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Constructing identities in some former Yugoslav states: Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia. Moving borders, crossing boundaries: Young people's identities in a time of change (5)

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Abstract

This is the fifth and final paper of a series on the project undertaken as part of a Jean Monnet professorship. Prior papers (Ross, 2010, 2011, 2013; Ross et al, 2012) have reported on the Baltic and Visegrad states, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Iceland and Cyprus. This paper focuses on three states formed out of the former Yugoslavia – Slovenia, a member of the EU since 2004, Croatia joined in 2013, and Macedonia is a candidate country. What discourses do young people use to construct their sense of identity – in relation to both their potential national identity and their potential European identity? Based on 35 focus groups (216 young people), I examine their constructions, drawing on Bruter's (2005) model of 'civic' and 'cultural' axes of identity, Jamieson and Grundy's (2007) descriptions of 'passionate' and 'indifferent' Europeanism, and Fulbrook's (2011) concept of generational change in political socialisation.

Keywords: *identities, construction, Balkans*

This is part of a larger project, about how young people in a wide range of countries conceptualise themselves in the changing socio-political circumstances of Europe, and about whether, and, if so how, they see themselves as different to older generations. In the three countries considered here there have been particular changes and tensions that may have affected young peoples' construction of identities.

The Austrian Chancellor Metternich, who dominated European international diplomacy from 1815 to 1848, reportedly said that 'Asia begins at the Landstrasse,' the road out of Vienna towards the south-east, indicating the marginalisation of all these lands by western Europeans at the time. The Ottoman Empire had included much of former Yugoslavia in the fifteenth Century: as the Ottomans retreated in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the Austrian Empire expanded to include Croatia-Slavonia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Dalmatia. In the mid-nineteenth century nationalist movements - generally linguistic-cultural liberal movements dominated by intellectuals - led to semi-autonomy and then independence from the Ottomans for Serbia, Bosnia and parts of Romania. Few of these changes and border movements respected the mixed checkerboard of languages and ethnicities in the Balkans, and Croats, Macedonians and Serbians have all made irredentist claims for the restoration of large and often overlapping areas that incorporated other groups: I heard young people now still referring to the actions of the *Četnici* (who fought for a Greater Serbia), and the activities of the *Ustaša* (Greater Croatian activists).

Towards the conclusion of the First World War conclusion, Woodrow Wilson set out the principles that were designed *inter alia* to settle the territorial tensions that had helped precipitate the war in his Fourteen Points: autonomy for the peoples of Austria-Hungary (point 10), 'and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality' (point 11). The southern Slavs, hitherto divided in the Austro-Hungarian Empire between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia-Slavonia, Dalmatia, parts of Carinola, Styria and Küstenland and much of southern Hungary were combined, with hitherto independent Montenegro and Serbia, to form Yugoslavia. An independent Albania was created that left a number of ethnic Albanians in the Yugoslav provinces of Montenegro and Kosovo.

By the 1970s Yugoslavia had growing ethnic tensions: the Serbians were the largest group and the Serbian leader Milošević tried to restore Serbian hegemony, which was denounced by Croatian and Slovenian leaders. Ethnic Albanian miners in Kosovo organised a 1989 miners' strike, precipitated by Serbian claims that Kosovo 'belonged' to the Serbs, and Serbia unilaterally absorbed Kosovo. Slovenian and Serbian delegations to the Yugoslav Communist Party Congress in early 1990 argued for autonomy, while Milošević insisted on empowering the larger Serb population. The all-Yugoslav Communist party was dissolved when the Slovenians and Croatians withdrew, each holding multi-party elections later in the year. The Slovenia and Croatia communist parties were voted out, and Slovenia became independent after a ten-day war in July. Croatia had a more protracted struggle with the Serbians and the Yugoslav National Army: ethnic Serbians, long-settled in Croatia, resisted independence and created Serbian autonomous areas within Croatia. EU and German pressure on the Serbs led to a ceasefire in January 1992, but the unrecognised Serbian enclave of Serbian Krajina remained free of Croatian control until 1995. The Serbs accepted the Macedonia declaration of independence in 1991: but when Macedonia described itself as 'the national state of the Macedonian people' it alienated the large ethnic Albanian minority in the country. Sixteen thousand Serbian exiles from the Krajina enclave in Croatia became refugees in Kosovo: Milošević supported them. In 1999 he tried to expel the Albanians from Kosovo: refugees in Macedonia further raised ethnic tensions. In the Kosovan war of independence Albanian nationalists in Macedonia demanded autonomy for the Albanian-populated areas. Insurgency only ended with a NATO ceasefire and the Orhid Agreement of 2001, in which the Macedonian government devolved more political power and recognition to the Albanian people, and the Albanians abandoned their separatist demands and recognised Macedonian institutions. Atanas, an 18 year old Macedonian young man I interviewed in Prilep, was aware of the tensions: he said 'we don't explore new things because… as a Macedonian, the Albanian wants to take my house, the Greek wants to take my name, the Bulgarian doesn't want me to exist, and the Serbian wants me to be a Serbian.'

Young people's identities and the European dimension

I use three frameworks in this analysis. Michael Bruter (2005), analysing the emergence of mass European identity, describes territorial identities as having two component elements, the 'civic' (identification with 'the set of institutions, rights and rules that

preside over the political life of the community' (p. 12)) and the 'cultural' (identification with a certain culture, social similarities, values). The second analytic framework is drawn from Sue Grundy and Lynn Jamieson's (2007) description of how some young people 'come to present themselves as passionate utopian Europeans, while for many being European remains emotionally insignificant and devoid of imagined community or steps towards global citizenship' (p. 663).

The third framework is generational. Mary Fulbrook's (2011) argues that the age at which people experience key historical moments, such as the transitions within German society in 1933, 1945 and 1989, can be a critical explanatory factor behind an individual or group's 'availability for mobilisation' for political expression. Age, she suggests, is 'crucial at times of transition, with respect to the ways in which people can become involved in new regimes and societies' (p. 488).

Do young people identify with the cultural and/or the civic aspects of Europe? Do they use the same components in their identification with their country? This question is of particular significance to the subjects of this study: as the borders of the European Union continue to demonstrate their flexibility, are there (in the minds of these young people) limits to Europe: where does the frontier lie?

Issues of methodology

This study is focussed on how these young peoples' ideas are socially constructed, and because social constructions are created through interaction in a social context, I used focus group discussions as a principal data source. Groups of five to six young people, of about the same age were asked a few very open-ended questions, and then encouraged to discuss these, sometimes with the help of an interpreter[1]. The discussion points were broad and encouraged discussion of how these young people described themselves, without direct reference to national, ethnic or European identities by the researcher; when such references were made by the participants, the latter were encouraged to unpack them as well as to comment on whether their parents and grandparents would attribute similar or different contents and significance to these identities. The discussion also encouraged them to comment on whether they thought all or the majority of the people in the country would think similarly to them; to talk about what contents they ascribed to the terms 'Europe' and 'Europeans'; and what their thoughts were on some countries' membership applications to the EU.

The focus groups took place in Macedonia in March 2012, and in Croatia and Slovenia in October 2012.

[1] Thanks to the following for help in locating schools, translation and comments on drafts: **Croatia**: Branislava Baranovic, Iva Buchberger, Bojana Culum, Karin Doolan, Ivana Jugovic, Iva Koustic, Vesna Jelena and Matic Kovak; **Macedonia**: Aleksandra Arsik, Nedmiran Beqiri, Tajna Jovanoska and Qufli Osmani; **Slovenia**: Marjanca Pergar Kuščer, Cveta Pucko, Andrea Sinjur, Tore Sørensen and Urban Vehovar.

Table 1: Countries in this study

Country	Population (millions, 2011)	European Union status	Locations visited	dates of fieldwork	number of focus groups
Croatia	4.4	EU Member 2013	Rijeka, Zadar, Zagreb	Oct 2012	11
Macedonia	2.1	EU Candidate country 2005	Prilep, Skopje, Tetovo	Mar 2012	11
Slovenia	2.0	EU Member 2004	Koper, Prade, Ljubljana, Novo Mesto	Oct 2012	13

In each location two to four schools with different social mixes were selected, and in each location there were groups of 12-13 year olds and 15 - 16 year olds. Permission was sought from the young. The sample is not representative, but it did enable a diversity of views to be expressed. The focus was on young people whose home is now in the country (so where there are significant minorities or those of migrant origin, some are generally included). Thus in Croatia I was able to interview a group of Roma young people; in Croatia and Slovenia young people from other former Yugoslav states; and groups of Albanians in Macedonia.

Table 2: Ethnicity/Citizenship of populations of study countries, early 21st century

Country and population (000's)		**Majority population %**	**Largest minority %**	**Other minorities % (0.5% and over)**	
Slovenia	1,964	Slovenian 83.1	Serb 2.0	Croat 1.8 Bosniak 1.1	'Muslim' 0.5
Croatia	4,284	Croat 90.4	Serb 4.4	Bosniak 0.7	
Macedonia	2,022	Macedonian 64.2	Albanian 25.2	Turkish 3.9 Roma 2.7	Serb 1.8 Vlach 0.5

***Sources**:* all data is 2011 declared ethnicity data from the National Statistics Agency/Census Office of the respective country, except for
Macedonia: State Statistical Office data for 2002,
Slovenia: Slovenian Statistical Office data for 2002

Perceptions of the nation

As in other countries in this study, the prime focus of national or country sentiment focussed on the cultural. Civic factors were present, but were held in poor esteem: politicians in particular were seen as corrupt. In Croatia, the former Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, was being tried on corruption charges at the time of the interviews, and sentenced the following month - he was 'the worst kind of politician,' said Braslav M (♂14). There are no good people, just the ones who we think will not steal from us.' In Macedonia, Georgios I (♂18) claimed nepotism and corruption were rife: 'friends you know will give you your job …corruption is at the highest level in the country.' There

was a widespread sense in some countries that it was not just politicians and officials, but the electorate at large, who were responsible.

In Croatia, Aleksandra M (♀15) claimed that 'the government has fallen, financially'; while in Slovenia Vita Z (♀12) said 'they say there's no money, but actually they have that money - how can they say that?' In another Slovenian city, Špela K (♀13) spoke with anger that 'rich people are happy that they've got a lot of money - and poor people are angry with them; because the rich people have everything, and they have nothing - poor people are angry with politicians.' Equalities issues were important to many young people, and a source of dissatisfaction with state policies. In Croatia, Adrijana M (♀15) wanted the government 'to be better towards people, to help people without work, our government is not doing anything about that. There are homeless people, and the government is not doing anything!' Her colleague, Aleksandra M (♀15), added 'they are forbidden to sleep in the streets,' and went on to speak more generally about the loss of 'certain rights' in Croatia: 'we have rights - but part of the people don't respect that, and in particular the government. Not just rights … People don't respect things any more, particularly the government, they steal wherever they can.'

There were divisions made between the country's populations. In Croatia, those living on the Mediterranean littoral distinguished themselves from the 'continental' Croatians: Agata N (♀17) talked first of Croats being 'not friendly towards Serbians or Slovenians - we hate Slovenians' but went on - 'in Croatia, but we are separated in a lot of ways - we don't like people from Zagreb, because they are *Purgeri* [long-established city families'. In Zagreb Vidoslav L (♂14) spoke of the Slavonians to the east as poor agriculturalists beset by droughts (there had been a particularly hard drought over the summer before this discussion): Radoš B (♂14) sympathised: '… for them it's more important to love your family than to love your country, because the country is not a concrete thing - it's more abstract than your family.'

The Roma were particularly criticised by the majority populations.

Table 3: Roma population: census data and estimates, numbers and percentages of total population

Country	Census data, 2010-12	Official %age Roma	unofficial data estimates	Unofficial %age Roma
Croatia	16,675	0.39	30,000 to 40,000 [1]	0.70-0.94
Macedonia	53,879 (2002)	2.61	220,000 to 260,000[1]	10.65-12.58
Slovenia	3,246	0.16	6,500 to 10,000[7]	0.32-0.48

Sources

[1] Ivanov, A (2006) *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeastern Europe*, Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS.

[7] Klopčič, V and Polzer.M. (eds) (2003) *Evropa, Slovenija in Romi,* Ljubljana : Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja.

In Slovenia I went to a large elementary school (taking pupils up to 15) on the outskirts of Novo Mesto in the south-east of the country. About 15 per cent of the school's intake was from a large Roma settlement in the school's catchment area. Most of these students were located in the younger grades. I had a focus group with nine Roma young people, aged between 11 and 14, with support from tri-lingual teachers who spoke Vlax, Slovenian and English.

Most said their identity was Roma, though Ela S (♀11) said she was both - 'Romenski, Sloveni. Roma first', and Sara H (♀13) was 'Roma and half Serbian'. They referred to non-Roma Slovenians as either as *civili* (the general population) or as *gađi* (officials): Anže H (♂13) complained that the *civili* 'accuse Roma - if there's stealing, the *civili* say that Roma are stealing.' This was unfair, said Matic V (♂14): 'sometimes [both] Roma and *civili* are stealing, but the *civili* are always saying that Roma are the thieves.' 'Roma … are treated differently to other people - in the shops, in the streets. *civili* always look as though they are avoiding Roma,' added Anže.

Yet they appeared to see themselves as a part of Slovenian society. Matic said 'I am a part of this society, a bit of *civili* society.' I asked how they would like Slovenian society to respond to them.

Anže	That they will speak about Roma in a nicer way.
Ela	They should behave in a good way towards Roma.
Matic	To behave nicer - to talk with us. *Civili* turn away from us whenever the see us. They should accept us when we play. Some of them accept us, some do not.
Eva H (♀14)	Communication, talk … they should talk with us in the same way that they talk to others.

Many of them had modest ambitions for employment in *civili* life.

Matic	I'm going to go on with my education, now I'm ninth grade. I'll go to technical school to do mechanics and electricity.
Anže	I'd like to drive a train.
Eva	I'd like to do cosmetics, be a beautician
Sara	I want to work as a waitress …I could learn to be a cook.
AR	These would mean that you worked much more in *civili* society -
Several	Yes, yes -
Anže	Yes. I would be with *civili.*
Hana	They would not know me as a Roma.
AR	Wouldn't your grandparents say that you are losing your Roma roots?
Several	No.
Anže	They'd say it was a good thing, good for us - to marry Slovenians and become part of Slovenian society.

Even these ambitions were unlikely to be achieved. Only five Roma students had completed this school since 2008, and in the past 20 years only one had managed to remain in a lower secondary school for longer than two months.

As Yugoslavia broke into independent states, there were many internal migrants who found themselves living in a country that was centred on a different national identity to their own. Large numbers of people have been displaced from their country or province of origin by the various wars of independence through the 1990s. In Ljubljana I talked with Slovene-origin 13 and 14 year olds about their perceptions of these groups:

Larisa V (♀14)	… some people who are not born in Slovenia, they're not accepted the same way as someone who's born here. …I think there is [a difference] - I saw some people are a bit rude to people who are from Croatia or somewhere else. I don't think it's right to behave that. ….
AR	Someone who's '*really* Slovenian'?
Larisa V	Some people think that they are more important than others - I know a girl - she trained hip-hop with me - and she was like 'Well, they're from there, they would probably steal some things from me' - she felt that they were dangerous.
Taj V (♂13)	There are kids whose parents are from Bosnia - and they feel that they are from Bosnia too - and they dress like that, Bosnian style.
AR	You can tell people from the way that they dress that they're from Bosnia?
Taj V	Yes, yes - their haircuts, their shoes.
AR	Do you agree with that? You can tell Bosnians by their appearance?
Enej T (♂14)	Sometimes -
Larisa V	- I think [that's] a stereotype,

In Slovenia Gaja (♀12) was critical of 'a lot of people [who say] Slovenia should only be for Slovenians - they don't like people from Croatia'; and Tai H (♂14) claimed that those from Bosnia and Serbia 'don't feel the same as us, because they weren't born here.' Žiga J (♂13) was a Serbian living in Ljubljana, who spoke wistfully of remembering his friends there: 'it's one big part of me - it's different from knowing people in Slovenia.'

In Macedonia I found much higher tensions about 'others': there had been Macedonian--Albanian street fights between young people in Skopje and Tetovo just ten days earlier, following several weeks of arson attacks, murders and violence. The very substantial Albanian minority had been cut off from the rest of Albania since the 1918 frontiers were fixed. Some Macedonians spoke of the Albanian minority as interlopers: for example Lidija S (♀14) said they 'don't really appreciate Macedonia - they are coming to Macedonia just to make more money with their jobs.' Others were tolerant of difference, but still referred to Macedonian Albanians as 'them': for example, Gabriela G (♀17) complained 'they don't see themselves as Macedonian, they see themselves as

Albanian. I don't think that's right - they should see themselves as Macedonians because they were born here and they grew up here.' The Albanians I spoke with similarly saw the Macedonians as others.

There were histories of migration from the 1950s. In Zagreb, Smiljana F (♀15) observed that 'many young people don't see their future here - I think they should try to develop something here.' Similar remarks about the better employment opportunities abroad were made in Macedonia. Aco N (♂14) suggested that 'at least half of the young people want to move out of Macedonia - they think other countries offer more opportunities.' Ekaterina D (♀13) listed the country's problems and concluded 'I don't want to live in this country when I grow up - I want to move to the UK, but I don't know if I will.' But again, those who left were often thought of as retaining their pride in the country: 'they're just as proud of Macedonia as we are, but forced to move,' said Aneta T (♀12). In the same group, Metodija S (♀13) argued that 'we all are proud of Macedonia, but we see better opportunities in other countries - but it's already getting better and there are not so many problems that people would love to stay.' But migration might pose an existential risk - 'if we join the European Union there would be a large number of people who would emigrate, Mateja K (♀18) observed.

Generational shifts

In Rijeka I spoke with young people who were all born between April 1998 and November 2000. They discussed their parents' experiences in the war of independence (1991-5), and I asked if they thought these might make their parents think differently about Croatia.

Petar	Well, I think it does, because they fought for this country and they went through a lot of struggles throughout that period.
AR	Do they feel more Croatian or less Croatian because of those experiences?
Sanja	More Croatian, for sure.
AR	What about your grandparents?
Petar	Actually, my parents and grandparents feel that we all need to be united, and that war shouldn't have happened, and we're all pretty much the same country, have pretty much the same culture, and same language - they feel that it was completely unnecessary for this war to happen.
Sanja	My grandparents were worried about my dad when he was in the war.
AR	Do they talk to you a lot about those times?
Želimir	My grandparents think that the separation was necessary, we needed to be independent from Yugoslavia - it was better for us.
Svjetlana	My grandparents don't agree - they say life was better back in Yugoslavia when it was very different, and when Croatia wasn't independent. They all had a job, they all didn't have to struggle - life was better for them then than it is now.

Petar identified his parents' generation as constituting a different cohort to his generation, and suggested that there has been a period effect (the independence war, that ended between 30 and 60 months before these young people were born) that served to differentiate that cohort from his. In response to my prompt, Sanja described the two cohorts as having different constructions of national (Croatian) identity. Petar then aggregated the older cohort to include grandparents who, in his opinion, share their parents' views, and then Želimir and Svjetlana further dissected different views of the grandparents' generation about the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Period and cohort effects interact: the cohort that includes parents is (generally) old enough to recall the independence war and the communist system, and young enough to reconstruct their identities in the independent post-communist society of Croatia; while the cohort that includes grandparents is (generally) old enough to recall the post-WW2 construction of federal Yugoslavia.

There were sometimes similar sentiments expressed in Croatia, particularly those whose parents had lived in the war zones of the time. Danica H (♀16) said she was 'proud, because my mum and dad are from Vukovar. My whole family is from there.' This city had been the site of particularly intense conflicts and atrocities in 1991. But this was not uniform: in Zagreb Radoš B (♂14) said his grandparents were involved in the independence war, and they therefore 'care more about Croatia - I don't really care too much, because I was not affected by the war.' Their classmate Tuga P (♀15) was more nuanced: 'old people don't appreciate our country, the middle-aged people who fought in the war, they love it so much - and we are still developing our opinions.' In Rijeka Blagica B (♀16) observed that the war had not affected that part of the country:

> in Zadar, where whole families were killed, there are more people who are proud to be Croatians. In Rijeka, we didn't really experience war, and our parents didn't.

In Zadar itself, Adrijana M (♀15) confirmed this: 'my dad is very proud to be Croatian, because he was in the war and defended this country. I haven't met my grandfather because he died in the war.'

Many said that their grandparents felt Yugoslavian rather than Croatian: Biserka K (♀14) said 'my grandparents don't like Croatia now - they liked Croatia when it was Yugoslavia,' and Gojislav P (♂15) that his grandparents thought that 'in Yugoslavia there was more of a sense of solidarity between Croatians than now.' But others such as Mladen D (♂15) said their grandparents were proud 'because they were there when Croatia made its own way to become independence - they could see the progress.' Zorka V (♀16) in Croatia felt that it was 'kind of hard for old people to accept change - my grandparents don't speak English at all, and they really don't understand me at all when it comes to something new. It's hard for them to adapt to the new way of living. They don't ever watch TV or listen to the radio or anything, they're really pretty still [living] in Yugoslavia. In Macedonia, Fatbardh A (♂12, Albanian origin) reported that her parents were in favour of EU membership 'but not my grandparents. Because they are so old, they don't understand these things,' and Earta K (♀13) was the same: 'I think my parents would like to be in the European Union, but my grandparents - no.'

Some young people thought that some of their colleagues should know more about the recent past. Dragica K (♀15) was concerned that he knew 'people of my age who still talk about the *Ustaša* without knowing the crimes that they have committed': this was the Croatian fascist/terrorist group of the 1930s and early 40s that sought to ethnically cleanse 'Greater Croatia' (see chapter four). Others thought there was sometimes too much dwelling on the past. Zdenko Z (♂14) talked of 'many children of my age, older and younger who … feel ill of the Serbs and the *Četnici* [the Serbian equivalent of the *Ustaša*] - I think that has changed now, and that we should come to peace with what happened, and that we should live in the present.'

Being European – and being Balkan

Membership of the European Union was understood by all. In Croatia, where group discussions took place in mid-October 2012 (eight months before accession) there was widespread awareness of the imminence of joining, and some scepticism about the impact. There were also fears that greater emigration would follow: Zvjezdana C (♀14) expected a 'brain drain [of] younger people that don't have a real future - people [will] go to Germany or somewhere like that [because] Croatia can't develop.' In Rijeka, Svjetlana M (♀13) thought open borders might mean 'bad people will come in … like Romanians searching for jobs - and there are no jobs here.'

But others observed there were potential drawbacks, such as this group of 13 year old Croatians: Živko V (♂) said 'We might have to lend money to other countries. We're going into the European Union to get money from other countries.'

In Croatia, where membership was at the time eight months away, Morana B (♀14) thought

> we now have an opportunity - and that's the European Union - we should develop our democracy. Democracy is something I associate with Europe - the whole of Europe and the European Union, because every country does what it wants, but there are influences….

Concern about a loss of independence was also seen in some Croatian responses. Aleksandra M (♀15) said 'we've always been under someone's rule. It's only in the past twenty years that we've had our own state - maybe that's why we're afraid.' In another city, Vjenceslav B (♂16) listed Croatia's former foreign rulers before complaining 'and now again we are losing again our independence and our conscience.'

This particular region was referred to time and again as being different from or not European, but being Balkan. 'Because we are Balkans,' said Ljubomir B (♂16) in Croatia; Zvonimira M (♀15) added: 'people from the Balkans have a different culture and other people notice that'; and then Ljubomir: 'their behaviour is different.' Again, there was a temporal dimension to this: Radovan Z (♂16) said 'Croatia wasn't a Balkan country, but now it is, because new generations are worse and worse,' which he then modified: Croatia 'was Balkan, but now it's even worse Balkan than it was before.'

This alienation was sometimes intense. To become European, said Aiša, 'we have to change everything, the behaviour of people - we don't behave as they do, and we don't see ourselves as European.' In another Zagreb school, Stanislava C (♀15) said 'it ends up like we are on some other continent.' In Macedonia, Georgios I (♂18) argued they were 'not a European country - a change in our mentality will probably make us a true European country… Europeans are people on a higher level in comparison with us.' Gabriela G (♀17) agreed: 'in Europe there are different systems, people are on a different level. Here, life is just so hard that people just have the time to think to survive day after day.' Damjan P (♂15) thought that 'Macedonia isn't there yet - it's not just a few steps - it's kilometres away from the European Union.'

In Croatia, Dragica K (♀15) described Europeans: 'in terms of behaviour, we're more calm and introverted than the others, we're better organised.' Andrija P (♂) saw 'a big difference between political Europe and cultural Europe. I personally feel like a part of cultural Europe, but because of being left out, I don't feel a part of political Europe.' In Slovenia Tine T (♂13) spoke of Europe 'being founded on being connected,' and his colleague Maruša K (♀13) said that 'if we [Europe] weren't connected, there would be more wars [and] disagreements.'

Others suggested anti-Balkan bigotry: in Croatia, Dubravka S (♀15) said others 'think you're primitive, because we're from this part of Europe.'This construction of not being European meant that 'Europe' was either elsewhere, or that there were two Europes. Petar M (♂14) suggested Europe 'should be split into two parts when we talk about who has a stake in the countries.' In Croatia, he continued 'it's really difficult to live and people have hard lives - in the other countries people have better pay, better conditions to live - the culture is pretty different. I would say that we're not exactly as the other Europeans.' Agata N (♀17) said 'we are different, we are Balkan - everything is faster there, than here. We haven't begun to live as fast as they do.' For Mirka R (♀16) in Croatia it was having 'a more eastern influence than a western influence.' Also in Croatia, Dubravka S (♀15) spoke of feeling 'kind of left out' of Europe by western nations, whom she described as 'the more posh countries.' In Macedonia, Idriz L (♂14, ethnic Albanian) felt he was 'not European' because of 'the conflict between Macedonians and Albanians in the past few weeks - we have to stop them if we want to be Europeans.' Many young people described their European status as technical, rather than real, but there were sometimes qualifications to this. In Croatia, Dragica K (♀15) said 'we're more Balkan, more sociable and more temperamental,' and then added 'but new generations - in the way in which they think, are real Europeans.' This sense of not quite yet being European was also seen in Macedonia, where Pranvera M (♀13) commented 'we're trying to be Europeans all the time, but maybe we're not completely').The Balkans were constructed as culturally distinct from Europe. This was seen clearly in Slovenia, on the north-western border of the geographic Balkans: Aneja G (♀17) said 'we are so close to the Balkans, we listen to all their music, and maybe sometimes we just feel closer to those Balkan people, they are not Europeans.' The gradient of nesting balkanisms (Elchinova 2004; Todorova 2009) was evident: in coastal Croatia Petar M (♂14) saw Slovenia as 'more of a European country than the [other] ex-Yugo countries - they are more developed than us … they moved on.' The group went on

Želimir Ž (♂13)	European people always group us in that culture, with Serbia, but we are not like that -
Sanja L (♀11)	But we are friends with other countries, like Germany – not Serbia!
Petar M (♂14)	But our mentality and everything is very similar.
Svjetlana M (♀13)	It not just about the cultures – they are way more developed than us.

In the same town, Blagica B (♀ 16½) said did not feel European 'because we're part of the Balkans. They rank us as Balkans, the other people in Europe, and we have to live with that. …we try to [be] better than other Balkan people …we are more European than you other Balkan people - it's a bad thing to be called Balkan.' The gradient was concisely expressed by Andrija P (♂15) in Zagreb: 'no one wants to be part of the Balkans - for Croatians, the Balkans begin in Bosnia; in Bosnia the Balkans begin in Serbia; and in Serbia they begin in Romania - because of the [prejudices] of the western countries'.In the Croatian town of Zadar, Gojislav P (♂15) explained that 'Slovenians used to be Balkans, but now they've become Europeanised, they've become part of Europe.' His colleague Mladen D (♂15) nuanced this: the Slovenians 'are Balkans, but they are much more European, more European than we are …they behave like Europeans - they are calm, they are polite.' Srebrenko K (♂16) said 'we're all Balkans here - we all just want to argue,' and then modified her position along the gradient: 'our mentality is different from the Serbian - they are more aggressive than us.' In Zagreb, Tuga P (♀15) also argued Croatia was not Balkan: 'there are some effects from other countries - we are middle European, like Austria - even from the Ottoman wars, Turkey - also Hungary - Italy too - so we are a mixture of everything, but we are unique in our own way.'There was similar special arguments advanced in Slovenia to justify not being Balkan. What, I asked, did 'Balkan' mean? Izak replied 'the southern countries - Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania.' When Ožbej said 'half Slovenia is Balkan,' Nikolina replied 'it depends how people are looking - Serbians see us as part of the Balkans', and when she, and others in the group, affirmed again that they were not Balkan, Izak fell back on the geographical definition, and Ožbej pronounced 'we are Balkan, because we are Slav, and have the same roots. … we have more in common with Serbians, Bosnians and Croatians than we have with Austrians.' In another Ljubljana group, Dominik Z (♂17) argued that Slovenia's position would change when Croatia joined the EU: when 'they joined the European Union, it means that the border will move to the south - and we won't be at the border - we will be almost in the middle of the Union.'Europe was thus for some of these young people a problematic construct. It was in some senses a desirable attainment, but as yet not achieved, and at the same time had an exclusiveness that meant that they felt rejected. Europe was thus seen partly as cultural - something that they 'ought' to share, but of which there was some uncertainty, and also to do with something described as 'behaviour', which seemed to encompass activities from financial probity to being conscious not to litter the streets, where it was felt that they fell short. But Europe was seen also as institutional, and here there was a greater sense of focus and of anticipation. Yet Europe, in an emotional sense, remained distant, cut off partly by the attitude of 'other' Europeans to them, partly by their distrust of their own 'mentality'.

Othering Russia, Serbia and Turkey

Across south-east Europe attitudes to potential Russian membership of the EU varied. Serbia historically had strong positive connections with Russia, and the view that Russia was a champion or protector of the Serbs coloured the views of the Slovenians and Croatians against Russian, and the Macedonians (sometime Serbian allies) in favour.

In Croatia there were also divided opinions. The Slav argument was used in favour of ties with Russia: Tuga P (♀15) thought 'they are Slavs and they have a similar mentality to us.' But Zora P (♀ 16) observed that 'in the war Russians helped Serbs, so if they enter the European Union that would lower our opportunities.' Russian economic power was again seen as an attraction: Sanja L (♀11) referred to the size of the country, and said 'I think conditions are good in Russia, better than here'. There was, in many countries, a misconception of the strength of the Russian economy: the per capita GDP of Croatia, for example, was some 10 per cent *higher* than Russia at this time. Generally, more young people were critical of Russian membership. Stjepan V (♂15) observed 'there are literally two people with all the power, and they are just exchanging every four years. Europe is democratic, that's like a dictatorship.' The perceived strength of Russia was a negative factor for some: Morana B (♀14) thought they 'would influence the European Union too much', and Gojislav P (♂15) thought 'they're bigger than almost all of us put together - if they're that big, they can rule us.'

Serbia was not wanted in the European Union for reasons of recent history, rather than of current politics. In Hungary, Alfréd J (♂14) referred to Serbia as 'not a friendly neighbour - they are pretty wild.' Serbia was also in the recent memory of the Croatians. Petar M (♂14) said 'we're more like enemies, right now,' to which Berivoj K (♂14) added 'there's a lot of hate - from our generation, and from older people'. For many Croatians, there was an existentialist fear: Radoš B (♂14) thought that some Croats feared that 'Serbia will boss them around, and will want to make a Greater Serbia,' but he was more sanguine: 'in the European Union they will not be in charge, they will just be the same as us, small fry.' There was some boasting that Croatia was joining the EU, while Serbia was not. 'We are going to be in the European Union and Serbia is not, and for us it's a big deal,' said Agata N (♀17). There were other voices. Andrija P (♂15) said 'it doesn't matter - the war was twenty years ago. Maybe we just have to let it go.' 'Kids from Serbia who are our age didn't have anything to do with the war' said Blaženka M (♀15). The Albanians in Macedonia (where ethnic murders took place in the week of the focus groups) were less forgiving. Dëfrim B (♂13) said 'like Macedonia, we hate Serbia from the bottom of our hearts.'

This was even more explicit with one group of Croats in the coastal city of Rijeka. Initially, they were adamant that they were not European, and had a different culture - 'because we're part of the Balkans,' said Blagica B (♀16). 'They rank us as Balkans, the other people in Europe, and we have to live with that.' Agata N (♀17, Albanian origin) explained 'because of the culture, we are different. We are Balkan, and we are different to other Europeans.' Europe was 'a pretty vast term', said Zorka V (♀16): 'there's western Europe, and there's eastern Europe … we're really kind of divided, unlike say America - there's more different cultures. I don't think you can say there are European

characteristics.' But ten minutes later in the conversation, Turkey provoked a different response from Mojmira F (♀15) and Tvrtko B (♂15):

Mojmira	I think it's a bad thing for them, because they have their special culture, and [are] economically developed, and they don't need Europe to help them with that. I think it will just ruin their culture, their ways.
AR	You all said that there was no such thing as a European culture?
[some laughter, intake of breath]	
Agata	Not as a European culture, but they are different from *Europe*, I would say - they're more with *Asia* and -
Tvrtko	- It's religion -
Agata	- about their religion, I would say their religion formed their culture, and for us it's not something like that, for us religion didn't form our culture, and it's something like that - maybe for Italy - but I would say not for France or Great Britain - it's not about religion. I would say religion came later, it didn't form the culture.
Zorka	I think that religion did shape European culture - just look at all the religious wars that have been going on in Europe.
AR	So there *is* a European culture?
Zorka	OK, I didn't say their wasn't some kind of *link* between European countries - I mean, it could be religion - and I did say maybe, well, not civilised, we can't say that - but religion is a factor.
Agata	There is, I would say, an American culture, but there's not a European culture. But again, when we compare American culture and European culture there's not such a thing as a European culture. But again, as we look at Turkey, with a European culture they don't fit in as -
AR	When you say those statements - 'When we look at Turkish culture' - who does 'we' mean?
Agata	[laughing] Europe!
Zorka	When we talk about Europe and Turkey, we are part of Europe; but when we look at Croatia as just a European country, no, we are not part of Europe. So its group-in-group-in-group.

Dragica K (♀15 Croatian) admitted he had 'a stereotype, but I think they like to fight … the war that we went through with the Turks is part of history, but there is still that feeling, the prejudice that we got from those times.' These Islamophobic responses were linked to concerns about migration. Srebrenko K (♂16 Croatia) claimed 'the Turks are already very deep into Europe - in Germany there are more Turks than there are Germans.'

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