Temporality in the Construction of EU Identity

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Abstract

The authors analyse how pro-federative representatives of the European Commission exploit the temporal dimension of identity construction within the EU. The paper shows, through the analysis of speeches and statements by Commission members, how efforts are made to construct a common past and visualise a common future to enhance common identities within the EU. The common past is invoked through recurrent claims that Europe is on the point of being reunified, and, most prominently, through references to the words and deeds of the Founding Fathers of the EU, notably Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman. This near past seems to make up the affective glue most counted upon to promote common identifications. Furthermore, the temporal dimension is used to invoke visions pertaining to the near future, here labelled the common near. Most often, these visions relate to the favourable and harmonious conditions expected to arise once the forthcoming enlargement is completed.

Introduction

What drives European integration forward? For some years now, it has been a recurrent theme among practitioners and scholars alike that new institutional designs and enlargements of physical numbers alone will not be able to sustain the European Union as a viable entity above and beyond its constituent member states (Smith 1991, van Ham 2001). As has become apparent from the discussions of the democratic deficit, the commitment and allegiance of the citizens are pivotal in this regard (Norris 1997). The Danish and French referenda on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 bore witness to this, as did the Irish referendum on the Nice Treaty in 2001. Few observers would deny that in order for the EU to assert and ensure its solid presence as a prime actor in the international arena, the legitimacy of the present EU order has to be enhanced among its peoples. Different routes are conceivable to meet this objective (cf. Hurd 1999), but the one relating to the nurturing of common identities within the EU would seem to be the one making for the most lasting and solidified success.

According to what amounts to a modern legend, Jean Monnet, one of the Founding Fathers of the European project, with the advantage of hindsight once exclaimed that if he had had to do it all over again, he would start with culture (cf. Shore 2000:44). In that way, he would have been able to include the individual citizens in the undertaking, thus counterbalancing the evident tendencies of the enterprise being an elite-driven project. The awareness of the need to include the citizens already started to dawn upon the EC/EU elites during the 1980s, and subsequently it manifested itself mainly in the imitation of the outer regalia of the nation states. Thus, during the 1980s and 1990s, the EC/EU acquired a flag, an official anthem and numerous other symbols purportedly linking the citizens with the EU idea and the EU bureaucratic structure. There was only one drawback: the symbols turned out to be largely hollow and devoid of emotional content. They failed to move the people. This paper addresses how the present discourse among the most prominent bureaucratic elite within the

EU structure – the Commission – seems to signal an awareness that symbols that connect to almost nothing are insufficient to ensure that the EU enjoys the emotional back-up of its citizens. According to our understanding, the symbols can only gain emotional depth if they are connected to revered phenomena in the past or to bold common visions of the future. The authors of this paper aims to show how the temporal dimension – inadvertently or deliberately – is being exploited in order to try to shore up the legitimacy of the EU. This is demonstrated by an analysis of a number of official speeches, made by members of the Commission during the period from early 2001 up to the time of the completion of this paper in the early spring of 2002.

Our findings suggest some interesting patterns as regards how the temporal dimension is being cultivated for the sake of identity construction within the EU. Far from expressing themselves within a self-referential organisational framework, the Commissioners should be regarded as prime movers in an identity construction enterprise, which largely takes place from the top down. They address, predominantly elite, audiences in EU member states and applicant countries, who receive inputs that might be used in subsequent processes of identity construction. We consider the rhetoric in the speeches representative of the Commission's efforts to situate culture as an important part of the ongoing political integration of Europe (cf. Shore 2000). Back in 2000, the present Commission laid down its strategic aims for its then pending five-year period of incumbency: "Political integration will become a reality as political leaders and citizens come to realise their shared values […] Political integration must be pursued taking full account of our national and regional identities, cultures and traditions" (COM 2000, 154: 3, cf. Prodi 15 February 2000). It is in this general context that this paper should be read.

The main question is not whether a common European vision exists or not, but rather how efforts are made to convince the peoples of the enlarged EU of their shared cultural values and beliefs. Culture has become a matter of political concern. Moreover, a coherent strategy is perceived to be needed in order to counter the lack of popular legitimacy of the EU institutions. This is expressed by the Commission itself in its "White Paper on governance" (COM 2001a, 428: 3-4, cf. Verheugen 4 September 2001). We posit that the cultivation of the temporal dimension as manifested in the speeches is part of such a strategy on the part of the Commission.

In recent academic research it is frequently pointed out that there are problems involved in simultaneously deepening and widening the EU (cf. Brabant 2001:113). Steyn (1999) claims that the whole project is characterised by a "delusion of cultural unity", and, for his part, van Ham (2000) questions the prospects for the ambitions to bring the EU closer to the people, since the union suffers from an intrinsic lack of "cultural affinity". This is where myth-making and predictions of a common prosperous future come in, as they might serve as instruments to alleviate perceived lacks of legitimacy and belonging. Moreover, even if the idea of the European unity is fictitious (Puntscher Riekman 1997: 60), it is being used as part of the strategy to deal with the democratic deficit. Hansen and Williams (1999) argue that the functionalist integration of the EU has from the beginning "relied upon a certain set of myths and identities", which enabled the labelling of the process as "non-political". In this study, we illustrate how the temporal dimension of EU identity construction is cultivated in order to legitimise the political and bureaucratic ambitions towards an increased European integration.

The temporal dimension in identity construction

These days the academic community has largely turned away from the notion that there is one single course of events called history, just waiting out there to be uncovered and reconstructed by latter-day historians. The past is, in all countries and in all societies, an intrinsic part of the present and vice versa. Thus, the present perennially "recreates the past" (Baucom 1999:5), but readings of the past also affect the views taken regarding the present. There are no objective givens, but a chain of events and processes that are eternally subject to interpretations and reinterpretations on the part of current generations. History is never "there" already. It needs to be "invoked, conjured, made" (Neumann 2000:7-8).

Cognitive and affective views of the past are of tremendous importance in constructing identities. By offering accounts on the nature of common heritage and routes to the future, as well as by offering yardsticks by which the present may be measured (Preston 1997:72), the past dimension pro-

vides the foundation for most identity constructions. Simply put, "history is the centrepiece of identity" (Cohen 1999:28). The past dimension is absolutely crucial, providing points of departure and guidance for the future, as well as feasible explanations regarding whence we came and perhaps even predictions, by way of extrapolation, concerning where we are heading (cf. Hedetoft 1995:11). At both individual and collective levels, recollections of a "golden age" constitute a source of strength and inspiration, and may be said to comprise the very glue of the affective dimension of identity. To try to answer the question "who am I?" without referring back to past experiences, albeit perennially recreated, is a vain exercise. In a word, the quest for a "usable" past becomes a central enterprise in all identity constructions (Maier 1988, Prizel 1998).

Clearly, individuals have a need to be part of a larger something. This kind of belonging makes life easier in a number of ways, it gives strength, resilience, and a feeling of physical and mental well-being and security, it facilitates social relationships with the in-group, and it simplifies otherwise insecurity-ridden choices of appropriate courses of action. And, if one can hark back to a golden age in the collective's past, it becomes easier to bear less glamorous or even miserable aspects of one's own day-to-day existence. There is certainly an existential aspect of history use involved here. Furthermore, there is an obvious legitimising use of history to be noted (Karlsson 1999), and in this sense we can speak of positive as well as negative legitimation (Vendil 2000). The first variant addresses examples of excellence to be cherished and inspired by, whereas the second relates to negative occurrences to steer away from and avoid repeating.

Most importantly, recollections of collective pasts are selective, and what has been dubbed collective amnesia is as important for the viability of national and other identifications as are acts of collective remembrance (Baucom 1999:7, Smith 1991, Cohen 1999). Renan (1994 [1882]) made this observation with admirable clarity more than 100 years ago. But what if identity construction enterprises are being undertaken in a context that goes beyond the nation state? What if we confront our example, the EU, proper? For a community devoid of ethnic commonality, the distant past will normally tend to lose its significance for identity construction, and instead, common visions of the future will tend to become a paramount means for knitting people together (Brown 1999). Thus, there should be a great need for collective prospects with strength of appeal to the citizens of the EU.

However, we would continue to argue that there is also still a need for having affective glue, connecting to the past.

We believe that it is time to look beyond the frantic efforts by proponents of an increasingly supranational Union to foster a greater sense of belonging by developing symbolical paraphernalia, like flags and anthems, imitating those of the nation state. Scholarly research on identity construction within the EU has for a long time tended to focus on these matters (cf. Shore's criticism of "neo-functionalist" theories of integration 2000:chp.1) thus largely neglecting to discuss other aspects of the construction enterprise, such as e.g. cultural policies, promotion of mobility flows and other transnational practices. The long-time effects of the latter bottom-up related processes of identity construction are admittedly hard to gauge, hence perhaps the lure among scholars to discuss the visibly feeble attempts to foster common identity through empty symbolism. There is, however, a significantly underexplored field of inquiry pertaining even to top-down identity construction efforts. The point that we will try to make in this paper is that the temporal dimension is increasingly being exploited for the sake of nurturing common identities within the EU. As we will try to demonstrate below, history as well as the near future is being used both as a legitimator of current actions and a vehicle to advance group cohesion in the EU. Quite clearly, cultivated beliefs about the past help to make sense of and to legitimise the existing social order (Bar-Tal 2000:59). These are, we would argue, modern myths (cf. Kertzer 1988:17-18), which offer accounts for the origin and purpose of the EU.

The myth of the reunification of Europe

The present Chairman of the Commission, Romano Prodi, has made it a prevalent sub-theme of his to refer to the "reunification of Europe" (e.g. Prodi 9 May 2001, Prodi 2000:33, cf. COM 2001b). Sceptics would claim that this is pure fairy-tale. Arguably, what we know as Europe has never ever been unified, and those attempts that there have been, e.g. by Napoleon and Hitler, have been deplorable to say the least. The audience is therefore kept somewhat in uncertainty as to what is Mr. Prodi's more precise point of reference.

When reading the book that has been published in his name, *Europe as I see it* (2000), matters become a little clearer. In this volume Prodi argues that, after the devastating WW II, "Europeans sought the unity lost and never regained after the fall of Charlemagne's great empire" (Prodi 2000:33). In other words, after recognising the fact that history has been more divisive than unifying for the all-European project, Mr. Prodi goes on to make the reference to the age of the great king of Franks, Charlemagne (742–814 AD), as the time when there purportedly was a harmonious togetherness of European peoples. In the one-volume history of Europe, supported by the European Commission and thus far the only major piece of history-writing officially funded by the EU or its predecessors, Charlemagne is described in laudatory terms: "As a leader in war he was skilful and indefatigable; as a diplomat he was imaginative and wise." (Duroselle 1990:102). Critics claim that the history book in question constitutes "an ambitious attempt to re-write history", and that the volume is "part textbook, part manifesto" (Shore 2000:59-60). Such criticism aside, could Charlemagne and his time provide what is needed by way of a golden age to draw upon for European identity construction?

Our contention is that this would be highly unlikely. Rather, if put into practice, the invocation of this period might carry some unfortunate connotations. First of all, elevating the realm of Charlemagne to the status of a role model for today's welding together of the populations of the EU is an enterprise that rests on a dubious analysis at best. Even recognising that the past is perennially recreated in terms of the present, it should be pointed out that Charlemagne's empire at its height consisted of present-day France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well parts of today's Italy, Germany, Austria and Spain. Neither Great Britain nor Scandinavia, nor indeed the applicant countries of Central East Europe were part of the project. Thus, the reference to Charlemagne's realm does not really help to bring forth a vision of a fully united Europe in today's terms. Rather, it may connote a sense of disrespect on the part of the original member states vis-à-vis those who joined the Union in later enlargements.

There is one more problematic trait with regard to the invocation of Charlemagne's realm as the golden age of Europe. According to the legend, he ruled "by the sword and the cross", and he was certainly not a man of peaceful ways. Rather, he was a warlord, and among other things he has been noted in the annals of history for waging wars on infidel Muslims in

present-day Spain. As it was put in a somewhat dated history book, "he was appealed by the prospect of ridding the Christians in Spain from the Mohammedan yoke, for in his family it was an old tradition to fight the Saracens" (Winston 1969:45). A basic premise of identity construction is that the constitution of an in-group is fundamentally dependent on the distancing from a more or less alien out-group. By stating what "we" are, it is also made quite clear what "we" are not and do not want to be, i.e. what "they" are (Billig 1995, Neumann 1998, Petersson 2001). It has been suggested that there are alarming tendencies that Muslims might make up the fundamental Other in today's identity construction within the EU (Lundgren 1998). As argued by Hansen (2000), the EU has articulated citizenship and identity in an ethno-cultural way that "comes to work excluding towards the Union's non-white and non-Christian population". The war against terrorism that was launched in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11 has certainly not reduced the risk of Muslims taking on the traits of the hostile Other. To weld Europeans closer together by analogies that serve to depict the Islamic world as an enemy would surely seem as an undertaking fraught with danger.

The sources of legitimacy: The Founding Fathers

Thus, the launching of the Charlemagne-connected myths to attain common identifications is not very convincing. As Hobsbawm and Ranger remind us (1983:7), "plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups (…) were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented". Maybe it could be worth recognising that the EU project is such a case. Again citing apt formulations by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983:2): "The historic past into which the new tradition is inserted need not be lengthy, stretching back into the assumed mists of time. Revolutions and "progressive moments" which break with the past, by definition, have their own relevant past". In view of the singular and unique importance of the European project, and the ground-breaking activities that the Founding Fathers of the EU, primarily Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, undertook in terms of bringing about lasting peace

between the former European arch-enemies, Germany and France, it seems fit to label the EU such a progressive moment. This was when a golden age of Europe was made feasible in the first place, indeed; maybe this in itself was the golden age.

Actually, the part of the past dimension that more than anything else brings together the European populations of today comprises the near past of these Europe-building pioneers. And to be sure, the Founding Fathers have come to be main characters in what we would argue amount to newly constructed myths. They are the great men upon whom the modern intra-EU mythology seems to rest (cf. Kertzer 1988:12). In person, they appear to be counted on to provide much of the glue needed for keeping the peoples of the EU together. As pointed out by Commissioner David Byrne, "these men and their successors … managed to do what many great leaders – from as far back as the emperors of ancient Rome had tried to do without success, to lay the foundations of a united Europe" (Byrne 25 May 2001).

The Founding Fathers are not only referred to as persons to be revered and as providers of emotional glue. It is quite obvious from numerous statements by Mr. Prodi that the names of his great predecessors are invoked for legitimising purposes. Not only does the very fact that they laid the foundations provide the present EU construction efforts with some legitimacy, but Mr. Prodi also tries to cast himself as a present-day equal of Monnet, Schuman and Adenauer. The present time is vastly different from the early 1950s, and it is now up to men of an equal stature to lead the EU into a qualitatively new stage of development, he seems to argue: "The genius of the founding fathers lay in translating extremely high political ambitions, which were present from the beginning, into a series of more specific, almost technical decisions. This indirect approach made further action possible (…) [M]y view is that this method, which reflected the constraints and objectives of the past, is now reaching its limits and must be modernised, for in the European Union the "pre-political" era is over" (Prodi 29 May 2001, cf. Prodi 28 January 2002).

Elsewhere, the legitimising intention is equally clear. In a speech delivered in Florence on the 51st anniversary of Robert Schuman's launching of the Coal and Steel Union plan, Mr. Prodi remarked that the articulation of the plan had "changed the political landscape of the continent more than anything else before". In view of the pending enlargement, Europe is once more at the stage of "turning a page in history". "We are putting behind us,

forever, our old divisions and the wars they generated", Prodi remarked. The enlargement process and the institutional reform brought in its wake were justified by the need to "renew and reinvent ourselves", just like Robert Schuman did with his declaration in 1950. This was, then, an equally bold and farsighted step to be taken (Prodi 9 May 2001, cf. Prodi 13 June 2001).

A related example is provided by Commissioner Chris Patten, who attempts to capitalise on the goodwill connected with the name of the Founding Fathers in order to legitimise a specific EU sphere of activity: "The EU must use the Common Foreign and Security Policy outside its borders as those two European visionaries, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, used coal and steel within its borders to "lock" in peace and stability, which allowed liberalisation and democracy to flourish", he argued (Patten 7 March 2001). In other words, Monnet and Schuman are called upon to legitimise the Common Foreign and Security Policy. As a rhetorical strategy, this might be considered somewhat devious, as the CFSP denotes an area that the Founding Fathers cautiously stayed away from. Their strategy was to avoid high politics and instead focus on less controversial issue-areas which by and by might spill over and bring the peoples closer together (cf. Shore 2000:42).

At this point one cannot help being reminded of Deridda's reading of Hamlet, where he concludes that after "the end of history", the dead king returns like a ghost which repeats itself, again and again. The past affects the present in its expected coming back in the near future, in what we will henceforth call a common near. Thus, when Hamlet calls forth his father's spirit, the past comes into being in the present and gives it transcendental features. But the spirit cannot be seen, "he can only be taken at his word" (Derrida 1994:7). Surely, we can imagine that we hear voices from the past predicting the future, but they resonate through the medium of those living today, invoking the spirits. The references to the Founding Fathers, to their words, work and deeds are tantamount to the invocation of revered and mythological figures from the past, and as such they might come some way towards providing the legitimacy among broader strata of the population that is so sorely needed. But there is undoubtedly a long way to go to reach this goal. However, if one cannot use the moorings of the past all the way through, then maybe the course charted for the future might bring about the desired popular affection? We will now turn to visions pertaining to the near future, the common near, in our analysis.

Just like the past, the future is something, which by definition is not. A stretching of the temporal dimension is required to establish a "natural" link between the present and the future. As we shall see, the Commission invokes the common near in order to create a greater sense of belonging. On the other hand, this could be construed to signify a lack of bolder visions pertaining to the more distant future. The following section focuses on some frequently articulated visions regarding this common near. Several of them indicate that the past is inherent, not only in the present, but also in the perceptions of the future. In a speech in May 2001, Commissioner Byrne stressed e.g. the importance of "restoring" Europe to its free, democratic, peaceful and prosperous state. He mentioned Europe as a continent, which since antiquity had never experienced peace among its countries and peoples (Byrne 25 May 2001). But recently the cold war ended and the Berlin Wall tumbled down, so why this need to *re*store Europe to its peaceful and prosperous state? Byrne does not provide a clear answer. Indeed, the future might already be here. If so, we only have to work on maintaining the achievements of our great predecessors.

Already Plato used the golden age to legitimise his ideal state where the degenerating flow of time was finally halted. In order to understand where we are heading in the future, references to a golden age may serve as path markers, ensuring that the future will not bring degeneration, but confirmation. The common project – to restore Europe to its peaceful and prosperous state – would lead us to safe grounds, but where are the rainbows at the horizon that might spur peoples" imagination and commitment?

Reuniting the family of nations

In May 2001, Romano Prodi gave a lecture on what fortune the pending enlargement is expected to bring the EU: "We are creating a peaceful Europe in which the peoples of this continent can live together in safety. We are reuniting our family of nations (Prodi 9 May 2001)." To put it differently, the Kidnapped West (Central Europe) is about to be reunited with its natural home. We are, according to Prodi, bringing the family back together after decades of communist oppression. This is clearly an example

of negative legitimation. To coin a phrase from Orwell's masterpiece *Animal Farm,* no one really wants to see Jones back. The common near will become a reality once the enlargement is accomplished, which is taken to signify democracy's final victory over totalitarianism. We are "turning a page in history" of a tome which has already been written. It is not a matter of whether, but when the Union will expand to encompass almost thirty member states. The enlargement is depicted as irrevocable.

What comes into question here is the position of the nation states (the "family members") in a more integrated Europe. Prodi is of course aware of the sensitivity of this issue and assures his audience that the enlarged Union will be powerful but never dominating. The common near will not bring an omnipotent supranational Union, hence the references to the reunification of our family of nations. The reunited family of nations is, in Prodi's terminology, a simple Europe where decentralisation and subsidiarity are key components. Purportedly, the EU will not replace the nation states, rather it will gather their unique experience into a better whole. Evidently, Mr. Prodi is walking a tightrope here. The family metaphor itself connotes that someone has to be the head of the family and that others are left to be big brothers or little sisters (cf. Chatterjee 1993:120).

Current EU discourse suggests an implicit hierarchy among family members. A very clear indication to this effect was to be found in connection with the suspension of Austria from bilateral consultation after the success of Jörg Haider's FPÖ party at the national polls. Commissioner Franz Fischler, himself Austrian, concluded at the time: "It is time that Austria starts to think genuinely European" (Fischler 14 May 2001). Occasionally, the hierarchy can also produce contradictory effects as when Prodi visited Budapest in April 2001 to talk about "bringing the family together": "So Hungary is and always has been an integral part of Europe […] important through history is your integration into Europe" (Prodi 4 April 2001). How, one might ask, can Hungary be an integral part of Europe at the same time as it must work on its integration into Europe? There seems to be different layers of the family involved here.

What if peoples and states do not follow the predestined path to the reunification of a peaceful family of nations? Indeed, as when the Irish people voted no to the Nice Treaty, family members at times do not seem to realise their own good. At a meeting with the General Affairs Council in June 2001, the foreign ministers of the EU agreed that, in spite of Ireland's

"no", renegotiating the Nice Treaty was not an option (Sweeney & McKenna 2001, cf. Diamanoupolou 14 June 2001). At the IGC in Gothenburg a few days later, Prodi – together with the then president of the EU Council, Göran Persson – reduced the Irish outcome to a national concern, reiterating that enlargement is irrevocable and a common good of which the Irish people have not yet fully realised the benefits (e g. Rydén 2001). In a similar vein, Prodi stressed in a speech in Warsaw in March 2001 the importance that Polish politicians explain to their people why the enlargement is good for them (Prodi 8 March 2001).

As mentioned, it is a prominent theme in present-day EU discourse that the Union must appeal more to its citizens. For instance, Prodi claims that "Brussels must come to mean all of us" (Prodi 26 April 2001). The insight corresponds to what obviously amounts to a larger agenda (cf. COM 2000:428). When addressing "Nice-sceptical" Irish people, Mr. Byrne reasoned that "Nice is of paramount importance for one final reason. It sets out the need for a major public debate on the future of Europe to renew a sense of ownership about Europe by its citizens" (Byrne 25 May 2001). However, the question remains whether a sense of commitment to common projects and common visions can be formulated from above. There will be no restoration of Europe unless the peoples of the nation states agree on being restored.

A new Europe that speaks with one voice – or sings in unison?

Alongside the family metaphor there is a related, quite prominent figure of speech in today"s EU discourse. While the EU has to respect diversity, the Union should speak with one voice (Prodi 26 April 2001, Prodi 28 January 2002). In his statements Prodi often returns to this issue. For instance in Paris in May 2001, he claimed that a common project and common policies are needed to create a strong Europe (Prodi 29 May 2001). Mr. Prodi here follows the set strategic objectives for the Commission for the period of the years 2000-2005. According to these, no nation state can tackle a world in movement on its own, therefore "the world looks to Europe for

principled leadership, and our citizens look to the Union for effective European action" (COM 2000, 154:3). After September 11, the Commission made a statement to the effect that "a strong and united Europe is more important than ever before to ensure peace, security, freedom and prosperity for all its citizens" (COM 2001c).

Notably, the past dimension is utilised in this context also. On one occasion, Prodi again invoked the memory of his great predecessors: "We have to develop the New Europe into what the founding fathers originally designed it to be: a genuine European community – a sense of shared identity, a common vision and purpose, and the will to achieve agreed goals together [...] A "New Europe" that speaks with one voice and takes effective and united action on the world stage. This is what I believe we owe to future generations." (Prodi 9 May 2001). In other words, the future lies in the fulfilment of the visions articulated in the past. Moreover, we can purportedly never reach our common goals, unless we restrict ourselves to speaking with one voice.

How can the vision of the reunification of the family of nations with full respect of all different peoples in Europe be reconciled with this proclaimed wish for one voice? Chris Patten gives his recipe, thereby indicating some differences of opinion within the Commission: "There are necessarily several voices. The Member States, small and large, must be heard and accommodated. But we must turn this multiplicity into an advantage: We do not aspire to a single European voice, but we get more attention and better effect if we sing from the same song sheet. The European Union is not a state [...] our several voices are learning to sing in harmony…"(Patten 7 March 2001). In this version, there is room for several voices in the choir, but they need to be harmonised. The path to the common near is within reach; provided that the people, regions and states of Europe stick to the common visions and the common policies, and thus act as a part of the European community. All the family members are allowed to sing, but at the same time they presumably need some guidance, possibly from the head of the family, to find out how the different voices in the family choir are to be arranged in relation to each other.

The transition to the Euro is in Prodi's view a demonstration of how the European family can succeed in bringing unity in diversity: "The changeover to the Euro has been an outstanding success [...] It has even become a game for everyone to collect coins from various countries, build-

ing up collections that are a symbol of both European unity and national diversity" (Prodi 28 January 2002). The statement implies a situation where the national identities are shrinking away from pole position of political governance to become producers of collector's items within a greater all-European unity. Surely, the tightrope is visible again.

Even though Prodi and others maintain that national and regional identities are to be protected and acknowledged in a more integrated Europe (e.g. Prodi 7 June 2001, Prodi 12 November 2001, Nielson 12 December 2001, Nielson 28 January 2002), it seems clear that the key to the future – the common near – lies in an enhanced common strategy concerning internal political issues as well as external policies. It is pointed out in this regard that the strategy does not end at the borders of Europe; Prodi is eager to underline that there will not be another Iron Curtain between the EU and its neighbours (Prodi 4 April 2001, Prodi 9 March 2001). The single voice of Europe regarding foreign policy will most likely make the world a better place to live in (Patten 7 March 2001).

"The New Europe" equals "The New Euro nationalism"?

In a speech in April 2001, Commissioner Patten posed a pertinent question: "[H}ow do you inject greater democracy and legitimacy into an organisation that has no natural "demos", in the sense of a cohesive grouping of people?" (Patten 19 April 2001). The question is pivotal. We have argued above that an exploitation of the temporal dimension in Europe is a means employed to establish a greater sense of belonging between the peoples and nations of the enlarged EU. The message in the analysed speeches – as we interpret them - is that a common collection of glorified memories of the past alongside an interpretation of the future as a common near, where enlargement is brought to a happy conclusion, helps the construction of a European demos, which has its "natural home" in the European community. The visions of the future Europe were already formulated in the near past: apparently we are restoring Europe to its prosperous and peaceful state; we are reuniting our family of nations and we are renewing a sense of ownership among the European citizens. Ostensibly, any diverging

views about some aspects of Europe's future do not undermine the fact that there is one basic idea of Europe beyond actual politics – a common agenda - that is at least tacitly agreed on. The future is given and is there for us to grasp.

If rhetoric successfully affects the way we perceive the world, actual changes concerning our attitudes towards the world around us might occur as a consequence (cf. Fairclough 2000). The mental and spatial boundaries that surrounded Europe in the past, and that surround it in the present and in the future are imaginary. Indeed, Europe is imaginary. It is argued that belonging to the EU goes beyond belonging to the constituent nation states. The question is whether it also is a belonging relieved from the burdens of the narrowness associated with national belonging (cf. Prodi 9 May 2001). We are not so sure.

Thus, after the completed enlargement, the members of the reunited family of nations will be brought back to their true home. A mythical link between Europe as a territory and the peoples living in it is invoked through constructed memories, but also through the reinterpretation of the future as a common near. According to Gellner, nationalism cannot survive without its "shell", the state (Gellner 1983: 143; cf. Hedetoft 1995:231). Nationalistic sentiments can, however, take other guises. Hedetoft (1995:233) argues that there is a (re-)romanticisation of nationalism in today's Europe which implies the coming to the fore of a dual national and European identity. This "New Euro nationalism" does not refer to a nation state, but to a polity of a different kind. The logic of the nation states has not necessarily vaporised, rather it has been transformed in order to fit the purposes of the European integration.

Visions and utopias in today's Europe

We have discussed how the exploitation of the temporal dimension serves the endeavours to promote common identities in the present Europe. With the help of the past a bridge is built to the present, which takes us into the future, perceived as our common near. As shown above, the European community becomes essentialised as being the former communist states" "natural home". Paasi (1996:281) describes how exiled people realised their

utopia, when they after the Cold War returned to their old homes in Karelia and experienced how they travelled in time. But how will the peoples of the applicant countries, basically remaining where they are, realise their utopias? One feature of utopia is that it stands above time and space. Like the past, the future is not, but utopian ideas might help to fill in the gaps. They become transcendental. Returning to Hamlet, this is a way to overcome the famous opposition between *to be* and *not to be.*

Surely, the ambitions to (re)create a European community and a political Europe lean towards utopian thinking. There is something romantic about the Commissioners" description of the future Europe, something at least provisionally utopian about the reinterpretation of the future as a common near. Even some traces of political messianism appear to be represented in the speeches, in the sense that European values are supposedly superior to all potential competitors. At the same time, Schuman and Monnet – the dead kings – seem to come back in the future to help us attain our visions in the common near. With their help we can restore the golden age and make unity out of diversity in Europe. This is our mission and destiny, and neither the flow of time nor transformations of space can change this. At the same time, the dead kings are being vassalised, limited to help to fulfil the enlargement in our common near. And so, the past becomes enslaved by the present.

We can imagine that we hear voices from the past and predictions about the future, but we can never be certain. Utopian rhetoric solves this dilemma and permits the temporal dimension to be exploited to legitimise the building of the "New Europe". If we legitimise certain politics through an exploitation of the temporal dimension, we incorporate transcendental and utopian thinking in our argumentation. The past and the future come into being in the present, while their meanings lie beyond our immediate perception.

Romano Prodi may be a "véritable visionaire"; is he at the same time trying to evoke a utopia? Not necessarily, but he certainly aims for a more coherent Europe where people and nation states can attain more viable identities, a greater sense of belonging in the enlarged EU. Still, what affective glue will be strong enough to keep the integrated parts together? Clearly, there has to be a common idea of what Europe is and what its foundations are (cf. Prodi 29 May 2001). The Commissioners do not only claim that there is such an idea, but also that we will reach it in our common near.

The future prospect *par excellence* is the fulfilment of the enlargement. This is both an asset and a liability. The enlargement might not by itself be bold enough an enterprise to ensure the continued emotional attachment of the citizens of Europe. So what else is there, except for the dead kings?

Acknowledgements

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