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## Europeans among themselves: Geographical and linguistic stereotypes

### Abstract (English)

Stereotypes can be studied from the perspective of political geography and critical geopolitics as part of geographical imaginations, in other words those geopolitical representations that help us make sense of the world around us. They necessarily frame our perception of ongoing events, and inform our behaviour in our attempts to influence them. Europeans produce and reproduce images of each other, regardless of the specific nature of their relationships – violent or peaceful – and political changes. “Othering” is part and parcel of identification processes, and the stereotyping of other Europeans has not disappeared with European integration. This chapter discusses territorial and linguistic stereotypes, i.e. stereotyping based on place and/or language. It will pay specific attention to the use of stereotypes in popular culture, especially the comical use of stereotypes, as humour is a way to question images of the self and the other that are taken for granted, and to foster efforts to overcome group prejudice. Three cultural projects using stereotypes for European identity politics are considered in more detail.

### Abstract (Nederlands)

Stereotypen kunnen worden bestudeerd vanuit het perspectief van de politieke geografie en de kritische geopolitiek als onderdeel van de geografische verbeelding, met andere woorden van de geopolitieke representaties die ons te helpen de wereld om ons heen begrijpen. Zij geven noodzakelijkerwijs vorm aan onze perceptie van de lopende gebeurtenissen en bepalen ons gedrag in onze pogingen deze te beïnvloeden. Europeanen produceren en reproduceren representaties van elkaar, ongeacht de specifieke kwaliteiten van hun relaties – gewelddadige of vreedzame – en politieke veranderingen. *Othering* is een essentieel onderdeel van identificatie processen en de stereotypering van andere Europeanen is met de Europese integratie niet verdwenen. Dit hoofdstuk bespreekt territoriale en taalkundige stereotypen, dat wil zeggen stereotypering op basis van plaats en/of taal. Het zal specifiek aandacht besteden aan het gebruik van stereotypen in de populaire cultuur, vooral het komisch gebruik van stereotypen want humor is een manier om vanzelfsprekende beelden van het zelf en van de ander te bevragen en bevordert inspanningen om collectieve vooroordelen te overwinnen. Drie pogingen om met behulp van stereotypen Europese identiteitspolitiek te bedrijven zullen worden behandeld.

### Abstract (Français)

Les stéréotypes peuvent être étudiés sous l'angle de la géographie politique et de la géopolitique critique comme des éléments de nos imaginations géographiques, c'est-à-dire de

ces représentations géopolitiques qui nous aident à comprendre le monde qui nous entoure. Ils filtrent nécessairement notre perception des événements et informent la conduite à suivre dans nos tentatives de les influencer. Les Européens produisent et reproduisent des images qu'ils ont les uns des autres, quelles que soient les qualités spécifiques de leurs relations – violentes ou pacifiques – et les changements politiques. La production d'altérité fait partie intégrante des processus d'identification et les stéréotypes sur les autres Européens ne disparaissent pas avec l'intégration européenne. Ce chapitre traite des stéréotypes territoriaux et linguistiques, c'est-à-dire des stéréotypes basés sur le lieu et le langage. Il accordera une attention particulière à l'utilisation des stéréotypes dans la culture populaire, en particulier l'utilisation humoristique des stéréotypes, car l'humour est un moyen de remettre en question les images toutes faites de soi et de l'autre et d'encourager les efforts pour surmonter les préjugés collectifs. Trois projets culturels utilisant des stéréotypes pour la politique d'identité européenne seront examinés.

## 1. Introduction

In a recent guide to Europe for refugees by a group of photographers and journalists, published in Arabic, Farsi, English and French, refugees arriving in Europe are introduced to the new continent and to some ten individual states. One chapter on “what makes Europe Europe” presents the common features of EU countries, and stresses the importance of humour in European culture, as the heading of a text box plainly announces:

In Europe, everybody is somebody's fool. (AFAC 2016, 130)  
(or in French “En Europe on est toujours le bouffon de quelqu'un d'autre”) (ibid., 131)

A selection of jokes follows: Belgians joking about the French, the French about the Belgians, the Swedes about the Norwegians, the Portuguese about the Spaniards, the Austrians about the Germans, the Greeks about the Albanians, etc. It ends with a joke about a linguistic stereotype.

And the Italians make jokes about [...] themselves. ‘What do you call an Italian with his hands in his pockets? A mute.’ (ibid.)

Highlighting these stereotypes is presumably meant to illustrate the kind of stereotypes (all negative, and mostly insulting the other country as dumb and stupid) that someone should be expected to accept without feeling offended. The authors stress that “telling jokes can help establish an identity” and is about teasing. Moreover it is telling that all the examples are about national stereotypes (not about race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, political ideology, age, profession, sport, etc.). Possibly this is related to the outline of the guide, which presents different states where refugees might eventually settle (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom); but most likely national identity is seen as a major anchor in the identity of Europeans, and stereotypes about national identities as part of European integration.

This paper also offers some thoughts about national stereotypes. It focuses on geographical and linguistic examples, revealing both the disciplinary background of the author (political and cultural geography) and the occasion for which it was prepared. It consists of four sections: the first on political geography and stereotypes, the second on national stereotypes, and the third on linguistic stereotypes, followed by an analysis of three vignettes: an art installation (*Entropa*) and two video adverts from the European Commission which attempt to use stereotypes in a humorous way to promote European identification.

## **2. Political geography and stereotypes**

It is important to take stereotypes seriously as representations which we have of each other, both because they express the “taken for granted” knowledge upon which we act (often implicitly), but also – and perhaps primarily – because they are explicit interventions by which we engage with each other.

The study of national stereotypes has often been centred on the individual and their psychological and cognitive needs for generalisation and classification as a means of handling the world in which they function. From a social science perspective, the collective representations expressed and reproduced through stereotypes are more important. They contribute to the production and reproduction of collective identities, through both self-identification and ascribed identities. Stereotypes can be used in chauvinistic narratives to glorify the supposed qualities of one’s own group, or to belittle others because of their supposed deficiencies.

Stereotypes need not be negative; but negative stereotypes are problematic because they are used to justify prejudice, negative discrimination and exclusion, and to normalise such attitudes and their outcomes, especially their negative effects on others.

This paper deals more specifically with stereotypes associated with national groups, their languages, and their homelands. A preliminary step is to question the naturalness of national identities and national languages, but this paper will not attempt to assess the credibility or the usefulness of specific stereotypes. Instead it highlights examples of the ways in which such stereotypes are used in the context of European integration. Moreover it acknowledges the use of national stereotypes and their endurance, but also signals the emergence of European stereotypes pertaining to the EU as a whole.

The view from political geography and critical geopolitics obviously focuses on geographically based stereotypes, either because embeddedness into specific socio-spatial relations (implying localisation, connection or movement) is intrinsic to the stereotyping, or because the stereotypes frame specific socio-spatial configurations; specific places for example, or individuals associated with specific places.

Geographical imaginations – i.e. imaginations of the world and its inhabitants – consist of geopolitical representations produced, reproduced and circulated in

geopolitical discourses. They express specific configurations of the nexus between power and space, between geography and politics, underlining how power (regardless of the exact definition and understanding of power that is used) comes into being through spatial practices and how space can be an instrument of power but at the same time structures power relations, while it is in turn shaped by the outcome of these power relations. In other words, power and space are co-constitutive of each other, both materially and ideationally (Dodds 2007; Rosière 2007; Dodds et al. 2013; Agnew et al. 2015; Van der Wusten/Mamadouh 2015; Flint 2017 for introductions in different languages).

These geopolitical representations provide a diagnostic of the world as it is (especially its qualities and its flaws) and a prognostic of what is to come (especially threats and opportunities). Therefore they enable individuals and groups to draw conclusions for their own strategic behaviour (how to address danger and to seize opportunities). In that context, political geographers have been particularly interested in the geopolitical discourses that underpin national identities and geopolitical visions (Dijkink 1996).

Although critical geopolitics originally scrutinised academic representations of global politics reflecting national and imperial agendas — as well as policy documents, public speeches and press statements of state officials conducting the foreign policy of (generally powerful) states — academics have also acknowledged the importance of popular culture for the circulation of geopolitical discourses. Indeed the geopolitical frames produced, reproduced and circulated through the mass media are particularly important to generate legitimacy for specific foreign policy interventions. In foreign policy, as in other policy domains, politicians mobilise support for their political programmes, but also tend to frame their action in a discourse that resonates with the opinions of their electorate. In political geography we therefore distinguish formal, practical and popular geopolitics as three different but interrelated domains in which geopolitical representations of the self and the other (i.e. geopolitical imaginations) are produced.

These representations feature geopolitical maps of the world – maps of friends and foes, in which boundaries and dangers are spatialised. They also present a vision of one's own place in the world (mission) and of relations with others, for example the inclination of the US to act as a global policeman, the self-image of the Netherlands as a provider of development aid, or the projection of Canada as an international peace keeper. These geopolitical visions therefore reflect a specific understanding of one's own national identity and ambition for the future.

These maps (both metaphorical and literal) and visions have consequences (see Dodds 2003 and Agnew 2009 on Balkanism, for example). They inform our perception of events abroad and frame them as either threat or opportunity, or as relevant or irrelevant, and therefore shape the space for policy interventions. When an event is irrelevant to us, we need not intervene, but if it is relevant, if it threatens our interests or our values, we are prompted to react. But how we react,

the options that are considered and the decision that are taken will depend on the perception of the protagonists as friends or foes, as rational or irrational actors, of their motivation and of their inclination to negotiate compromises. Therefore stereotypes determine both which issues are on the political agenda and which remain obscured, which viewpoints are heard and which voices remain silenced, and which solutions are seen as reasonable and which are deemed unrealistic. Stereotypes can be functional, often self-serving, fostering national cohesion, making sense of the rest of the world through simplification, classification, labelling, othering and the reproduction of prejudice.

Some obvious similarities can be noted between such critical geopolitical approaches and other approaches in the humanities and the social sciences which are also centred on the social production of identities and representations. Think for example of the discipline known as imagology (Leerssen 2000; Chew 2006; Beller/Leerssen 2007; Bender/Gidlow/Fischer 2013; Baldassarre 2015). In all these studies, the veracity of the stereotypes is not particularly important; the aim is to research how they come about and how they are deployed. Nonetheless the very questioning of their origin and uses suggests that these stereotypes should certainly not be essentialised, as they are the results of social relations and are subject to changes.

Stereotypes in popular culture are particularly interesting because they reach a large public and can be used to mobilise support for specific policies rather than others, and to mobilise collective actions that require extensive monetary and human resources (like waging war). Literature, cinema, newspapers and school books are particularly important media. These media tend to be organised in national cultural vehicles or communication settings which are shaped by national cultural and political institutions – such as national languages, national education systems and national intellectuals and opinion leaders. In practice these public spheres are sometimes even smaller, since it can be argued that Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Catalonia, Wallonia or Flanders (to name a few) are subnational communicative settings of their own, inside their respective states, with their own media institutions, political parties, public intellectuals and opinion makers.

One of the challenges for the emergence of European stereotypes is the absence of a European (that is, EU-wide) communicative arena. It is therefore difficult to identify the cultural production and circulation of representations that travel across the internal borders of the European Union.

The film *L'auberge espagnole* (2002) is one such audio-visual production. The film is also known under the Spanish title *Una casa de locos* (literally “a madhouse”) or the English title *Pot luck*.<sup>1</sup> (The idiomatic French phrase *auberge espagnole* refers to a place where you can only eat what you have brought with

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<sup>1</sup> The film maker Cédric Klapisch is reported to have proposed *Europudding* for the English title but it was seen as too Eurosceptic (Brooks 2003).

you, while in English a potluck supper is a communal meal where guests bring their own food). It is a French film about the ERASMUS experience that has shaped millions of European students since 1987. The film is about Xavier,<sup>2</sup> a French student in Barcelona, and his co-residents, all ERASMUS students from different countries. The comedy is a coming-of-age initiation trajectory in which Xavier becomes a multicultural European. The film plays with stereotypes about national characters and with national languages, while offering a romantic account of the ERASMUS experience. It could be seen as offering a stereotype of the Europeanised student. It is no coincidence that the film is used for educational purposes in other member states (as shown by the study files available online for students of French) and that it has been widely scrutinised as a representation of the making of European identity (see for contrasting views Derakhshani/Zachman 2005; Ezra/Sánchez 2005; Amago 2007; Ousselin 2009).

Cartoons – like other visuals – are expected to travel easily, as they appear not to need translation like written or oral text, but this is a misconception; the connotations of drawings are often not as easy to grasp and to transpose to other contexts as we might expect. Tragic examples are the so-called Danish Mohammed cartoons that were circulated worldwide and fostered violent and deadly mobilisations in several Muslim majority countries (see Hussain 2007; Saunders 2008; Linkekilde 2010). Less tragic examples demonstrate the importance of contextualisation. Figure 1 features a drawing by Luz (Renald Luzier, a French cartoonist affiliated to Charlie Hebdo);<sup>3</sup> it is entitled *Le rêve européen* (*The European dream*) and it represents a person dressed as a Ku Klux Klan member lighting a match (so ready to set something or someone on fire) in front of a fictional flag which combines the confederate flag – much contested in the USA as a symbol of the South or of a system based on slavery and racism – with the EU colours of blue with yellow stars. The bubble says *Les Grecs et les migrants dehors!* (*Greeks and migrants out!*). A Spanish audience or a Catalan audience in France will however see a capirote – the pointed hat used by some religious orders during Easter (black in Perpignan in France, but white in Valencia) – and read it possibly as a statement on the catholic roots of the European integration project.

<sup>2</sup> The film is now part of a trilogy: in *Les poupées russes* (2005) (*The Russian dolls*) Xavier is 30 and moves for his work to London and St Petersburg, and in *Le casse-tête chinois* (2013) (*The Chinese puzzle*) he is in his 40s and follows his ex and his children to New York.

<sup>3</sup> Luz also drew the cover page of the first edition of *Charlie Hebdo* after the murder of the editorial team on January 7 2015. The page showing Mohammed's pardon was received with outrage in some countries and several people died in riots protesting against the satirical journal, in Niger for example.



Fig. 1: Luz: Le rêve européen

## 2.1 National stereotypes

Stereotypes play an important role in both geopolitical visions and national identities as they help to represent typical features of the collective identities of the self and the others involved. State building and nation building are key processes in the production of this kind of stereotype. Europeans have been experts at this, and stereotypes were widely used to mobilise European populations against each other in two World Wars in the last century, and in a rich history of episodes of both hot and banal nationalism (as Michael Billig aptly named less hot expressions of nationalism such as the everyday display of the national flag).

Stereotypes about others include the most basic action of using derogatory names for other groups. Think for example of *boche* and *Chleuh* in French, *mof* in Dutch, *kraut*, *fritz* and *jerry* in English and *szkop* in Polish, to list only a few used by Germany's neighbours. Interestingly, Wikipedia's English version (but not the other linguistic versions) features a page on these pejorative terms and their negative stereotyping under the heading *List of ethnic slurs by ethnicity* that is far from being complete or even accurate – there are for example no entries for the French or the Dutch (although many English expressions come immediately to mind: “going Dutch” or “a Dutch treat”, “a Dutch uncle”, “a Dutch wife”, “Dutch

courage”, “taking Dutch leave”, “a Dutch agreement”; but also “taking French leave”, “the French disease”, “a French kiss”, including some directly related to linguistic stereotypes like “double Dutch” or “pardon my French!”.

European integration was meant to overcome the worst and most violent expressions of these European nationalisms, but that could be done in two (contradictory) ways: either as a movement beyond these sorts of “us versus them” divisions, or as the upscaling of such narratives to the European level. The first implies that (national) stereotypes would become less and less important, the second that they would be replaced by a new kind of supranational nationalism, a Europeanism in which the European is the new “us”, and the non-European is the new “other”. The first would imply the building of some political architecture (possibly some state building) without national identity, the second some European nation building to complement the building of a European political union (as a federal state).

If any of this happens, stereotyping among Europeans should become less and less relevant and more and more benign, akin to the stereotyping of local and regional identities within states, such as the ideas about meridional people in France or Italy. Numerous examples show, however, that regional and local prejudices can be serious and enduring (think of Amsterdam vs. Rotterdam, Glasgow vs. Edinburgh, Madrid vs. Barcelona, Milan vs. Rome, etc.) and that the prejudice associated with certain social and regional varieties of the standard language remains strong, like the fact that people speaking French with a Marseilles accent are not taken seriously (Blanchet 2016).

The rest of this paper reviews some examples of stereotyping in Europe which demonstrate that national stereotyping remains strong and widely shared, but in a softened way and possibly complemented by emerging European stereotypes (for a collection of essays on changing Danish stereotypes amidst Europeanisation see Agger/Gentikow/Hedetoft 1990).

Pew, the American survey organisation, has polled the opinions of respondents in many countries since 2001, including that of Europeans about each other. In May 2013, in the midst of a financial, monetary and economic crisis (often labelled as the Euro crisis), the results of how respondents in selected European member states rank each other on positive and negative characteristics resonate with established stereotypes: trustworthy, arrogant, compassionate. The connotations are not unimportant in the midst of the crisis when the citizens of different member states entertain different understandings of it: the Northern Europeans blaming the Southern Europeans for their debt, the Southern Europeans blaming the Northern Europeans for their monetary and austerity policies. Being seen as hardworking or not, corrupt or not, can help foster or hamper solidarity between member states (see Table 1).



<b>Stereotyping in Europe</b>				
<b>Who Works Hardest, Who's Corrupt</b>				
<i>EU nation most offered as <u>top choice</u> as...</i>				
<i>Views in:</i>	<b>Most Hardworking</b>	<b>Least Hardworking</b>	<b>Most Corrupt</b>	<b>Least Corrupt</b>
Britain	Germany	Greece	Italy	Germany
France	Germany	Italy	Italy	Germany
Germany	Germany	Greece	Italy	Germany
Spain	Germany	Greece	Spain/Italy	Germany
Italy	Germany	Romania	Italy	Germany
Greece	Greece	Italy	Greece	Germany
Poland	Germany	Greece	Poland	Germany
Czech Rep.	Germany	Greece	Czech Rep.	Germany

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q50aCOMBO, Q50bCOMBO, Q51aCOMBO, Q51bCOMBO.

Table 1: Stereotyping in Europe

(Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project 2012: *European unity on the rocks: Greeks and Germans at polar opposites*, 2. More details at [www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/29/chapter-4-views-of-eu-countries-and-leaders/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/29/chapter-4-views-of-eu-countries-and-leaders/), last accessed January 2017)

Stereotypes are not only observable in periods of crisis. A widely circulated British postcard was produced by J Hugues Wilson (1995) in a period of relative prosperity and Euro-enthusiasm. It is a good example of the countless lists about typical features of Europeans. On this postcard

*The perfect European should be...*

cooking like a Brit, driving like the French, always available as a Belgian, as talkative as a Finn, as humorous as a German, as technical as a Portuguese, as flexible as a Swede, as famous as a Luxembourger, as patient as an Austrian, as controlled as an Italian, as sober as the Irish, as humble as a Spaniard, as generous as a Dutchman, as organised as a Greek, and as discreet as a Dane.

The list refers directly to stereotypes associated with the nationalities of the member states (15 at the time); it also hints at the stereotyped dysfunctionality of the EU, since it combines the worst from each participant (instead of combining positive stereotypes: humorous Brit, well-organised German, discreet Luxembourger, generous Irish, talkative Italian ...). Another reported example makes this stereotype about Europeanisation even more explicit:

What is the unified Europe going to be like?

Heaven if

The lovers	are Italian
The cooks	are French
The technicians	are German
The policemen	are English

And if everything is organised by the Swiss

Hell if

The cooks	are English
The policemen	are German
The lovers	are Swiss
The technicians	are French

And if everything is organised by the Italians.

(reported in Hidasi 1999,119)

National prejudices are often very much localised in the territory associated with the nationality they portray. The intimate connection between language, nation and territory is deeply entrenched in our thinking. Children have difficulty in accepting that Belgians do not speak Belgian, and we often forget whether Germany was named after the Germans or the Germans after Germany (to name just one example).

Popular culture provides interesting examples of the prevalence of prejudice and stereotypes. The Bulgarian artist Yanko Tsvetkov – a “true” European who has lived, studied and worked in Germany, the United Kingdom and Spain – has captured the attention of a wide public and the recognition of mainstream media in the US and in Europe (including the *BBC* and *The Guardian* in Britain, *Corriere della Sera* in Italy, and *Stern* and *Der Spiegel* in Germany) through his online *Mapping stereotyping* project (2009 onwards). Some of these maps have been published in a bestseller called *Atlas of prejudice* (plus sequels) and translated into several languages (according to the website of the author, into English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Italian) and have sold over “100.000 copies worldwide”. (See also <https://atlasofprejudice.com/about-118cdc905692#.c5b6bbejg>)

Tsvetkov maps stereotypes by locating them on political maps. His maps include many maps of Europe “according to ...”. These maps are centred on one country and label the relevant neighbours through the eyes of that country. *Europe according to Poland 2010* (<http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/europe-according-to-poland-print/>) for example shows Poland and the remaining countries of Europe, but they are given a descriptive label: “Western Bully” (Germany), “Our Former Colonies” (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine) and “Eastern Bully” (Russia), and “Wrinkled Bully” (Austria). In the North: “Vodka Addicts” (Finland), “Investors” (Sweden), “Refrigerators” (Norway), “Canada” (Iceland) and

“Toys” (Denmark). In the West: “Gays” (the Netherlands), “Beer” (Belgium), “Pussies” (France), “Godless Traitors” (Great Britain), “Potatoes” (Ireland). In the South: “Sunbed” (Portugal), “Tomatoes and Bulls” (Spain), “Weirdos” (Switzerland), “Land of Saint Cathol” (Italy), “Drunks” (Czech Republic), “Big Sausages” (Slovakia), “Cool Dudes” (Hungary), “Gypsies” in Romania and “Beggars” in Moldavia, “Low Class Holidays” (Slovenia), “Crazy People” (Serbia) and “Kind of Boring” (the rest of former Yugoslavia), “Grandma’s Beach” (Bulgaria), “Hotels on Strike”(Greece) and “Minarets”(Turkey).

Using the same formula, Tsvetkov provides similar maps for many member states. They include *Europe according to France, Great Britain, etc.* (in 2009, 2010, 2011). But whether by a slip of the tongue or not, the titles of the newer maps shift from the viewpoint of the country to that of the nationals: *Europe according to the Germans, the Greeks, the Italians, the Spaniards, the Bulgarians* while more recent versions (with generally the same content) revert back to states: *Europe according to Germany, Greece, Italy etc.*, including smaller ones like Luxembourg and non-EU ones like Turkey, Russia, and the Vatican as well as views from outside Europe such as the USA and Latin America.

Some maps were made by zooming in on specific political actors within European states such as political parties (*Europe according to the British Tories 2011*) or individual politicians (*Europe according to Silvio Berlusconi 2011*, as well as non-EU ones like Putin and Trump). More recently, *Europe according to Marine Le Pen 2016* shows France with La Nouvelle Orléans (the French name for New Orleans, but also referring to the French city of Orléans and the cult of the Front National for Jeanne d’Arc, who was burnt there in 1431 and is honoured with a demonstration on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May to counterbalance the Internationalist and Socialist Labour Day). See <https://atlasofprejudice.com/europe-according-to-marine-le-pen-561dd32caa79#.ng1ryxboc> (posted in December 2015).

A more complex example is a satirical map of the future of Europe, based on the dystopian future envisioned by anti-Islamic nativist politicians: *Europe according to Anders Breivik 2024* in a blog entry entitled *Welcome to Eurabia: a chronicle of the impending Blitzjihad and the islamization of Europe*. See <https://atlasofprejudice.com/welcome-to-eurabia-a89bc72c3a71#.5gc7q7k44> (posted in January 2015, just a week after the Charlie Hebdo murders).

Tsvetkov’s ever-expanding collection of maps is posted on his websites <https://atlasofprejudice.com/all> and <http://alphadesigner.com/>. The concept offers opportunities for infinite variations. Tsvetkov has also applied it to past rulers and empires: *Europe according to the Ancient Greeks, Europe according to Charles V 1555, Europe according to Austria- Hungary 1914*, and to future scenarios: *Europe according to the future 2022*. I noticed only one map targeting a grouping not based on nationalities: *Europe according to gay men 2012* (<http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/europe-according-to-gay-men-print/>).

The maps feature several layers of stereotypes, as they map both the stereotypes associated with other states in Europe from a particular viewpoint, but also stereotypes about the viewer. A comparison of the maps highlights some stereotypes which are widely shared, while others are much more specific; it also highlights the relevance of certain neighbours and the irrelevance of others. These stereotypes reflect partly national character, partly foreign policy, partly position in the European project, partly interaction patterns (tourism, typical exports). The European Union as a project and its policies are also reflected in certain maps, for example in the view from the UK (as an awkward partner of integration) and from Greece (confronted with austerity measures). In addition a more global view of the EU is offered in later work on ways to tear Europe apart, featuring *20 ways to break Europe* into two or three macro-regions. In this case, the indicators range from cultural orientation (modern/classical or catholic/protestant/orthodox) through food (wine/beer/vodka or tomato/potato) and political orientation (revolutionary/traditional) to the economy (poor/rich or working habits) <https://atlasofprejudice.com/tearing-europe-apart-10d01e876eab#.swi99d7nc> (posted in December 2014). Here the state borders have disappeared and the European community as a whole – one single community but divided – is portrayed. Tsvetkov offers a similar series of maps of the cultural partitions of the US: *12 ways to break the US* at <https://atlasofprejudice.com/12-ways-to-break-the-usa-c44293ea8d17#.nalz13jfi> (posted in October 2015). But then again his map *Mainland USA according to common sense 2011* looks like the large majority of the European maps and features one stereotype for each federated state (see <http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/usa-according-to-common-sense-print/>). In the case of the US it is apparently not necessary – nor possible? – to make different maps with Mainland USA according to Californians, New Yorkers, Texans, Coloradoans, etc. – or are these maps still pending?

Alongside the obvious national stereotypes (some old and established, some contingent on present events) the maps sometimes also show clear stereotypes about the EU itself perceived as a bloc, as is the case on the British map where it is “the Evil Federated Empire of Europe” (in pink, like the British Empire used to be shown on school maps) (<http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/europe-according-to-britain-print/>) or the Greek map where it is the “Union of Stingy Workaholics” (in yellow, like the euro) (<http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/europe-according-to-greece-print/>) or the apparent view from nowhere called *Europe 2009* centred around the “Union of Subsidized Farmers” (in EU blue) (<http://alphadesigner.com/art-store/europe-in-2009-print/>) or looking ahead to 2022 when Turkey is still a EU candidate but the EU has moved east (covering Poland, the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine) and most of the 6 founding members of the European Communities have become Merckland (Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Northern Italy) (<http://alphadesigner.com/blog/europe-according-to-future-2022/>).

The new media have clearly contributed to the exceptionally wide circulation and success of Tsvetkov's maps through his website and through sharing on social media<sup>4</sup>, but it should be stressed that neither the national stereotyping, the personification of countries, the mapping nor the wide circulation are new.

Early historical examples of musing about national characters are found in Julius Caesar's writing on the Gauls, or Herodotus on the people known to his contemporaries. In modern history we can think of the taxonomy of national characters by Jules de La Mesnardière (1642) (see Leerssen 2000, 272); the relations between climate and national character assumed by Montesquieu in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) in his analysis of the impact of physical and human geography and the interaction between climate and culture producing specific political institutions; and Immanuel Kant's ideas about races (1775). See also overviews of national stereotypes among philosophers (Crépon 1996) and in popular culture (Dubost 1999; Duccini 2004, 2009; Leerssen 2000; Chew 2006; Beller/Leerssen 2007). The *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert featured an entry on national characters ("caractère des nations"):

Le *caractère* d'une nation consiste dans une certaine disposition habituelle de l'âme, qui est plus commune chez une nation que chez une autre, quoique cette disposition ne se rencontre pas dans tous les membres qui composent la nation: ainsi le *caractère* des François est la légereté, la gaieté, la sociabilité, l'amour de leurs rois & de la monarchie même, &c.

Dans les nations qui subsistent depuis longtemps, on remarque un fond de *caractère* qui n'a point changé: ainsi les Athéniens, du temps de Démosthène, étaient grands amateurs de nouvelles; ils l'étaient du temps de S. Paul, & ils le sont encore aujourd'hui. On voit aussi dans le livre admirable de Tacite, sur les *mœurs des Germains*, des choses qui sont encore vraies aujourd'hui de leurs descendants.

Il y a grande apparence que le climat influe beaucoup sur le *caractère* général; car on ne saurait l'attribuer à la forme du gouvernement qui change toujours au bout d'un certain temps: cependant il ne faut pas croire que la forme du gouvernement lorsqu'elle subsiste longtemps, n'influe aussi à la longue sur le *caractère* d'une nation. Dans un état despotique, par exemple, le peuple doit devenir bientôt paresseux, vain, & amateur de la frivolité; le goût du vrai & du beau doivent s'y perdre; on ne doit ni faire ni penser de grandes choses.

*L'encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751-1777, 2:666) ([http://portail.atilf.fr/cgi-bin/getobject\\_?a.13:501:2./var/artfla/encyclopédie/textdata/image/](http://portail.atilf.fr/cgi-bin/getobject_?a.13:501:2./var/artfla/encyclopédie/textdata/image/)) (see also Leerssen 2000, 273)

These national characters were also portrayed visually in this period, like the etching *Le secours de la paix aux nations opprimées par la guerre et la misère* (1648) which represents the different actors at the peace negotiations of Westphalia (<http://martinezd.wixsite.com/estampesmartinez/ecole-francaise?lightbox>

<sup>4</sup> Including the circulation of the many of the maps translated into Chinese and reposted on the website <http://alphadesigner.com/press/mapping-stereotypes-translated-in-chinese/>.

=cvsp) (Duccini 2009 in <http://letteraturagrafica.over-blog.com/article-31799995.html>). Even more famous is the *Völkertafel*, an early 18<sup>th</sup> century painting from Steiermark in Austria portraying European peoples and their characteristics.<sup>5</sup> The people listed are from the following nationalities: Spanish, French, Italian, German, English, Swede, Polish, Hungarian, Russian and Turkish or Greek (as one category). Qualities discussed include behaviour, national character, spirit, attribute, clothing, vice, illness, country, religion, animal, etc. There is nothing on languages, although linguistics is listed as the science associated with Poles, Latin with Hungarians, and Greek with Russians.

According to Barron (2008)<sup>6</sup> the political cartoon map developed in the period between the 1848 revolution and the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71). The most famous (for their circulation at the time and their reproduction in studies) include:

- *Schröder's Rundgemaelde von Europa im August MDCCCXLIX* (Düsseldorf, Germany) ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rundgem%C3%A4lde\\_Europa\\_1849.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rundgem%C3%A4lde_Europa_1849.jpg)),
- *Kaart van Europa* 1859 by Emrik and Binger (Haarlem, The Netherlands) ([www.geographicus.com/P/AntiqueMap/KaartvanEuropa1859-emrikbinger-1859/](http://www.geographicus.com/P/AntiqueMap/KaartvanEuropa1859-emrikbinger-1859/)),
- *Komische Karte des Kriegsschauplatzes* (Hamburg, Germany 1854),
- *Nouvelle carte d'Europe dressée pour 1870* by Paul Hadol (Paris, France) ([https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_Hadol#/media/File:Satirical\\_Europe\\_in\\_1870.jpg](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Hadol#/media/File:Satirical_Europe_in_1870.jpg)),  
also published in English as *Latest war map of Europe, as seen through French eyes, Map of Europe for 1870 prepared by Hadol*,
- The serio-comic maps by Fred W. Rose (London, England) such as *The serio-comic war map for the year 1877 by Fred W. Rose* (1877) ([https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/archivedetail/6248/SerioComic\\_War\\_Map\\_For\\_The\\_Year\\_1877\\_By\\_FWR/Rose-Bacon%20&%20Co.html](https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/archivedetail/6248/SerioComic_War_Map_For_The_Year_1877_By_FWR/Rose-Bacon%20&%20Co.html)),  
*Angling in troubled waters, A serio-comic map of Europe by Fred W. Rose* (1899) (<http://bibliodyssey.blogspot.nl/2009/06/satirical-maps.html>),  
*John Bull and his Friends, a serio-comic map of Europe by Fred W. Rose* (1900) (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/bibliodyssey/3668664529/sizes/l/>),
- The maps of the twelve more important European countries (including England, Scotland, France etc.) as persons were drawn by Lilian Lancaster and brought together with verses for each country in a booklet entitled *Geographical Fun being Humorous Outlines of Various Countries* published in London in 1869 (see tweet about the book at <https://twitter.com/LoveArchaeology/status/511104925800357888/photo/1>),

<sup>5</sup> See the paper of Hans Henning Hahn in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> See also his website [www.barronmaps.com/](http://www.barronmaps.com/).

- *Humoristische Karte von Europa im Jahre 1914* ([www.barronmaps.com/products/humoristische-karte-von-europa-im-jahre-1914](http://www.barronmaps.com/products/humoristische-karte-von-europa-im-jahre-1914)),
- see for an overview of maps from different countries for that period (Briars 2014) (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2014/jun/03/war-ww1-propaganda-maps-in-pictures>),
- *Hark! Hark! The dogs do bark!* By Walter Emanuel (London England 1914) ([http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/19907/Hark\\_Hark\\_The\\_Dogs\\_Do\\_Bark\\_With\\_Note\\_By\\_Walter\\_Emanuel/Johnson,%20Riddle%20&%20Co.html](http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/19907/Hark_Hark_The_Dogs_Do_Bark_With_Note_By_Walter_Emanuel/Johnson,%20Riddle%20&%20Co.html)),
- *Europäische Treibjagd* by G Schiedermeier (1915 Regensburg, Germany).

The beginning of the Great War marked the transition from satire to propaganda, first in Germany and Britain and then to an even greater extent in Bolshevik Russia (again according to Barron 2008, 13).

Compared to the present day *Atlas of prejudice*, the visual images are much richer. Stereotypes are not only put in words on the map; in these satirical maps they are represented through images (a person or an animal) that embody the national character, and the shape of the territory of the country is even sometimes used to portray that character (see also de Barros Dias 2012 for anthropomorphic maps and Edney 2007 for maps of bodies and empires). They remind us that these national stereotypes are much older than modern nationalism; they emerged in the Middle Ages. *Nation* was originally the term to label students with the same birthplace at a medieval university, who used the same vernacular or kitchen language among themselves (as opposed to Latin, the lingua franca of European universities at the time). It was later broadened to people sharing the same homeland. Most of the national stereotypes only implicitly refer to the language spoken by the national group, but others more specifically target language itself.

### 3. Linguistic stereotypes

Charles V is often quoted as having said

I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men, and German to my horse.

(Misattributed to Charles Quint (1500-1558), <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/charlesv142488.html>)

This stereotypes the various languages, suggesting that each is more suited for a certain activity than the others. The idea also suggests that this powerful man needed to master several languages to be able to rule such an empire. The linguistic stereotype about the political and diplomatic élite has changed a lot since then. English is now the language of the global elite. A series of pictures of the visit

to the White House by the partners of the heads of governments during the G8 summit in Washington on 19 May 2012 nicely demonstrates the point. In these pictures (and this was noted in the French media at the time), an interpreter can be seen speaking in the ear of Valérie Trierweiler (then the partner of the French president François Hollande) because she did not master English well enough to follow the conversation without a mediator. This was seen as a deficiency for someone in her position.

Even more telling is the campaign of the European Union to reduce the distance between its institutions and its citizens in 2013. The president of the European Council (then the Belgian Herman Van Rompuy) was active on the website *Debating Europe*,<sup>7</sup> where the working language is English, and the slogan read *Ask me! Send YOUR questions to Herman Van Rompuy* – notwithstanding the other 23 official and working languages of the European Union and the languages that Van Rompuy is proficient in.

The Anglicisation of international exchange has also fed stereotypes linked to different ways of speaking English. No doubt native speakers of English have their ways of making fun of different varieties (Received Pronunciation, Irish, Australian, American etc.) and foreign accents. In the EU context there is arguably some tension between British English speakers and foreign speakers of English (International English, European English, Erasmus English). No doubt native speakers make fun of foreign speakers, but the latter also share stereotypes about native speakers of British English. Some representations focus more specifically on the hyperbolic politeness of the British, others on the oddity of certain idioms and the misunderstanding generated by British euphemisms, comparing *What the British say* with *What the British mean* and *What others understand* as shown in the Anglo EU translation guide published by the British daily *The Independent* in 2015 (see Table 2).

Stereotypes about each other's languages are common (think of the erotic power of the Italian-speaking lover as a gimmick in the 1988 British-American movie *A fish called Wanda*). Studies have considered various aspects such as the use of foreign languages in advertising, especially the association of certain languages with certain products and qualities, such as French and German with beauty and elegance or pragmatism and reliability respectively (Hornikx/Starren 2008) and the challenge of dubbing of linguistic stereotyping (Ferrari 2010), as well as foreign language teaching (Löschmann/Stroinska 1998).

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.debatingeurope.eu/](http://www.debatingeurope.eu/).



## Anglo-EU Translation Guide

What the British say	What the British mean	What others understand
I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect...	I think you are an idiot	He is listening to me
That's not bad	That's good	That's poor
That is a very brave proposal	You are insane	He thinks I have courage
Quite good	A bit disappointing	Quite good
I would suggest...	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about the idea, but do what you like
Oh, incidentally/ by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is...	That is not very important
I was a bit disappointed that	I am annoyed that	It doesn't really matter
Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense	They are impressed
I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already	They will probably do it
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault	Why do they think it was their fault?
You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	I will get an invitation soon
I almost agree	I don't agree at all	He's not far from agreement
I only have a few minor comments	Please re-write completely	He has found a few typos
Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea	They have not yet decided

Table 2: Anglo EU Translation Guide, *The Independent* 11 November 2015

(see [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/chart-shows-what-british-people-say-what-they-really-mean-and-what-others-understand-a6730046.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/chart-shows-what-british-people-say-what-they-really-mean-and-what-others-understand-a6730046.html), accessed January 2017)

Much rarer are examples of humour around stereotypes regarding multilingualism. One outstanding example from popular culture is the take of the English stand-up comedian Eddie Izzard on languages and on multilingualism in his 1999 show *Dress to kill*.

“But, uh, in Europe we have 200 languages. Two hundred languages! Just count them! I know you won’t! But, uh but a total – 1 – languages. **And future generations of Europeans, I’m sorry Europeans, but we’re going to have to be bilingual. We are going to have to be, and English speakers hate this.**”

**‘Two languages in one head? No one can live at that speed! Good Lord, man! You’re asking the impossible!’**

‘But the Dutch speak four languages and smoke marijuana!’

‘Yes, but they’re cheating!’

Everyone knows marijuana is a drug enhancement, that can help you on track in field, to come – last in a team – of eight million, eight million other runners who are all dead.

**I don’t know how the Dutch do it, but anyway – cause we’re going to have to learn! And the reason we’re going to have to learn is, one, for – being groovy, and just getting out there and doing it; but the second one, we just lose a lot of business, in Europe. In the rest of Europe.**

Cause German people phone up and going, ‘Wir haben funf millionen Deutschmark, fuer die Auto –’ ‘Just fuck off, willya mate?! I thought he was speaking German, I told him to go away! I said I don’t know, something about funf millionen Deutschmark and I told him to get knotted! We don’t want any of his Deutschy Markys. We do?! We do want that?! Oh, I’m terribly sorry! Oh fuck, redial.’ Yeah. So, uh.”

(Eddie Izzard, 1999, *Dress to kill*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hJQsvoY6VU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hJQsvoY6VU&feature=related); my emphasis)

Less flattering are the common representations of the European Parliament as a Tower of Babel (sometimes even “photoshopping” the building of the European Parliament in Strasbourg and the famous painting of the Tower of Babel by Brueghel, as in the blog post *Sinister Sites: The EU parliament* (<http://vigilantcitizen.com/sinistersites/sinister-sites-the-eu-parliament/>, 8 December 2008).

To some extent the EU institutions, allegedly the largest employers of interpreters and translators in the world, also play with the idea. For the 2010 Universal Exhibition Shanghai Expo, they published a YouTube video clip entitled *Do you speak European?* with Chinese subtitles about interpretation, prepared for a special exhibition “Do you speak European?” at the EU Pavilion, Shanghai Expo 2010 10-20 July (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Afk9hE7qptA>; see also a second video in Chinese with English subtitles *Interpreting for Europe & for China* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSW1jJotpWE>; both accessed January 2017). This is closely related to the stereotyping of monolingualism as the norm and the associated representations of bilinguals as freaks (see for example *Bilingual celebrities* on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzniYTLmFkc>, accessed January 2017).

Cities traditionally offer more room for linguistic and other cultural diversity (Pennycook/Otsuji 2015; King/Carson 2016). Nevertheless multilingualism is not necessarily welcoming. A few street signs exemplify that the acknowledgement of linguistic diversity can go together with prejudice.

First, take the Glasgow City Council sign spotted in a park, where the message in English is followed in translation in four scripts: Chinese, Bengali, Arabic and Hindi.

In the interests of hygiene and safety  
members of the public are requested  
to refrain from feeding the birds  
as food debris attracts vermin

(Photo by Nicole Nau, August 2011, posted on <http://languagesindanger.eu/book-of-knowledge/multilingualism-and-language-contact/> (accessed September 2016))

Gaelic is not included, and is probably seen as redundant because Gaelic speakers are expected to read English, but the European languages of larger groups of migrants (Polish, French, Italian, Spanish etc.) are absent too, as if only migrants from outside Europe are unable to read the English text and need to be “educated” about this.

Another sign spotted in the Netherlands is more direct:

*In Rotterdam spreken we Nederlands*  
(Dutch for “In Rotterdam we speak Dutch”)

This electoral poster of the main right-wing party VVD (the main party of the governmental coalition at the time) was used during the 2014 municipal elections in several cities. This testimony of distrust in the use of other languages than Dutch in the electoral campaign was interestingly enough contradicted by their counterparts in Amsterdam, who were circulating tracts in English to reach expat voters, although tracts and meetings in Turkish, Moroccan, Arabic, Portuguese or Polish for larger migrant groups were deemed inappropriate for fear of candidates being unaccountable in that other language, promoting a different agenda to the mainstream party in Dutch and developing clientelism with a specific migrant electorate.

Finally a picture of a bag with a printed text in Arabic script spotted in the Berlin underground went viral after it was tweeted on 16 August 2016 by the Berliner Nader al Sarras with the explanation that the text reads “This text has no other purpose than to terrify those who are afraid of the Arabic language” (<https://twitter.com/naderalsarras/status/765617240947458048>).

The bag was reported to have been manufactured in Haifa, Israel, where the same guilt by association affects Arabic (see [https://www.buzzfeed.com/rosebuchanan/people-are-loving-this-companys-bags-using-arabic-script-to?utm\\_term=.ww5LdkGA1#.xmdxmGkoZ](https://www.buzzfeed.com/rosebuchanan/people-are-loving-this-companys-bags-using-arabic-script-to?utm_term=.ww5LdkGA1#.xmdxmGkoZ)), showing how the complex configurations of local linguistic landscapes evolve across borders.

## 4. Stereotypes, identity politics and European integration

The final part of the paper deals with policies and how they harness stereotypes. It is well known that French educational policy, promoting French as the language of the French state and annihilating other languages on its territory (see Thiesse 1999), has used stereotypes to shame speakers of regional languages and push people (school children especially) towards monolingualism in the state language. French state schools – free and compulsory but linguistically particularly destructive – have campaigned against other languages through stereotypes associating these languages with poverty and filth:

In Brittany, school posters would typically state:

“Il est interdit

1. de parler breton et de cracher par terre”

“It is forbidden

1. to speak Breton and to spit on the ground”

In Alsace (regained from Germany) posters would promise

“C’est chic de parler français”

“It’s smart to speak French”

In the northern part of Catalonia, the motto painted on the wall of the school yards told you

“Parlez français, soyez propre”

“Speak French, be clean”

Stereotypes can instead be used in a humorous way, including in more formal circumstances than *The Atlas of Prejudice* discussed earlier. In this final section I would like to present three recent (European) examples of how stereotypes intervene in the representation of European integration (so both national and European stereotypes). All three are related to EU institutions, their communication with EU citizens and their attempts to foster some kind of European identity. All three use stereotypes tongue-in-cheek but with various degrees of success.

### 4.1 *Entropa*

The first is the exhibition *Entropa*, commissioned by the Czech presidency in 2009. It is customary for the rotating president of the Council of Ministers to commission a piece of art to be exhibited in the Justus Lipsius building of the Council in Brussels. The Czech presidency commissioned an art work from David Černý to reflect the slogan *Europe without barriers*.

The artist prepared an exhibition under the title *Entropa: Stereotypes are barriers to be demolished* (see also the press release of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU on 12 January 2009). This was a particularly important symbolic moment, since it was the first time the Czech Republic had held the presidency since its accession.

The installation – a construction kit of Europe, a gigantic plastic model to be put together like the models of planes, cars, motorbikes, ships and so on known as Airfix models in the UK, Heller in France, Revell in Germany, Italeri in Italy etc. – was presented as the collective work of 27 artists, one from each member state. According to Černý each member state was represented by a work of art by a national artist, based on stereotypes which other Europeans hold about their country. At the opening of the exhibition some of the works caused much commotion and even outrage among civil servants, diplomats, politicians and the general public in certain member states, and eventually there were formal protests. The discontent with the exhibits was deeply aggravated when it became clear that the artists did not exist, and that all the works had been created by Černý and his Czech team. The stereotypes became even less acceptable, since they were not self-inflicted caricatures but qualities ascribed from the outside. There were diplomatic incidents. In the end the piece for Bulgaria (an ensemble of squat toilets labelled Turkish toilets) was covered at the demand of its government (or “veiled”, as McLane 2012, 478 phrases it). For a review of the Bulgarian debate about the artwork, about the meaning of the Turkish toilet, how the discussion evolved once it became clear it was not the work of a Bulgarian artist, and about the censorship of “the cloth-covered toilet”, see Roth (2010).

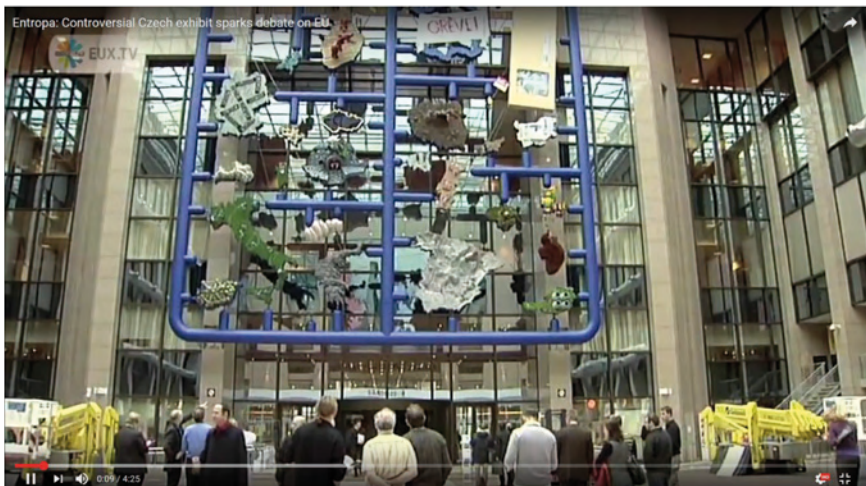


Fig. 2: Snapshot from Euractiv item on the opening of *Entropa* 2009 (overview)

The catalogue published with the installation is trilingual in Czech, English and French and provides a description of the installation, an explanation, and a biography of the artists for the 27 member states (Croatia was not yet a member in 2009). The countries were presented in alphabetical order of their names in English (not in the national languages as usual in the EU protocol). It is still available on the archived website of the Czech presidency at [www.eu2009.cz/assets/czech-presidency/publications/entropa.pdf](http://www.eu2009.cz/assets/czech-presidency/publications/entropa.pdf). The biographies of the fictitious artists were also (and are still) available online at <http://entropa.liborsvoboda.com/entropa.htm> (accessed January 2017). These biographies also play with stereotypes of the different nationalities (names, careers, etc.), but most important is the way each country is represented in the kit.

Here follows the description of the pieces of the puzzle. The text comes from the description of the exhibition published by the Techmania Science Center ([www.techmania.cz/data/fil\\_5512.pdf](http://www.techmania.cz/data/fil_5512.pdf)), reproduced and amended in the English language Wikipedia article devoted to the installation. The amendments are based on observation of the installation and controversies and other reactions in the media (check the Wikipedia website for the content of the footnotes; they generally refer to statements by officials and protagonists):

- “**Austria**, a known opponent of atomic energy, is depicted as a green field dominated by nuclear power plant cooling towers with vapour coming out of them at intervals.[7]
- **Belgium** is presented as a box of half-eaten Praline chocolates with the pattern of Brussels waffles.
- **Bulgaria** is depicted by a series of connected “Turkish” squat toilets with neon lights connecting and illuminating them. This piece of the sculpture was later hidden with fabric.[8][9]
- **Cyprus** is cut in half.
- The **Czech Republic’s** own piece is an LED display, which flashes controversial quotations by Czech President Václav Klaus.
- **Denmark** is depicted as being built out of Lego bricks, and some claim to see in the depiction a face reminiscent of the cartoon controversy,[10] though the resemblance has been denied by Černý.[11]
- **Estonia** is presented with power tools resembling a hammer and sickle, citing the country’s consideration of a ban on Communist symbols.[12]
- **Finland** is depicted as a wooden floor including a male with a rifle lying down, imagining an elephant, a hippo and a crocodile.[13]
- **France** is draped in a “GRÈVE!” (“STRIKE!”) banner.[8]
- **Germany** is a series of interlocking autobahns with cars moving about on them, described as “somewhat resembling a swastika”,[8][14][15] though the statement is not universally accepted.[16] Some Czech military historians also suggest that the autobahns resemble the number “18”, which some Neo-Nazi groups use as code for A.H., the initials of Adolf Hitler.[17]

- **Greece** is depicted as a forest that has been entirely burned, possibly representing the 2007 Greek forest fires or the 2008 civil unrest in Greece.[18]
- **Hungary** features an Atomium consisting of watermelons and Hungarian sausages, based on a floor of peppers.
- **Ireland** is depicted as a brown bog with bagpipes protruding from Northern Ireland. The bagpipes also play music in five-minute intervals. [citation needed]
- **Italy** is depicted as a football pitch [8] with several players who appear to be masturbating, possibly indicating what some see as the country’s “fetish for football”. [15]
- **Latvia** is shown as covered with mountains, in contrast to its actual flat landscape.
- **Lithuania** includes a series of dressed Manneken Pis-style figures urinating, with the streams of urine being illuminated by yellow glass fibres.
- **Luxembourg** is displayed as a gold nugget with a “For Sale” sign.[8]
- **Malta** is depicted as a tiny island with a prehistoric dwarf elephant, as well as a magnifying glass in front of the elephant.
- **The Netherlands** is depicted as having disappeared under the sea with only several minarets still visible.[8]
- **Poland** has a piece with priests erecting the rainbow flag of the gay rights movement on a field of potatoes in the style of the famous photograph *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*. [19]
- **Portugal** is shown as a wooden cutting board with three pieces of meat in the shape of its former colonies of Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique.
- **Romania** is a Dracula-style theme park, which is set up to blink and emit ghostly sounds at intervals.[8]
- **Slovakia** is depicted as a Hungarian sausage (or a human body wrapped in Hungarian tricolor).
- **Slovenia** is shown as a rock engraved with the words “First Tourists Came Here, 1213”.
- **Spain** is covered entirely in concrete, with a concrete mixer situated in the north-east.[20]
- **Sweden**, unlike the other pieces in the sculpture, does not have an outline, but is instead represented as a large IKEA-style self-assembly furniture box containing Gripen fighter planes (as supplied to the Czech Air Force).[21]
- The **United Kingdom**, known for its Euroscepticism and relative isolation from Europe, is “included” as a missing piece (an empty space) at the top-left of the sculpture.”  
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entropa>)

See also detailed pictures on the website of *The Guardian* at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2009/jan/14/entropa-eu-art-hoax> or the Euractiv

post on YouTube *Entropa: Controversial Czech exhibit sparks debate on EU* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2SKLSM1cw4> (both still available in January 2017).

Entropa can be seen as a critique of the use of stereotypes as shorthand for identities in cross-cultural encounters. Moreover the kit as a whole suggests that Europe is still to be put together, that some pieces are missing, and that the result is likely to be disappointing (like the plastic model often disappoints and ends up unfinished or poorly glued in a corner of the room).

Černý's choices seem not to show how Europe looks according to the Czechs (to paraphrase Tsvkekov's atlas of prejudice), but rather various prejudices about each other. They surely reflect ongoing political debates, especially regarding European integration, but also more traditional stereotypes and individual experiences. Interestingly the linguistic elements were in English (except for the French "Grève!" in the installation (see Fig. 4), but in English in the catalogue).



Fig. 3: Snapshot from Euractiv item on the opening of *Entropa* 2009 (detail).

The very title of the artwork suggests however that it is more a comment on the EU as a whole than on its parts; on how it operates as a system, alluding to entropy, a measure of disorder in a system. Alexandr Vondra, the deputy prime minister for European Affairs, was quoted in *The Guardian* at the opening stressing that the artwork was intended as a comment on the EU, not on national stereotypes:

“Sculpture, and art more generally, can speak where words fail.”

“In line with the Czech presidency motto, ‘A Europe without barriers’, we gave the 27 artists the same opportunity to express themselves freely as proof that, in today’s Europe, there is no place for censorship.”



“In return, we got an uncommon, yet common, piece of art. I am confident in Europe’s open mind and capacity to appreciate such a project.”

(quoted in Watt 2009)

The Czech minister was too optimistic, and his government was forced to deal with requests to intervene and to choose between insulting fellow European governments or censoring. This choice was made easier when it turned out that Černý had not worked with national artists as had been agreed with the sponsor.

Knowing Černý’s track record (he painted the monument to Soviet tank crews pink in Prague in 1991), he was also surely making a statement about the Czech government, the president Klaus (as they had explicitly clashed before), and the Czechs’ self-inflated image and ambitions at the eve of their first presidency. Forcing them to mobilise most of their resources to handle the commotion – even if the diplomatic stir was probably greater than expected – was also a way of disrupting the scripting of a prefect presidency by perfect Europeans after their perfectly managed return to the West.

The art work seems to have revealed or revived musing about east-west divides in Europe: a greater sense of humour in the west (Entropa being associated with a British sense of humour like Monty Python or Sacha Baron Cohen) believed to be less current in the former Eastern Europe (but then again, think of Sveikian humour!, see Kuus 2008), or Černý’s selection of kinder and less offensive stereotypes for the older member states. The British public was reported to be rather amused at being portrayed as absent, but that was seen as rather benevolent criticism by former Eastern Europeans compared to being portrayed as a squat toilet (Bulgaria) or a sausage wrapped in the flag of their neighbours (Slovakia). Similarly the team of imaginary artists was sometimes called a joke, but more often a hoax, a fiction, a mystification, a falsification, even a forgery (Zigelyte 2012) when moving east. The controversy also addresses the role of art and political patronage, including the question of whether the artist has committed fraud and should give the money back (because he did not hire artists in the 27 member states as he claimed he did).

There is no doubt that, as an artwork, Entropa was successful in disturbing business as usual. The installation was removed earlier than planned from the Justus Lipsius building and transported to Prague and later to the Techmania Science Centre in Pilsen (and its presence – also controversial in local politics – was allegedly an asset for that city in winning the title of 2015 European Capital City of Culture; see [www.techmania.cz/data/fil\\_4418.pdf](http://www.techmania.cz/data/fil_4418.pdf) and [www.techmania.cz/data/fil\\_5512.pdf](http://www.techmania.cz/data/fil_5512.pdf)).

One year later, Spain took over the presidency and presented the associated installation in Justus Lipsius: this was a video installation by Daniel Canogar entitled “Travesías” (crossings). References said “Spanish Presidency unveils ‘uncontroversial’ art installation” and the artist was quoted explaining that he

was “clearly trying to avoid offering references to national symbols,” favouring instead “interpretations of the work that do not involve national colours” (Euractiv 5 January 2010, [www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/spanish-presidency-unveils-uncontroversial-art-installation/](http://www.euractiv.com/section/languages-culture/news/spanish-presidency-unveils-uncontroversial-art-installation/)). The use of stereotypes clearly had high political costs, but it does not seem to have had a negative impact on the evaluations of the Czech presidency by European circles and think tanks. The commotion was duly noted in the authoritative evaluation of the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Beneš/Karlas 2010, 71), although it was put into perspective in the light of the challenges of the presidency: the uncertain faith of the Lisbon Treaty, the global financial crisis, the gas crisis and the lost vote of no-confidence of the Topolánek government.

## 4.2 EU enlargement on YouTube

The two other examples are video clips produced by the European Commission for its channel on YouTube (for some time under the label eutube). There were both posted online in early 2012: one caused a stir, while the other was less controversial but nevertheless widely circulated. Both aimed at communicating the importance of further integration and enlargement of the EU. These short videos (generally about 1 minute) target younger Europeans using social media. They feel like advertising, and rely essentially on the visual message, with a small amount of spoken or written text – in English as the language of wider communication. Although stereotypes are surely more often than not invoked implicitly or explicitly in this short vignettes on European politics and society, these two videos are particularly instructive.

The first is now known under the title **EU enlargement: growing together**. As with most videos produced for YouTube by the European Commission, it is a clearly staged scene with no text at all until the final message (in English). The clip was removed from eutube after a few hours because it was perceived as prejudiced, racist and imperialist. The clip had already been widely shared and can still be viewed on several sites.<sup>8</sup>

The clip (as with all the videos posted on YouTube for the Commission) targeted a young audience. It portrayed Europe as a woman in yellow – looking a bit like the Bride (Uma Thurman), the heroine of the American movie *Kill Bill* by

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E2B\\_yI8jrI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E2B_yI8jrI); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SYwV9034kM>; [www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=aPYTx03U08](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=aPYTx03U08) (under the title “the enlargement ad”); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOkYvp0Y3dw>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZW3ERcByWA&index=6&list=PLoJquNJCbEPz75LOkb6nejAxRYoa7gZE6>.

Quentin Tarantino<sup>9</sup> – and fighting three non-white men. When the sequence starts, the young white woman in a yellow costume is walking in a disused warehouse. At the signal of a gong she is suddenly “attacked” by a yellow man, then a brown man, then a black man each wearing the clothes (and in one case a weapon) and demonstrating the choreography attached to a specific martial art. Connoisseurs can tell that the three men are masters of kung fu, kalaripayattu and capoeira respectively. In other words they represent the three emerging powers in the world economy: China, India and Brazil. The woman stays calm, closes her eyes, spreads her arms and multiplies herself into twelve identical clones who encircle the three men. All sit down. The camera view changes angle and now views the scene from above; the twelve clones of Europe change into yellow stars and the scene into the EU flag. The men have disappeared into thin air.

The closing statement appears in English on a dark blue background with the logo of enlargement (colourful circles representing the member states on a map of Europe):

The more we are  
The stronger we are  
[Ec.europa.eu/enlargement](http://Ec.europa.eu/enlargement)  
© European Union 2012



Fig. 4: Snapshot from *Growing together* (March 2012)

<sup>9</sup> *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003), *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (2004) and the original four-hour cut, retitled *Kill Bill: The Whole Bloody Affair* (2011).

The original post was removed, but it had gone viral. According to Simic (2015b, 186) it spread across 7,000 websites, starting on March 6. The video was noticed and shared, but not in the way the makers had expected. As those who posted the video on YouTube (where it is still available) noted, the reactions were negative:

“I’m not the owner of this video. The European Commission was forced to withdraw this video in March 2012 after it was criticised as “racist.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOkYvp0Y3dw>)

“This ad was launched by the EU and then immediately withdrawn because of overwhelming bad feedback. I had made a backup however and think people should be able to see it [...]” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SYwV9034kM>)

“White European Woman attacked by aggressive Black, Asian and Indian Men. This is the official EU enlargement commercial aired across the EU.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SYwV9034kM>)

“The European Commission has issued an apology after complaints were made about an advert uploaded to YouTube advertising European Union enlargement.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZW3ERcByWA&index=6&list=PLojuqNJCbEPz75LOkb6nejAxRYoa7gZE6>)

The video has been interpreted as a racist and sexist script, suggesting that Europe was superior and peaceful and that China, India and Brazil – and by extension non-white men – were violent, aggressive and threatening to (white) women. Additionally the personification of Europe is seen as excluding non-white Europeans and the personification of Brazil as black is seen as misleading in terms of the racial demographics of the country. While the relations between Europe and the challengers can easily be seen as racist, this racism is sometimes surprisingly described as reflecting racial differences *within* Europe: “Three men from ethnic minorities using martial arts skills with a possible interpretation of preparing to fight a woman” (Simic 2015a, 7) and “no other race can challenge ‘white supremacy’” (ibid., 8).

In fact the chosen script was meant to convey a completely different message. Indeed, the European Commission is generally no challenger of political correctness. The focus was on enlargement and the need for individual European states to join forces to be able to cope with the challenge of global economic competition and the emerging economies. The martial arts theme was an attempt to surf on the popularity of the genre. The choice of martial arts with a long history and a robust tradition could be read as a plea against aggression and violence and for discipline and self-control, mutual respect and collaboration. In that sense the stereotypes of Europe’s “others” might have been positive. At the same time, the *Kill Bill* reference for the Europe persona could be read as negative, since the heroine of the film is particularly violent.

According to Stefano Sannino, the director general of the Enlargement Division of the Commission, quoted in *The Guardian* (Watt 2012), the young audience, acquainted with martial arts films and video games, was positive, as was the focus

group. “We apologise to anyone who may have felt offended. Given these controversies, we have decided to stop the campaign immediately and to withdraw the video”. There was a clear mismatch between the intended stereotypes and those perceived by the audience.

The second video is entitled **Hidden Treasures of Europe**. It was posted just two weeks before the previous one and also deals with enlargement, but in a very different way. It has been available since 2012 on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_jRjPI9iRQ&feature=plcp&context=C47da909VDvjVQa1PpcFPGOEuvWmODi-JsQgq3XBM7WvzmsU6zrMs%3D](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_jRjPI9iRQ&feature=plcp&context=C47da909VDvjVQa1PpcFPGOEuvWmODi-JsQgq3XBM7WvzmsU6zrMs%3D). It has been seen over a million times (as of late 2016) and can be said to have been more successful – or at least less controversial.

The video clip supports enlargement with geographical stereotypes: it displays views or scenes typically associated with a member state, naming the likely member state (in English) with a question mark and then replacing the place label with the name of the candidate member state where the clip was filmed. The video is accordingly a succession of sequences – one for each candidate member state in South Eastern Europe (i.e. the Western Balkans and Turkey) – as summarised in Table 3. The selection include candidates close to accession (Croatia), candidates negotiating accession (Turkey), declared candidates (Montenegro) and other potential candidates (such as Bosnia but also Kosovo, although several member states do not recognise its independence). It is worth noting that candidate member state Iceland is not included.



Fig. 5: Snapshot from *Hidden Treasures of Europe* 2012 (February 2012)

The sound track starts with piano music mixed with life sounds (voices, traffic) and crescendo (electronic music) and a return to piano after a little girl running in front of the Greek ruin says hello to the viewer in Albanian (with English subtitle). Then the closing statements appear: a few lines of text popping up in English on a dark blue background with the logo of enlargement (colourful circles representing the member states on a map of Europe):

So similar, so different  
 So European  
 Coming together  
 Ec.europa.eu/enlargement  
 © European Union 2012

All the stereotypes (see Table 3) are positive and they are deployed to convey a positive message about the candidate member states, suggesting they are much more similar to the old ones than is generally acknowledged – but also underlining the differences between them, similar to the differences between the member states. For that purpose it seems that the message needed the chosen member states to be “older” member states, that is member states of EU15, as none of the chosen stereotypes is associated with a new member state (i.e. Poland and the eleven others that joined in 2004 and 2007). Last but not least, the stress on cultural differences also suggests that the candidate states will support union in diversity. An (unintended?) drawback could be that the video suggests that you need to be similar to one of the existing member states to be allowed to join the club, while the absence of Iceland reflects the fact that its candidacy does not need to be explained, justified and defended, at least in cultural terms. To my knowledge no controversy has arisen from these representations (apart from the usual questioning of Turkey’s European credentials in the commentaries).

Description of the visual	Localisation (NB: names in English)	
	Old Member State?	Candidate Member State
Lake	Sweden?	Montenegro
Young women in shopping street	France?	Serbia
Old town with bridge	Italy?	Bosnia Herzegovina
Students’ graduation	United Kingdom?	Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
Anchorwoman in television studio	Spain?	Kosovo

Description of the visual	Localisation (NB: names in English)	
	Old Member State?	Candidate Member State
Central business district with high rise towers and traffic	Germany?	Turkey
Opera hall	Austria?	Croatia*
Greek ruin	Greece?	Albania

Table 3: Siting Europe in the successive visual clips

\*Croatia was then a candidate member state – it joined the Union in 2013.

### 4.3 Final remarks

Stereotypes remain fascinating resources for the communication of the representation of collective identities. The examples presented in this chapter show that they pertain to enduring and reinvented national stereotypes, as well as emerging stereotypes about European integration. The three European examples scrutinised in this paper used stereotypes tongue-in-cheek, but with varying degrees of success. The two video clips made for the European Commission played differently with stereotypes: the first tried to promote a European identity through stereotypes of Europe and other bigger players, but was perceived as a gross prejudice towards Europe's "others". By contrast the second clip used stereotypes of Europeans about each other. The latter seem to have been more acceptable and more effective in highlighting differences and commonalities between them. However the violent reactions that marked the reception of the Entropa exhibition suggest that "to be each other's fool" is not always that easy, even for Europeans.

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