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The Borders of Europe
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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show how Europeanisation should not be seen as a standing element, but rather as one of the main knots in which the global flows of culture, images and ideas crossing the European's imagination are entangled. Europeanisation is to be considered as a discursive process through which the European identity (the so-called Europeanness) becomes part of a wider narration that includes other symbols, values, imagines etc.

The paper is based on an ethnographic research carried out on the island of Cyprus after the economic and financial crisis of 2013. It analyses the rhetorical use of the adjective *European* by Greek-Cypriots when asked to define their ethnical and national identity as well as the way it changes depending on the different "Other" Cypriots want to distinguish from. The focus is on the strategic use of the term Europeanness which allows one same group of people, on different occasions, to recover the ones that have been pointed at as "others" or to keep them out. In particular, the paper pinpoints three main oppositions (Greek vs Turkish, Mediterranean vs European and Cypriot vs Greek), where the tool of Europeanness is used to underline the border dividing two identity categories.

Eventually, it challenges the concept of Europeanisation as a process from a point of less Europeanness to one of more Europeanness. In fact, the meaning of being European cannot be understood by taking the Europeanness for granted, as a clear and sharp concept, but rather by investigating the relationship between Europe and other symbols as modernity, development, national or ethnic identity, etc., following all the different and contested meanings it can assume among people.

Keywords

While I was preparing this paper, I read an article by the historic Robert Holland regarding the different ways in which British rule was carried out between Cyprus and Malta. It ended with these words: "Whether the common membership of an 'ever closer' European Union will erode the relevance of such contrasts is the point historical (including colonial) and contemporary debates collide" (Holland 2014, 19). Such a closing betrays a very common opinion about the Europeanisation process, considered as an attempt at smoothing national differences towards a postnational European continuum.

However, the issue of Europeanisation should be seen from a more complex perspective, that is stressing the multiplicity and variety of the elements entangled in the Europeanisation concept. As Borneman and Fowler suggested, we should look at Europeanisation as "a spirit, a vision, and a process" (Borneman Fowler 1997, 511). I would like to focus in particular on the dimension of vision, which is strictly related with the ones of imagination and future.

My aim is to show how Europeanisation should be considered as a discursive process through which the European identity (the so-called Europeanness) becomes part of a wider narration that includes other symbols, values, imagines etc. Therefore, Europeanness should not be seen as a standing element, but rather as one of the main knots in which the global flows of culture, images and ideas crossing the European's imagination are entangled. The meaning of being European in a globalised world can only be understood by investigating the relationship between Europe and other symbols as modernity, development, national or ethnic identity, etc., following the connections created among people.

Secondly, these statements are to be seen as related to what Appadurai called "project of good life" (Appadurai 2014). This expression, originally coined in relation with the poor association and activists' house of Mumbai, may also suit our question about Europe. In fact, culture, intended as the *capacity to aspire,* contains a future dimension which again stresses the intentions and aspirations of the individuals claiming to belong to a political community rather than the legacies of the past that are underlined by a *culture-as-tradition* approach. I'm going to come back to this point later.

Cyprus is a privileged field to study the relationship existing between different identity narrations already dwelling on the island and the feeling of belonging to Europe. Due to the unique condition of being both an ex-colony and what Michael Herzfeld (2002) has defined a *crypto-colony* , this relationship is complex and cannot be dumbed down to an opposition between national and supranational.

During my first ethnographic research in Cyprus, I spent four months (from September to December 2013) in the capital, the south side of Nicosia, collecting data *from below,* through interviews and the associating with the inhabitants of the city. In that time, I observed the rhetorical use of the adjective *European* by Greek-Cypriots when they were asked to define their ethnical and national identity and the way it changes depending on the different *other* that Cypriots want to distinguish from. I have approached the issue of identity from an operative perspective, focusing on the role that particular traits or elements of identity play in the relationship between groups and communities, without checking if these constructions refer to an effective state of fact or not. I carried out the research following the perspective initiated by Barth (1998), that is looking at the identity categories as tools to discriminate among groups

and not as a gathering of existing features. For this reason I dealt with the category of *border*, looking for the borders that cross the G/C consciousness and all the elements they use to mark them. On that occasion, I have pinpointed three different oppositions (Greek vs Turk, Mediterranean vs European and Cypriot vs Greek) where my spokespeople could use the tool of Europeanness to draw the borders of their *us*. At the same time, the vagueness of the term European allowed them to stretch it, cut it or reshape it in order to change its borders according to the different context their were thinking about: a strategic use of the Europeanness which allowed them, on different occasions, to recover the ones that have been pointed at as *others* or to keep them out.

Firstly, the European border is used as a tool to underscore the clearest border existing in Cyprus: the *green line* which has been dividing the two sides of the island since the war of 1974. From the Cypriots' point of view this line separates two different worlds: the Greek, Christian, free and modern South and the Muslim, military occupied and backward North side. Europeanness marks the divide; being European means not to be Muslims, not to be mentally undeveloped, not to be violent, that is not to be Turk, but Greek. In other words, the claim of being European is another way to contrast the Turkish demand for the island's soil.

The Greek and Turkish case is said to be the ethnic opposition par excellence: a clash of civilisations that has been going on for thousands of years. The Europeanness is one of the fields, both political and symbolic, where this battle is being fought. The bitterness and violence are considered so intrinsic in the relationship between Greeks and Turks that cause and effect roles could be switched. As Yiannis Papadakis has shown (Papadakis 2005), the G/C propaganda states the Greek nature of the inhabitants of the island on the basis of the sufferings provoked by the Turks all along the history.

In the opinion of my spokespeople, Europeanness and EU membership are related: the first is needed as a condition for a real integration and cooperation among the members.

Therefore, Turkey stands no chance to become a EU member because of the impossibility of Turkish people to co-live peacefully with other European peoples. The differences between the former and the latter are substantial and insuperable. Not only is the presence of Turkish people in Europe a problem of dealing with poor migrants who could bring criminality or disorder, the main problem seems to be the access of Turkish people to the *acquis communautaire*, and the possibility of free movement and residence into the EU. Most of my informants spoke about the Turkish entrance in Europe as an "invasion": not a military invasion from a foreign state, as the one in 1974, but as a flooding of millions of foreign bodies that could corrupt the very nature of Europe. As the business owner Gaston told me:

> What I believe? I believe they have not to be a full member. Ok it's a big country, 75 millions people, it's a big market, it's ok for Europe, but if they become a full member.. if 10 or 20 millions Turks from east go in Europe, what they do there? In Germany, Denmark, England.. full catastrophe![1]

All this reflects a specific view according to which the Europeanness is not only a condition to join the EU but the necessary basis to make it successful. As other scholars have already noticed (Pagden 2002), when we talk about Europe in the common sense, we are neither talking about a continent, nor a people, but we refer to a history of civilisation with specific and arbitrary characteristics, resulting from a specific narration. Pagden (2002) noticed that normally continental identities lack of strength and appeal among people. Just few other identities represent an exception, which are used to affirm social and economic demands, as the Afro-american's. The European identity breaks this rule.

> Only Europeans have persistently described themselves, usually, when faced with cultures they found indescribably alien, to be not merely British or German or Spanish but also European (Pagden 2002, 31)

The narration of Europe is grounded on a chauvinist and racist judgment of others and combines in a creative and selective way elements from the ancient Greeks, the Roman empire, Medieval christendom, the Renaissance, the industrial revolution, the social state and the anti-communism of the cold war, in order to declare itself as the origin of the whole human civilisation.

This perspective allows the narrators to keep out from the European stage others actors, for example the Vikings, Migrants or Russians, even if they have had a decisive role in the historical play of Europe as a continent.

Together with (or better against) Europe is always put the East, that means the Islamic civilisation. It is described as a quasi-society, which hasn't got own features but merely represents the non-west other to which the European self is opposed. (Asad 2002). The otherness of the East resides in its being islamic; Muslims are another kind of humanity, with different behaviors and values, not compatible with European ones. This explains why Turks coming from inner Turkey are considered more dangerous than the the ones living on the Aegean coast: they grew up isolated from modern secularisation, and because of that they are seen as fanatic Muslims incapable of coexisting peacefully with Europeans. With the words of Gaston:

> Because Turkey is 85 millions people, let say, that ten millions are the civilised people. [….] 85 millions, 10 millions that are the people that maybe they have to be in the EU, the other 75 millions are fanatic Muslims and this is not nice. It's very dangerous because when you are a Muslim you believe that first is God and after the other things. Now we live in other years.[2]

Europeanness can be used as a tool to stress the contrasts between Turkish and other Europeans, as Cypriots, but can be used at the same time to draw a further border among Turkish people themselves. As a matter of fact, G/C feel a great difference between the Turkish-Cypriot community and the big number of Turkish migrants arrived on the island after the war and living in the houses seized from G/C. The presence of these settlers is one of the problems that still hinders the solution of the *Cyprus problem*. The Republic of Cyprus considers them as illegal clandestines and doesn't accept to give them Cypriot citizenship; in fact, they are asked to leave the island.

"Turk from Turkey is dirt, Turkish Cypriots are more like us"[3] told me Cristina. This statement is in line with the Greek propaganda, which aims at freeing the T/C community from the Turk oppressor but refuses at the same time to create a federal T/C state, stressing the similarities and the supposed peaceful past coexistence of the two ethnic groups to get T/C back to the pre-war condition of minority in a Greek state.

In this context Europeanness changes its skin, the border of Europe is enlarged to comprehend one hundred thousands of T/C, tracing a divide between the licit inhabitants of Cyprus and the *Turks from Turkey*. Islam is again the pivotal element of the opposition, the retired Yiakonos has recapted: "they [the Turkish settlers] are fanatics"[4], instead T/C secularisation would be proved by their usage to take part in the Christian celebration when they were living in Greek villages, or by their habit to eat pork. Moreover, Turks aren't able to distinguish between religious and secular aspects of their life, and this again would be a sign of their backwardness. Furthermore, a recurring belief among my spokespeople is that they were "brainwashed" to hate the Cypriots and to produce a *turkisation* (i.e. an islamisation) of the TRNC, that consists in jeopardising the Westernness of the T/C specific cultural identity.

The core of the difference between the self-defined moderns and the supposed backwards is contained in the closing of the last quotations: "Now we live in other years". Some seem capable of building a rational separation among the religious, public and political spheres, others aren't able *yet*. This chronological separation between modernity and backwardness is strictly related with the idea of Europe, even in other contexts where religion is not contemplate.

The European border could as well be re-drawn in order to distinguish Western Europe from the Mediterranean countries, as Cyprus itself, which stay one step behind on the way to modernity. In this case, Europe is turned to something far from the cypriot "us", to either a goal to achieve or an explanation for their own unsuccess. In fact, during my first stay in Cyprus the inability of keeping up with Western requests was largely stressed by the media and the public opinion in order to explain the recently bankrupt of the national bank and the economic crisis of the island. The bank crisis uncovered the bribery, the collusion between political and financial system and the familism that had shattered the illusion of deserving the European membership. The incapacity of Cyprus to achieve and manage the standards of a modern state would be the cause of the ongoing crisis.

> We were not 100% ready to entry EU. I mean first of all mentality, and the awareness of how to be a citizen, you have to be very active, you have to claim, to understand how the institutions work, [...] So I knew we were not ready, economically we were ready.[5]

In this quote by the young designer Orestis, Europe stands for a new way of being citizens, a new approach to the public life that marks out modernity or backwardness.

This widespread belief is normally described with a set of stereotypes that doesn't refer to the Oriental backwardness but to the category of Mediterranean. The Mediterranean region and way of living is another common alter ego of Europe, now reduced to the North-West Europe, as the words of the bartender Pablo prove,

> Cyprus is more Mediterranean, Europe is something else. In the Mediterranean there is the same culture and we live in the same way.[6]

Actually, Mediterranean is Europe but it is the Europe of the old times. In people's imagination, the development maps show a geographical hierarchy: the periphery seems to receive a second-hand modernity from the centres which give it off. As a consequence, the closer you are to the centre, the quicker your development process will be. Southern people stand a chance, if they want and if they aren't corrupted by other cultures, to receive the modernity bless, but they need time. Their subaltern and isolated position in the economic and cultural hierarchy has produced a delay in the running to modernity that is now to be filled. With the words of Minos, a public servants of the Morphu's municipality:

> Basically, Europe used to be like us. They changed before we do. The greeks, for example, they had the same principle mentality as we did in 1950 but they changed more quickly because they were closer to the Europe's mainland. I mean.. all the movements that changed the way people think, they found more prosperous land in the main European districts than in Cyprus that were still isolated.[7]

From the opposition Europe vs Mediterranean another Europe comes to light, not anymore related to the firm opposition between different cultures, origins, or even natures but to a liquid belonging that refers to individual or collective attitude and skills. To be European is not an unalterable product of history but the ability to keep up with the running of progress. Thus, one *can* become European, as Giorgos affirmed in reply to my question about the belonging of Cyprus to Europe or Asia:

G: This is an outdated question. Now yes is European
Me: Why did you say "outdated"? What has changed?
G: Now we are part of the EU. The young people behave more like westerns and now we don't discuss more about this question. Before you could have asked it.[8]

Learning to be European is a complex task but Cypriots had a good teacher: Britain. The British dominion appears to be one of the elements that have encouraged the Europeanisation process; it is often perceived as a benefit, as a push towards the modernisation of the country. The recurring opinion about British ruling was that through it Cypriots managed to inherit a more open mentality, hard-working attitude, better chance for education, appreciation for law and order, a slimmer bureaucracy and so on. Good opinions about the British rule are confirmed by the words of Nizza, a woman who recognised the advantage of the English school system in spite of her lack of English knowledge.

They gave us the English language, good for education. Our youngsters can go abroad to study and this make them open minded. University in Britain is better than in Greece.

The past inclusion in a modern and powerful empire created a cultural link with one of the most important centre of propagation of modernity, disclosing the wide world to the small and marginal Cyprus: to sum up, it had an important role in speeding up the process of modernisation of the country. The result of the British dominion was a promotion of Cyprus into the geographical hierarchy of Modernity, a moving away from East to West.

Many people think that England influenced us badly, but I disagree. They helped us in being more European, otherwise we would have been more similar to Asiatics. […] The british are better than the Greeks and so they were good for us. They have organized better the public sector.[9]

It is interesting to notice that in this brief conversation about the past Nizza brought up twice a comparison between the British and the Greeks that was not explicitly solicited by my questions. My spokespeople would often compare their political motherland Britain and their cultural one Greece when talking about their colonial experience. When it is compared to the British rather than the Turks the meaning of being Greek changes completely; in this case, it has to do with the Mediterranean and peripheral soul of Cypriots opposed to the pure-European English legacy. The contact with a developed country seemed to have the power of smoothing the self-ascribed flaws and negative bias of Cypriots as Greek and Mediterranean people. In this optic, the British gave to Cyprus all the good features of Northern countries, as they corrected laziness, corruption of the political system, inefficiency of the bureaucratic system and so on.

Thanks to those skills they were able to develop and enrich, as well as dealing with other European partners in the EU. This feeling was so strong that one interviewed (Demos) even mentioned the "British touch" not only as the main difference distinguishing Greek Cypriots and the Greeks from Greece but also as an evidence of Cypriots' stronger Greekness compared to Greeks' themselves.

This tricky situation can be better comprehended if we acknowledge the role of British colonial past in shaping Greek and Cypriot identities (Katsourides 2014, Bryant 2004). This acknowledgement makes the relationship between Cyprus and Europe more complex than we had imagined. The opposition to colonialism was pursued both by the left-winged Cypriot civil nationalism through the communist party and then through the labour AKEL party, and by the right-winged Greek-Orthodox nationalism, through the EOKA and the Church, which claimed for *enosis* (the union of Cyprus to Greece). Also leftist nationalism was the product of the colonial situation and embodied its own vision of modernity (Panayiotou 2006). However, focus should be put on the right-winged, since E*nosis* became both a unifying flag and the supposed aim behind the anticolonial effort and also because of the deep and key impact that the colonial experience have had in the ethnic and national imagination of Cypriots.

British imperial rule in Cyprus is said to be "inconsequential" (Varnava 2009), because of the lack of interest and investment in the country if compared with the "imperial fortress" Malta, headquarter of the british navy in the Mediterranean since the start of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, despite the poverty of strategic and military interest, Cyprus had at least an ideological value: showing to the Turks how a community should be ruled or, in other words, how a modern state works.

According to Rebecca Bryant's view (2004), under the Ottoman Empire Cypriots thought of their island as a well-defined place of origin but not as a key element through which their own personal identity could be defined; they felt part of a social group owning multiple borders at multiple scales, the family, the social and economic network with Cypriot migrants all over the empire or the religious *millet*; however, it was only during the British dominion that they were turned into a national community made by ethnically identified citizens.

The traditional rappresentative system was seen by Western as based on corruption or vote-rigging, strictly depending on the village priest or the *muhtar* as a intermediate between people and power: the modern way of ruling had to pass through a divorce between religion and politics. A brand new politics needed a new community to manage it; the religious-village based community were to be replaced by a public sphere of equal anonymous citizens in which everyone owned equal rights (and equal wrongs). Moreover, during the colonial rule, the importance of the Greekness in the education of Greek-cypriot pupils was stressed more and more, since it was considered to contain an inner bent to civilisation. Only its fulfillment was the correct way for personal education and, therefore, the path towards a moral and material progress for the whole community. (Bryant, 2006)

Thus, the outcome of the modernisation that the British brought on the island was a deep reshaping of the way Cypriots imagined themselves and their land: from an island dwelled by Muslim and Orthodox people to a Turkish or Greek national state. It was during that time that Cyprus was torn off from the Oriental and backward world and positioned in a "new world in which Cypriots were defined as part of an European periphery" (Bryant 2004, 2).

Greek nationalism was the mean through which the crypto-colonization that typifies Greek identity was transferred into the Greek-cypriot community. Argyrou (1996) defined this situation "European hegemony", whose main expression is the "cradle-of-the-west syndrome". According to this, Cypriots are allowed to be included in the circle of the Western and modern countries, but only as heirs of the ancient Greeks, which entails an effort by Greek-cypriots to recover their "supposed-real" Greek identity removing all the layers that covered it in a sort of identity archeology, a process also called de-ottomanisation. The price of Cyprus' modernisation was been therefore the constant relegation of Cypriots to a quasi-european country.

Picturing this situation, Demos' words become clearer. The post-colonial situation in Cyprus has generated a perception of lack of modernity in Cypriot consciousness together with the need for it; a requirement that seems only to be solved through the acceptance of the British-made modernity. However, as again Rebecca Bryant noted (Bryant 2006), Cypriots find themselves in the funny situation of being both an ex colony and a country claiming for an European identity. Thus, from this perspective, the modernity is something that has to be recovered, and not achieved. This is valid both for Cypriots and Greeks, as their modernity is contained in their Greekness. The goodness of the British rule was for this reason the de-ottomanisation of Cypriot society, which let the Greek-european nature bloom again. Therefore the more British they are, the more European they are, the more Greek they are.

To conclude, the Cyprus example shows the need to review the normal concept of Europeanisation: perceiving Europeanisation as a process from a point of less Europeanness to one of more Europeanness is too reductive and simple because it does not consider other preliminary issues.

Firstly, in order to "become more European", it is needed to feel, in some way, even only potentially, European. Secondly, Europeanisation does not say anything about the meaning of Europe, or better said, it often takes Europe for granted, when, as we proved to show, Europe can be a lot of different things, have different purpose and vehiculate different values.

The main question that Europeanisation rhetorics leave on the table is what is *real* Europe, and who has got the power to choose it? who can actually be European, who possesses the authority to define the European circle and why. In the case of Cyprus, if Europeanness had been taken as a matter-of-fact concept, we would have failed in understanding the purposes and strategies standing behind the claiming of an European identity and therefore the reasons why one same person could define themselves as European or not European on different occasions.

In our case study, for example, Europeanisation is considered to be the path towards modernisation, the achievement of a process which started during the colonial past, when the British took Cyprus off from Asia and put it, as Mediterranean country, at the margins of a continent where they, as Greek heirs, feel to occupy a central position. At the same time it seems to be the product of a centuries-old history of civility opposed to the barbarian East. Or again, it could be the underlying way-of-being that ties up all the peoples of the European Union, and excludes the other.

Europeanisation is all of this things and none of them. It should be seen as an arena where Europe and its own meaning are at the stake rather than the origin or the product of a change.

Moreover, The fact that we are in a process towards an "even closer union", whatever it means, doesn't leave out the existence of Europe in the present, and all the ways it is involved in the everyday life of about 500 million people that already include or exclude it from their project of good life. In order to do that, a definition of culture which is not so tied with the categories of past, tradition, legacy, but rather with the ones of future, project and hope is more useful. Coming back to the Appadurai's capacity to aspire, future is not to be treated as a neutral dimension but as a political space where people can carry out their protest, that is the proposal of an alternative role for themselves.

In order to understand the Cypriot-fashioned Europeanisation process, we should beforehand investigate the different existing concepts of good future together with the role which Europeanisation plays in them. Post-colonialism as well should not be seen only as a result of the past influencing in some way the acceptance of the new European belonging, but as a standing point from which the Cypriots can look at their own political future.

I am sure that others research in others contexts will provide other visions and hopes about the same process of Europeanisation towards a different EUrope.

In conclusion, lots of Europe are growing now and all of thew are worth being collected and analysed if we want to understand what Europe really means for all people living in it at the present time. Only in this way we shall start doing an ethnography of the EU and not only in the EU.

Notes

1. Nicosia, 10th October 2013
2. Nicosia, 10th October 2013
3. Nicosia, 23rd October 2013
4. Nicosia, 8th December 2013

5. Nicosia, 16th October 2013.
6. Nicosia, 20th December 2013
7. Nicosia, 25th December 2013.
8. Nicosia, 10th October 2013, The interview is been translated from italian to english by the author.
9. Nicosia, 8th December 2013. The interview is been translated from greek to English by the author

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