



## LOCATING EUROPE YASEMIN SOYSAL

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I came to Wiko to locate Europe. The project I set out for myself was to explicate the nature and scope of Europe as an identity category as it is built in educational spheres. This was part of a larger project funded by the Economic and Research Council, in which I studied the redefinitions of the nation and citizenship vis-à-vis the development of Europe as a transnational entity. History and civics schoolbooks, as well as public debates and conflicting claims about national curricula, constituted the empirical bases of my inquiry. The research was both a longitudinal and a comparative undertaking. I have sampled and

analyzed textbooks and curricula both from the core of Europe (Germany, France, and Britain) and its periphery (Turkey and Greece), from the 1950s to the present.

What have I found? What can I conclude from my year in Wiko?

My research has revealed that, as projected in schoolbooks and curricula, Europe is a diffuse idea and discourse. Its identity is a loose collection of civic ideals and principles, such as democracy, progress, equality, and human rights. As such, “European identity” differs considerably from the national type of identity, the kind we are most used to. National identities locate their legitimacy in deeply rooted histories, cultures, or territories. The new Europe, on the other hand, is not past-oriented: it is future-oriented. True, history schoolbooks glorify Europe’s Roman Catholic or Greek origins as remarkable European achievements. But these origins are less and less offered us as religious or ethnic accounts, and increasingly in terms of the more abstract universal principles they contain.

But the trouble with such formulation of identity, however firmly they are claimed, is that these universalistic principles and ideals can no longer be solely affixed to Europe or its member states. At the end of the twentieth century, human rights, democracy, progress, and equality are everyone’s and every nation’s modernity. Even when other nations organize their modernity differently – or fail to exercise it altogether – these are the principles that preside over that process. This makes it impossible to define a territorially and culturally bounded European identity. “Europe” does not come into existence over and against other identities as national identities have done. In economic competition, Asia and America might become Europe’s “others”, but they do not necessarily constitute cultural “others”. Regardless of attempts to the contrary – and they do exist – Europe fails to create its cultural and symbolic “other”. In that sense, Europe lacks originality. It is not unique and precise enough to perpetuate a coherent, homogenous collective. Unlike the national identities and histories, as they were codified in the ardent processes of state- and nation-building, Europe falls short of developing its discriminating particularisms and authentic markers. It derives its legitimacy from universalistic principles and from the future it projects. And that future, or aspiration for that future, is now entangled with others’ futures, making European identity broader than Europe itself.

Like Europe, the depictions of nation in the new schoolbooks also appear in less than coherent terms. Schoolbooks and curricula increasingly situate the nation and national identity within a European context. In that process, the nation itself is transformed. We might describe what is taking place as the “normalization” of the nation. By which I mean a standardizing process that removes the myth, the extraordinary, the charismatic, and the

archenemy from national canons. Take the increasing celebration in history textbooks of the Vikings as part of the European heritage. As we were all taught in schools, Vikings were the barbarians against whom Europe, its civilization, goods, and values had to be defended. In the new history books, the uncivilized, plundering warriors have been replaced with jovial long-distance traders. Similarly, ancestral tribes such as Germanic and Gallic or Normans and Franks are increasingly depicted not in heroic, but in cultural terms, through such images as quaint village life, hospitality, and artistic achievements. The national heroes, Jeanne d'Arc, Bismarck, or Francis Drake, are taught in a matter-of-fact way, far removed from mythical glorification. In this picture, the clear-cut distinctions between friends and foes do not seem to be working any longer.

So this is how the European story and the nation are being retold in school textbooks and curricula. Europe in this story is fuzzy, not precise or well defined enough to offer up a homogenous collective identity. It has too many boundaries, too many geographies and cultural references. And the nation is not the same nation without its glorified heroes and historical chapters and its archenemies.

All of this is to say that the operational categories we cherish and work with as sociologists are becoming blurred and difficult to sustain. What my research at Wiko revealed has been confirmed by my experience of Berlin as the city refashions itself as a capital and as a world city. This is a Berlin different than what I encountered ten years ago when I came here to do my Ph.D. research. Then there was a public worry about what would become of Berlin as the "national capital". This had been a privileged city after all, isolated from Germany and open to the world within its own parochial existence. After ten years of construction and moving the state bureaucrats from Bonn (with their famous beer Kölsch and their favorite hangout Ständige Vertretung), Berlin seems to have become the German capital, but not the expression of its nationness.

At the opening of the Berlin film festival (here I confess, I took off two weeks from my research time at Wiko to see three to four movies a day by obtaining a free pass thanks to my title as a Wiko Fellow), the chancellor Gerhard Schröder stated that he was proud to see four "German" films in the competition, only to qualify his pride with a long digression on how events like the Berlinale are forums for international cultural experience. Thus the motto of the film festival: Fest der Unterschiede/Celebrating Diversity. This was Berlin's claim to a "world city" status.

Another event (for which again I stole from my research time at Wiko) was the Berlin Debatte, organized in collaboration with the Goethe Institute by the marketing companies

Accenture, ECC Kohtes Klewes, and Wolff Olins. In a series of workshops that took place in Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Munich, and culminating in Berlin, the business and intellectual elites gathered together to “re-brand” Germany. The ambition was to create the new “Marke Deutschland”. Everyone seemed to have agreed that Germany needed a new image, which would represent the best of the nation, “the things that we can be proud of”. The long discussions scrutinized the old stereotypes and images (industriousness, punctuality, technological superiority, VW Beetle, Maggi, lederhosen, eagle, etc.), and gave way to the future: Spielmacher. *Germany as playmaker*. In the final meeting in Berlin, during which the new brand for Germany was disclosed (with power-point presentations that were no less elegant and efficient than the ones at Wiko!), we were told to “Think Different” to fill the content of the new German brand. As the projector displayed the image of an Apple iMac! on the screen, we were left with a generic emphasis on difference but no national marker to make Germany different.

It was indeed rewarding to try to locate Europe, and nation within it, in Berlin. At Wiko, where my American academic training betrayed my Anglo-Euro-Turkish social sensibilities, I found kindred spirits, intellectual stimulus, and pleasures of mind and soul. Thanks for a great year!