rearticulate their own identities – in Great Britain the debate on "Britishness" continues, in France a discussion flares about what it means to be French and so on. Compounding these troubles, at the supranational level another heated debate has begun regarding European identity. Europe became a continent of ethnic minorities from the outside, and the proportion of foreign born population is still growing thus necessitating the idea of "identity constellations" [Murphy 1999, p. 70]. Hence, Risse argues [2001, p. 202] that Europeanisation implies an incorporation of understandings of Europe which means that identity may vary depending on how it resonates with other constructed local (national) identities, including the question of how the "Other" is defined and the amount of ideational space that exists for such a construct.

Consequently, within the context of European identity, what is strange is not automatically feared. To the contrary, the room for difference and diversity is much bigger than when it comes to national identity; one could argue that it constitutes a cornerstone of European identity. Clearly, there is no ready identity foundation into which the new meaning can be injected as there are no "European people." Rather there are many different group identities which are to be merged into one European collective. Therefore, what does personal identification with Europe mean at the collective level? Firstly, collective identity derives from a distinctive social group – an institutional framework that articulates identity or objectifies it is not enough. Secondly, collective identities especially find their manifestations in shared symbols and nest in common history [Smith 1997].

If the former self becomes the "Other," which part of the past is to be placed on the pedestal and which roots are to be abscised? For instance, the opinions that European identity is the result of Greek, Roman and Judeo-Christian elements are becoming scarce and give way to an understanding that these constituents are everything but the cornerstones of what we call "Europe" [Murphy 1999, p. 166]. In the view of Davies it has become an embarrassment for the "Enlightened" Europe to be reminded of their common Christian identity and hence the quest for other, more neutral connotations [Davies 1996, p. 7]. Nonetheless, there is no consensus as to its content; no shared understanding regarding the values, the foundations, the substance and the landscape of such identity. Instead a repetitive theme appears that Christianity cannot serve as the identity signifier of European cultural heritage [Delanty 2007, p. 133] since it is insufficient to offer a basis and a reference point for European self-understanding, especially in view of the embraced cultural diversity in particular with respect to some 20 million Muslims inhabiting the continent at present. European secularism is also put forward as another substantial argument in this respect.

Hence, another question concerning European identity and its conceptualisation of the former "self" as the present "Other" is the question of memory. Memory is a central concept to collective identities but when it comes to European identity, in its political, cultural or social aspects, common memories are either scarce or contradictory. In the process of European identity construction powerful memories can be created only by the European people and they do not exist. Furthermore, the existing memory-making tools are rather weak: accession referenda, the signing of the treaties, multiple institutions, and a cohort of predominantly faceless bureaucrats will have difficulties in replacing revolutionary episodes, powerful myths and symbols which constitute the formative elements comprising the foundations of many other collective identities, be it national or religious. Furthermore, memories not only bind the past but are also projected into the future. The only memory projected into the European future is the memory of collective trauma [Giesen, Junge 2003], and this trauma is becoming the mark of European identity which is created to prevent the past from ever happening again. As a result, the lack of a common heritage is intensified by the absence of memories, and this in turn

offers only a very limited kind of European identity. It is an identity which has difficulties in determining what it is like, and is instead shaped and driven by the conception of what it is not.

Contrary to the accepting identities, whose boundaries are flexible and more porous, the process of European identity construction based on rejection of the self does not leave space for uncertainty or doubt, no breakdown, no crevice in constructed certainty that could (de)fragment the myths of unity, duty and conformity. Such identity construction provides the means through which the desired *status quo* is perpetuated and extended in space and time. Not only does a European identity perceive as the "Other" everything that is beyond excruciatingly defined borders of the imagined future, but more importantly this notion is extended across time and rules also the past by organising memories. Thus, European identity emulates nationalism in the sense that it follows its footsteps in the "treatment of the Other as everything and nothing" [Keane 1993].

Identity built on the basis of the former self becoming the "Other" means simultaneously that what once was the "Other" ceases to fulfil this role. This also contributes to the negative form of European identity construction with a super affirmation of extra-European features and under appreciation of intra-European traits. Can a robust collective identity be formed on the basis of embracing difference from without and unanimity from within? While, for instance, Christianity has undoubtedly extra-European roots, at the time it revolutionised Europe (both culturally and politically) it constituted only one, decisive external factor. Similar claims can be made with regard to different facets of European identity which were entwined into it in the past. Europe was born out of a confrontation with the "Other," and not from immersing itself in it. In a milieu of cultural relativism placing equal importance on all cultures, such a situation is simply impossible and so the capability of confronting the "Other" is lost and its disappearance is the only option left.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to shed new light on the hazards inherent to the Europeanisation phenomenon and in particular to the project

of European identity construction. It argues that when explored as a process rather than as a concept, European identity is a project that lacks the tools and foundations to propose solutions to the inherent obstacles of the identity formation process. These determine the scale and the reach of identity based politics within which the emerging identity projects are articulated and implemented.

Regardless of whether we conceive the process of attaining European identity in political or cultural terms, it is clear that the question of means is irrelevant; it is rather the ends which constitute the source of understanding the predicaments of the European identity construction. Those remain purely political and instrumental, and hence render the European identity a fragile construct. This understanding is reinforced by Delanty who repeats Kristeva's assertion that Europe must become not only useful but also meaningful [Delanty 2007, p. 127]. "Communities, like individuals, draw borders not so much to assert presence but to exclude the influence of that which is perceived as threatening to the persistence of that presence" claims Bowman passionately [Bowman 2001, p. 42]. The borderline demarcating European identity runs along the rift between the past and the future. Whereas "if all that binds Europeans together... is the renunciation of history, there is nothing to define them as people" [Delanty 2007, p. 135].

Common sentiments and expectations are a very frail basis for a common identity. While from the political perspective it is impossible to put a finger on a particular group of people and call them "Europeans," in the same way in which there will be no difficulties with indicating Hungarians or Norwegians, from the cultural point of view there is no feasible way of determining what these impalpable "Europeans" are or should be. It is merely known what they should *not* be like. The knowledge of what Europeans are not supposed to be like is perhaps enough to delineate the outer boundary of the new identity, but it is not enough to provide a durable and consistent foundation for the new identity both in the political and cultural senses – one that is its own negation of the past and is derived from the collective guilt of the decades of internecine conflicts.

Difference plays a central role in the identity construction process and determines whether identity is created on the basis of positive or negative identification. The implications of the above for the

European identity are many. Political and cultural boundaries of the new identity are determined by the negative categorisation and rejection of the past in which the past self becomes the present "Other." At the same time, a Habermasian understanding of identity which is not past- but future-oriented and highlights the civic components of every identity, is also impaired by the lack of a European demos, which is the basis and prerequisite for any political identity.

Thus, the limits of a strong cultural identity are reiterated in the restrictions of the political one whereby a rather elusive and ephemeral cultural identity is seconded by a weak political identity. Culturally, European identity creation refers not to a shift from "Dutch" to "European" but to the dynamics of identity formation [Holmes 2009, p. 52] which renders the idea of European people "caught up in the paradox of having to appeal to definitions of commonality while denying the existence of and underlying «we»" [Delanty 2007, p. 135]. Thus there is no ready European identity ready to be disseminated among the Europeans; nothing ready-made that can be taught. Politically, the weaknesses of attempts at creating European identity is exemplified in the ever present discussions on two "Europes," with the French-German tandem enforcing their projects on an EU core that is able to keep up with the pace and scope of "Europeanisation," and the contesting member states like the UK and the peripheries which are constantly lagging behind.

It remains unknown how effective European identity will be in terms of loyalties, and how strong the identity signifier will become. However, there are no grounds for believing that in the nearest future it will mark a main point of reference for the inhabitants of the European continent. Recent opinion polls [Mahony 2014] and the rapidly ascending popularity of Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant parties in several countries [The Economist 2014] support the argument that the impact of the European identity is faltering and that the impact of this sense of belonging might be transitory. Unfortunately, when the axis of the process of identity construction gyrates around the concept of denial of the former self and rejection of one's own past instead of building upon the negation of everything that one used to be, this negation constitutes a determining factor in the process of identity construction and maintenance. Such a process of Europeisation must be questioned on the grounds of its capability to sustain a cohesive

identity. Without attaining this understanding and realising how acceptance of the former "Other" frames the contingencies of "Europeanisation," the discourse on European identity shall not escape the ineffective dychotomies and will not be able to offer alternatives to the present ideational crisis in Europe.

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