# Discursively Constructing Europe: Culture, History, Values and the Other

*How is a European identity constructed and made meaningful among young people who actually subscribe to and operate within such an identity*

*By Christopher Kølvraa*

In recent years questions of European identity have become increasingly popular in scientific, political and popular debate, though they are often formulated without reference to the concept of identity, as, for example, in the related questions: "What binds the Europeans together as a community?"; or "What is (or should be) the grand idea behind being European?".

This article will also focus on these questions. This is, however, not a normative approach. My goal is not to offer an opinion on how Europe or Europeans should be imagined, but rather, working from concrete empirical material, it is to analyse how (a specific section of) Europeans actually relate to, and attempt to answer, these questions.

I have chosen to use a discourse-analytical approach, which also includes a theory of identity as discursively constructed. This is partly because I believe that this theory of identity offers some interesting new ways of analysing this inherently slippery concept. But it also seems practical in relation to the character of the empirical material and thereby in relation to the questions I ask of it.

I will say more about the material below, but here it suffices to say that it can in no way be claimed to represent the opinions of the European public in any general sense. Rather, the producers of this material could be said to represent what has been termed *"an interested minority"*[1]. That is, young people who explicitly describe themselves as operating with some sense of European identity, who in some sense feel European. As such, one cannot expect answers from this material to such questions as *'Who* feels European and who does not?' or, indeed, *why* this seems to be the case. For answers to these questions one will have to look elsewhere. As I mentioned earlier, the focus here will be on the *How*-question; how is a European identity constructed and made meaningful among those who actually subscribe to and operate with such an identity? And thereby in relation to whom this identity, this community of Europeans, is mobilized and deployed?

**The Bridging Europe Web dialogue**

This article is based on material generated through the so-called *Bridging Europe Youth Community* project. This project was initiated by the organizations "The House of Mandag Morgen" and "World Economic Forum", and lasted from 1st May to 13th July 2002. The idea was to form a net-based version of a European town hall. As such, the project consisted of two parts. First, the participants would engage in a 9-week long web-dialogue after which they would meet up in Denmark and attempt to draft a suggested constitution of Europe. Each week in the web-dialogue had a particular topic for discussion. These topics were:

1) European Identity: What Makes Me Feel European?
2) Globalisation and the New Europe
3) EU Institutions and Structure: How Does Brussels Work?
4) EU Enlargement (Eastern and Western Perspective)
5) Migration and Integration in Europe
6) Education and Innovation in Europe
7) Europe and the Rest of the World
8) The Role of the Media and Public Opinion in Shaping the Future of Europe
9) European Youth Policy[2]

It is the participants' contributions to the web-dialogue that I use as empirical material.
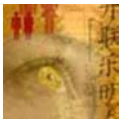
The group of participants consisted of 1000 young Europeans, meaning that there were participants from all the member states of the EU, from the ten (former) applicant countries and from Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Bosnia-Herzegovina, F.R. Yugoslavia and F.Y.R. Macedonia. All the participants were aged between 18 and 25.

As it was part of the project to conduct statistical surveys of the group through questionnaires, attempts were made to ensure that there was an equal distribution of men and women and, in an attempt to avoid a (too large) economic bias, the cost to the individual participant was kept down to 100 euros. In addition it aimed, as far as possible, to attract participants from across the political spectrum.
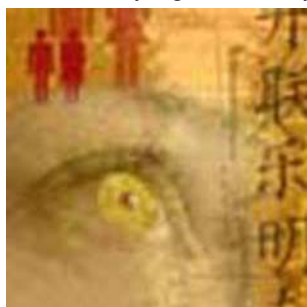
Some obvious biases could not, however, be eliminated. Firstly, all participants had to be able to communicate in English. But secondly, it is also worth noting that the individual participants' inclusion in the project happened solely as a result of their own initiative. They had to send in an application including a motivational statement. As such, one should not expect that part of European youth who are indifferent

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[1] *First Generation Europe - Report from the Bridging Europe Youth Community*, by World Economic Forum and Monday Morning, 2002, (http://www.mm.dk/filer/first_generation_europe.pdf), p. 8

[2] All the information from this section as well as further results from the statistical surveys can be found in: *First Generation Europe - Report from the Bridging Europe Youth Community*, by World Economic Forum and Monday Morning, 2002)

to Europe, or directly repelled by the idea, to be represented in any significant way among the participants.

Because of this, the group, in some respects, ends up as very homogeneous. From the questionnaires one can find out that an overwhelming part of the participants are students, speak two or more languages and have travelled extensively within Europe. If one recalls what seems to be the general trend in analyses treating the question of *who* is or are likely to feel European, then it does not seem that strange that nine out of ten of these highly educated, multilingual and internationally mobile young people declare feeling European. Because these are actually more or less the traits generally named when attempting to describe the kind of person who is likely to be operating with an European identity.[3]

**Theoretical framework: Discourse and identity**
The discourse-analytical framework that I use in my analysis comes mostly from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's book "*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*"[4]. At the most basic level however all discourse-analytical approaches share the fundamental assumption that the meaning or identity ascribed to concept or object is the result of a social convention rather than something springing from the object in itself. The meaning of Europe, for example, is not then a consequence of some immanent quality of the landmass itself, but rather defined by what everybody, in a certain situation, agrees that it means. As such its meaning may well change over time (from 'Christendom' to 'a continent'), however the meaning of a concept or an object is always derived basically from its relation to other objects or concepts. Any meaning of Europe then always involves the either implicit or explicit reference to what Europe is not. Europe as a continent is not Asia or North America.

One of the central terms in Laclau and Mouffe's theory is *articulation*. This designates any practice through which a certain concept or object is ascribed a certain (new) meaning. Articulation is then a practice, which changes or creates the thing that is articulated. If Europe is articulated as Christendom, then it is an entity that stops at the Turkish border, has an important centre in Rome and a specific set of priorities. If, however, Europe is instead articulated as the EU, then the borders, centres and priorities are completely different.

If articulation is the practice through which a concept is given a new meaning, then the term *discourse*

desig-nates the system of differential relations that a concept, through articulation, is inserted into in order to achieve this new meaning. If Europe is articulated as Christendom, then it is inserted into what one might call a religious discourse, which also contains a lot of other concepts (for example, God, the church, the believers, etc) and from within which the relevant difference is the one in relation to Islam.[5]

This anlysis will then, in this terminology, look at how Europe or Europeans are articulated by the participants in the web-dialogue, i.e. at what other elements are also present in their discourse on Europe; and especially at whom this particular articulation puts Europe in a differential relation to.

This last point - who Europe stands in a differential relation to - is an intricate part of any question on European Identity. Just as any concept is defined in relation to what it is not, a group of people who share a collective identity will also, to a marked extent, think of themselves in relation to those who are outside the group, the Others. This is a point especially made in the research on nationalism; nations have always defined themselves and their unique qualities in relation to the other (most often surrounding) nations. The relationship between Self and Other is expressed through what Laclau and Mouffe call "chains of equivalences"[6]. This means that a chain of concepts, which we equate with ourselves, is constructed (these are generally positive). Our Other is then ascribed the opposite negative concepts through another chain of equivalences; the Danes are peaceful, easygoing and considerate, whereas the Germans are warlike, authoritarian and dominating. As such, constructing our Other becomes an intricate part of constructing ourselves. As Stuart Hall puts it: "*Only when there is an Other can you know who you are*"[7]. This should not be understood as though there is always only one Other to a certain kind of identity. The Danes, of course, have a Swedish Other, a German Other etc. At times, however, one of these can become so dominant in the discourse that it becomes, what I term, a significant Other, meaning an Other that is not only constructed as different from the Self, but which is considered to be so radically and threateningly different that it starts to influence the way we relate to the rest of the Others. Examples of this could be Denmark's relationship to Germany in the 19th century or the relationship to the Soviet Union during the cold war, which both influenced greatly how we related to other nations.

The discourse-analytical theory of identity however also involves a conception of each individual as having multiple identities, because identity in this framework is not something that one 'is', but rather something that one 'does'; any given person has at his disposal a range
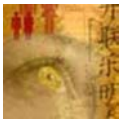
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[3] For such an analysis see: Horsman, Mathew and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, London 1994.
[4] Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso 2002 (1985).

[5] Regarding articulation and discourse: Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Verso 2002 (1985), p. 105ff
[6] Ibid pp. 127-128
[7] Hall, Stuart, Ethnicity: Identity and Difference, in Geoff Eley and Grigor Suny (eds.), Becoming National, Oxford 1996, p. 345

of identities, for example as a man, as a Dane, as a European, as a student and so forth. Which one is at any given moment mobilised depends entirely on the situation and thereby on whom there is a need to relate to. As such, these identities need not be locked in to a stable hierarchical order because, in the situations where one would mobilize one's national identity and conceive of oneself as part of the national community, it simply seems deeply irrelevant that one is also a man.[8]

There are of course situations where two identities can come into conflict. This happens if a situation arises that call for the mobilization of two identities, i.e. a situation where two different discourses both seem relevant and meaningful to articulate the individual, but in which these two identities are completely incompatible. Laclau and Mouffe term such a conflict an antagonism[9]. In other words, this means a situation in which two of the collective identities to which one belongs come to contradict each other so that one can no longer be a part of both. This would for example be the case for European Muslims if Europe became articulated solely as Christendom. There would then arise an antagonistic relationship between their identity as Muslims (articulated into a discourse of Islam) and their identity as Europeans (articulated into a discourse of Europe). An antagonism is dissolved when one of the discourses achieves hegemony over the other, meaning that the hegemonic discourse becomes the one that is thought of as the relevant or most natural one to articulate the individual in the given situation.

This theoretical approach to identity as something that is inherently multiple means that it is not in itself a problem that most of the participants claim to be both European and national. Because the relevant question in relation to identity is not if these people in their hearts really feel mostly national *or* mostly European. It is rather which identity a certain situation or a certain Other calls for the mobilization of; when, or in relation to who, does it seem relevant to be Europeans rather than a certain nationality and vice versa. And, of course, whether these two identities ever become antagonistic.

I hope that it is now obvious that when analysing the construction of a European Identity, a significant part of the analysis must actually be devoted to looking at the construction of Europe's Other.

**The nations and Europe: cultural histories and political values**
In the first week of the web-dialogue the topic for discussion was *"European Identity: What Makes Me Feel European?"* Although this topical question is formulated at a personal level (as what makes *me*, not what makes *us)* the participants seem to implicitly agree right from the start that feeling European is not (just) a personal experience, but that it means being part of a certain community. As such the discussion turns immediately to what it is that all Europeans have in common that makes them feel that they belong together, that they belong to a community of Europeans.

As one might well expect, given the overall attitudes of the group towards feeling European, there is very little critique of European identity at a normative level. If the participants do not think that European identity already exists, then they seem to think that it should. The only ones who reject the idea of a European identity at a normative level do so because they think of the term identity as being intrinsically linked with culture or cultural community. It is, however, only a small minority of the participants that take this stand, and most of these soon abandon it. For the majority, the advantage of discussing European *identity* seems to be exactly that it need not include the idea of a common European culture. As such there is an overwhelming consensus that a common European culture neither exists nor should exist. Indeed what one cannot avoid noticing is that the term culture is completely hegemonized by a national discourse. Culture in this discussion means national culture. Furthermore culture, although not explicitly defined at any point in the discussion, is clearly not articulated as a matter of choice or preference, it is as one participant puts it "*not something you can learn from books or hear from others*"[10]. Culture however is not the only element in the national discourse which appears in the material. The nations are further articulated as being very old/having a long history, and as being something immediate and primary to every individual. A favourite metaphor in the discussion is that they are the roots of a person, a foundation that one must always start from, and that cannot be negotiated, abandoned or denied, even if one would like to, not even for Europe.

*Trying denying your own roots don't make you more European than a person that values them!* [11]

This articulation of nations as very 'thick' communities seems to structure and set the limits for the possible ways of articulating Europe or the community of Europeans. As such the main underlying principle of the entire construction of Europe is to make sure that it is articulated in such a way that it does not enter into an antagonistic relationship with the nation:
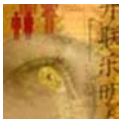
*It's about time that we (...) open our minds and broaden our perspectives. But that shouldn't be incompatible with feeling proud of your own country, traditions or heritage.*[12]

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[8] For an elaboration of this conception of identity see: Hall, Stuart, Who needs Identity? i Stuart Hall og Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity,* London 1996, pp. 1-18
[9] Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 2002 (1985), pp. 122-134 og Jørgensen, Marianne Winther og Louise Phillips, *Diskursanalyse som teori og metode*, Roskilde 1999, pp. 60-62

[10] In the following I will be referring to the web-dialogue (see www.bridgingeurope.com), in the following way: The topic of the week, the date of the contribution, the title, the author and the country: European Identity, 02.05.2002, *The Un-grabbable Europe*, Bart Woord, The Netherlands
[11] European Identity, 04.05.2002*, To Lena*, Leonor Lourenco, Portugal

The first consequence of this is, as mentioned above, that any articulation of Europe as a common culture is ruled out with reference to the radical cultural particularity of each nation. Instead, in what seems a desperate attempt to avoid the complete disintegration of Europe as a meaningful and coherent unit, the motto of "Unity in Diversity" is introduced into the discussion. This in itself, however, is not very helpful. To several of the participants the idea of unity in diversity is, at least if left unelaborated, incompatible with the very meaning of the term identity.

*Identity means similarity, things making us alike.(...) To say that Europe is a 'unity of difference' is a paradox, not an answer[13]*

So, in other words, something is needed that the Europeans do in fact share or have in common. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the general discourse on Europe in recent years, what is introduced as the common ground for all Europeans is a certain set of political values. These values are defined by one participant as *"democratic principles, ideas of freedom, liberty, social life and behaviour, trade, etc."*[14], but in fact there are surprisingly few attempts at making such a list and, in the following discussion, the European political values are mostly just referred to as being democracy, freedom and equality; however any explicit discussion on the content of these terms is completely absent. Everybody, more or less, seems to be so content in the knowledge that this articulation of Europe as something *political* does not challenge the national cultures, that there is no real motivation to explore in detail what these political values entail or how they relate to each other.

Articulating Europe as a community solely organized around these political values has, however, some unintended consequences. As most agree that these values are universal, this leads some participants to a very abstract notion of Europe. If being European just means being democratic etc., then there is no longer any necessary connection between living together in Europe (the continent) and being European. Europe is then nothing more than a frame of mind. This position is well expressed in the statement:

*I think Ghandi was/is a thousand times more 'European' than Adolf Hitler.[15]*

Furthermore, democratic states exist beyond the European continent, and this notion of Europe as a frame of mind therefore seems to lead to the inclusion of entities that most participants are very much reluctant to call European. This is expressed in one participant's deliberately provocative question:

*Don't Americans have democracy too, or maybe they are also Europeans?"[16]*

By far the majority of the participants are willing neither to include Ghandi nor any Americans in the community of Europeans. It is to avoid this, that the idea of Europe as a community around certain political values is supplied with a historical dimension.

What is constructed in order to anchor the idea of Europe firmly within the European continent is in fact a particular European narrative which links the cultural particularity of the nations, a long history of conflict and the present Europe of values in a tight causal chain. The cultural differences of the nations did in the past cause them (Europe's youth, if you will) to fight each other. But in the course of a long history we have learned that these differences are in fact what make Europe so special:

*In which other continent can we find such a tremendous cultural variety?[17]*

The cultural differences in Europe can then, when one has the necessary experience and maturity (i.e. a long hard history), cease to be a source of conflict and can become the very ground from which tolerance, curiosity and understanding grow. And these are crucial if one is to be truly democratic.

This articulation avoids challenging the national discourse, because it is not claimed that Europe is maturing, or will mature, to a point where cultural differences can be denied or eliminated, rather that Europe is not only the mature old and wise Europe of today *because* of the combination of national differences and a long hard history, but that in order to *stay* democratic, this benevolent diversity must be maintained and appreciated so that it can keep reproducing the atmosphere of tolerance that, in the end, is the very condition of the present Europe of democratic values.

*we are one big family consisting of various nations (…), these are the reasons why Europe is wealth and democratic community[18]*

By constructing such a tight connection between Europe and what is both its precondition and its opposite, the nation, it becomes possible to think of Europe as a community of political values, without it becoming so abstract that it drifts away to India or America. Europe may be a frame of mind, but there is a good reason for it being a European frame of mind.

Resting on this construction, the universality of European political values can be handled normatively.

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[12] European Identity, 01.05.02, *European Identity*, Alvaro de Ona, Spain

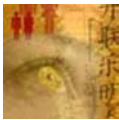[13] European Identity, 01.05.02, *Why do we need a European identity?*, Anders Blok, Denmark

[14] European Identity, 02.05.02, *What unites us?*, Rita Vaicekonyte, country not indicated

[15] European Identity, 02.05.02, *European identity. Ghandi vs. Hitler,* Selcuk Akyuz, Tyrkiet

[16] European Identity, 03.05.02, *In response to Helena,* Deniss Petrovitsh, country not indicated

[17] European Identity, 05.05.02, *Differences are priceless*, Leonor Lourenco, Portugal

[18] European Identity, 03.05.02, *Is there a common European identity?*, Batric Sekara, Bosnian-Herzegovina

They are European, but they should be universal. This means that this universality can be transformed from being a disturbing element, when trying to define Europe, to being the cornerstone in an emerging idea of Europe's role or mission in the world. Europe becomes the natural choice as a "*guardian of universal values*"[19].

One last thing that is worth noticing in this construction is that it allows the participants to avoid engaging in a very concrete discussion about the exact borders of Europe. These can remain fuzzy and flexible because at the heart of this construction there is actually a hidden tautology; Europe is defined by values, these values emerge from the, at times, conflictual history of the nations, i.e. *Europe consists of the nations that have endured the ordeal of European history*. As European history is usually articulated with reference to the two world wars (particularly the destruction of Nazi-Germany), this anchors the idea of Europe in the European continent. However, it does not offer any distinctions as to exactly how far (especially east) this spreads. How far east do we find nations that have been part of European history? Nazi-Germany, at one point, spread to the outskirts of Moscow; and Turkey has played a significant part in many of the wars that are traditionally thought of as European wars. This flexibility in the exact location of European border, inherent in the construction, makes it possible for each participant to imagine Europe in the shape that he or she prefers. As such the otherwise difficult issue of whether Turkey is a European country or not simply does not enter the discussion in any dominant way.

In this first discussion then, the relational character of this identity does not primarily emerge as a relationship to a non-European Other. Of course non-European actors appear at times, but the structuring relationship seems to be that between Europe and the nations. In fact, these two elements seem to move in opposite directions of the same spectrum as the discussion progresses. In order not to challenge the nation, Europe must, from the beginning, be constructed as a community of political values, a common frame of mind, but the nations themselves however, in order to counterweight the abstract and voluntaristic character of Europe, seem to move in the opposite direction and, as such, increasingly become ever more primary, non-negotiable and unchangeable essences. The more abstract Europe becomes, the more 'real' the nation becomes.

However, as the discussion in the following weeks moves to more concrete political topics, especially two non-European actors become increasingly visible in the debate.

### The Arab Other: The Other Inside

Although the Arab Other is absent from the discussion on European identity in the first week of the web-dialogue, he does enter the discussion in the following weeks, when the topics are such as "Migration and Immigration" and "Europe and the wider world".

In the discussion of migration and immigration, there are in fact rather few contributions dealing with migration within the EU or with immigration from the applicant countries. And where such movements are mentioned, they are generally not articulated as problematic; actually they are most often described as a central part of the European project (EU). In fact it seems as though the very term immigration very soon becomes reserved for talking about Arabs either already residing in Europe or on the move towards Europe. This discussion of the place of Arab immigrants in Europe seems immediately to split the participants into two camps. However none of these ever seem to gain the upper hand, because both can deploy the construction of Europe as formulated during the first week to support their position.

In the one camp, the construction of Europe as an open and voluntaristic community, a special frame of mind, is simply applied directly to the issue of immigration. In this articulation the immigrants do not pose a problem at all. Given that they can subscribe to freedom and democracy, then they can immediately be articulated as an unproblematic asset to the community; for example, as a much needed addition to the workforce.
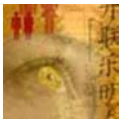
*(...) immigration is a richness for us while our countries are desperately growing older and older, [and] we have trouble to pay the pensions of our elder.*[20]

In the opposite camp people are a whole lot more sceptical towards Arab immigration. This scepticism, however, is not primarily about whether Arab immigrants will be willing to live in freedom and democracy, more often it is expressed as an apprehension towards, what is usually termed, Arab culture.

However, this position does not mean that they have to abandon the earlier construction of Europe; they just simply chose to stress the necessary connection to the nations that is also a central element in it. If the Europe of political values arises from the cultural diversity of the nations, then one can, without ever contradicting this articulation of Europe, make a case for protecting the national cultures. This all means, though, that in this camp the issue of immigration slides from a European frame to a national one:

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[19] European Identity, 04.05.02, *European political identity as 'universal values'*, Anders Blok, Denmark

[20] Immigration and Integration, 31.05.02, *To Philip, Bart and their friend Pim..*, Gregory Mounie, The Netherlands

*In some neighbourhoods, they don't even know who our president is, that driving too hard can lead to penalties, that it isn't really normal to sacrifice sheeps on their balconies, that it's usual to keep your garbage inside until the 'cleaning service' arrives...[21]*

This quote is actually a very good example of what generally happens. The Arab immigrant is articulated in connection with culture, here the sacrifice of sheep, but the thing that this Arab culture is different from cannot be a common European culture because, as I described earlier, such a concept is excluded from this construction of Europe.

Instead, what stands in opposition to Arab culture necessarily becomes national culture. Those that articulate Arab immigration as a problem do so in a national frame (in the quote above note the reference to *'our president'*), not in a European one.

The problem then is that the Arab immigrant can be thought of in two radically different ways, which *nevertheless* both refer back to the same construction of Europe. At one level, the immigrant is confronted by an open European community of political values in which he can readily be included and accepted. However, at the same time and place, he will be confronted by a national community, which, as it is articulated as a closed cultural essence, cannot integrate him.

This duplicity in the construction prevents a clear articulation of the Arab immigrant as Europe's Other. He is either not an Other at all, or he is treated not as Europe's Other, but as a national Other.

There are however contributions later in the web-dialogue when Arab *countries* are articulated in relation to Europe. However these are then articulated as the object of what one might call Europe's civilizing mission, the guarding and spreading of the universal political values that Europe itself is defined around. However in such articulations of the Arabs and Europe there is always another and much more dominating Other in the picture.

## The American Other:
## globalization as McDonalization

The USA, or simply America, emerges in the text to a greater or lesser extent in basically all the discussion topics. Often, there is no elaboration on why America is radically different from Europe, it is rather just assumed that everybody will agree that it is, and the very mention of America can as such be deployed under any issue as a forceful rhetorical punch line, often taking the form of a rhetorical question:

*Do you really want to have a second USA?[22]*

This negative image of the USA is never challenged, not even when a participant tries to contradict an argument which rests heavily on it. When the idea is introduced that Europe should establish close ties with countries like Canada, Russia and Australia in order to resist *"the*

monopoly of the U.S.A"[23], those that disagree make sure they do so without denying the radical differences of the USA:

*I've been to Canada and I actually think that Canadian people are much similar to people from U.S. than to us.[24]*

What exactly this difference entails does however become clear in the discussion of globalization. As mentioned earlier, this term is first introduced as the force that Europe is to guard the universal values against. Now however, it becomes clear that this force is by no means anonymous; it does in fact have both a specific origin and a specific set of malignant consequences. As to the origin, there is never much doubt among the participants:

*Globalization is at the moment Americanism[25]*

This idea of globalization as Americanism is most often metaphorised into *McDonaldization*. Further, there does not seem to be much dispute among the participants as to the effects of this:

*McDonaldization are threatening to destruct local cultures, languages and traditions.[26]*

As McDonaldization destroys culture, and McDonaldization is synonymous with America, one swiftly arrives at the conclusion that America lacks anything resembling true culture:

*The American culture and economy are one[27]*

The merit of this image of the USA as completely void of culture is that it enables the construction of the USA as Europe's Other on cultural grounds, but without ending up with a construction that implies that there is such a thing as a common European culture. Because America has *"nothing resembling or comparable to Europe's various cultures"[28]* the dichotomy does not become one between American culture and European common culture, but can instead be constructed as one between America as non-culture and Europe as a container of 'Culture' in a general and abstract sense. Europe is, in this particular dichotomy, able to play the cultural card without challenging the cultural particularity of the nations. As such, America can be successfully constructed as a *European* Other and does

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[21] Immigration and Integration, 30.05.02, *Ethnic cultures are dangerous for themselves,* Bart Woord, The Netherlands
[22] EU Institutions, 16.05.02, *Well...,* Marco Mehl, Germany

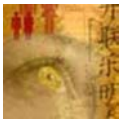[23] EU Enlargement, 22.05.02, *Never geographical members, but Light Members,* Selcuk Akuyz, Tyrkey
[24] EU Enlargement, 23.05.02, *In which measure is the Enlargement right?,* Sara Del Noce, Italy
[25] Globalization, 09.05.02, *Nobody is against globalization I think,* Malek Shaladi, Germany
[26] Globalization, 08.05.02, *What does globzlization mean to me,* Dasa Bolcina, Italy
[27] Globalization, 13.05.02, *Europe as a contrebalance for different Globalization,* Stephane Goethals, Belgium
[28] EU Institutions, 21.05.02, *Reform – Enlargement – Democratic Deficit – USA,* Fabian Psaila, Malta

not slide to the national level, as was the case with the Arab Other.

The dichotomy between Europe and America is also strengthened by the consistent deployment of the image of Europe as old or experienced.

*United States is not a country with traditions. I mean they are too young in our earth to have traditions[29]*

It is this introduction of history that allows for a sharp differentiation between Europe and America also at the level of political values, even though they both have democratic institutions. America may have the institutions of democracy, but without history it does not have the wisdom of experience and tolerance that is strictly necessary to truly appreciate and implement the underlying political values. The resemblance at the democratic institutional level is then immediately replaced by an ethical difference.

*The difference towards the USA is in my opinion that they just don't have a history as long as ours. This is important for their ethics[30]*

The result is that the USA is successfully constructed as Europe's Other at all the levels relevant in this particular articulation of Europe: the cultural, the historical and the political/ethical. What is in fact constructed is two opposite chains of equivalences. Europe is articulated as nations, experience and ethical political values, which is then opposed to an America articulated as McDonalds, reckless irresponsibility and selfish economic interests.

Although it is the dichotomy between Europe and America that is by far the most elaborated in the discussion, there are however, as I mentioned earlier, a few other non-European actors, mostly in the form of Arab countries. These are though always articulated as objects to be acted on, not as actors themselves. Objectified as either the inherently passive receivers of civilization (from Europe) or as the powerless victims of McDonaldization, they are the object of the fight rather than a participant in it. The fight itself seems always to be with America. It is this relationship that structures and guides the relationships between Europe and other non-European Others.

As such one might claim that the USA is not only viewed as radically different from Europe, but that it in fact becomes Europe's significant Other. Not only does this articulation of Europe seem to be the perfect anti-thesis of such an America, but also Europe's interactions with and conceptions of the rest of the world, i.e. the civilizing mission, seem to be mostly defined as yet another level of resistance towards the American Other and its 'mission' of McDonaldization.

## Concluding remarks

In this article I have attempted to show how a collective European identity, or the community of Europeans, is constructed in the concrete setting of the *Bridging Europe* web-dialogue. Although an analysis such as this naturally cannot capture the entire complexity of such a large bulk of material, I have tried to show the structures that I believe are the most significant in this construction of Europe. Two things, in my view, stand out in particular. Firstly, even in this group of young and trans-nationally mobile participants, nations re-main articulated as solid 'real' cultural essences. The national community is never up for negotiation and as such becomes the basic principle in the construction of Europe. Secondly, Europe may be constructed within limits set by the nations, but this construction is also made to be deployed against a certain Other. Europe's Other does not appear to be the Arab immigrants, which never the less are still extremely popular for the role of national Other. Rather Europe's Other appear to be America. It is this dichotomy that dominates in the material, and does so to such an extent that America, at least in this material, actually ends up appearing as Europe's *significant* Other.

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