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After Identity: Mentalities, European Asymmetries and the Digital Turn

Joris van Eijnatten

Introduction

'Send it back to where it came from', said an American talk show host during the 2016 election campaign in the United States. In an episode of 'Full Frontal', Samantha Bee referred to what she called Donald Trump's un-American 'brand of right-wing, racist, anti-immigrant demagoguery'. The place of origin she had in mind for this unsavoury ethics was Europe.¹ Whether or not racism was actually part of the American election campaign is not of concern in this chapter. Rather, the focus lies on Samantha Bee's suggestion to send racism back to Europe, a proposition that is part of a long-standing tradition of American anti-Europeanism.² Bee made use of a common trope according to which the good things in the United States are American and the bad ones European. In her argument, 'Europe' functions as a discursive construction that serves to make a statement about America rather than Europe. Whether or not she was convinced that all Europeans are racists is not really relevant. The significant point is that whatever Samantha Bee may have imagined America to be does not necessarily correspond to valid, verifiable truths about Europe. Each culture, each group and each individual creates a mirror image of its 'other', just as Americans create an image of themselves by constructing the Europe they like or dislike. We call such self-reflecting mirror images 'identities'.

The Self and the Other

In theorizing identities, scholars of cultural history commonly employ the well-known concept of the 'Other', popularized in the wake of, among others, cultural studies (Stuart Hall), literary theory (Edward Said), postmodern philosophy (Jacques Derrida), postcolonial theory (Homi Bhabha) and feminist theory (Judith Butler). On a theoretical level, the notion of 'othering', or the conceptual pairing of 'identity' and 'alterity', assumes that a Self constructs its own identity by identifying what it is not in order to identify what it is.³ 'Whatever is being distinguished must be distinguished from something which, in turn, must be distinguished from it. Thus all distinguishing also makes visible that from which something is distinguished.'⁴ Gadamer's logic is compulsive. Making distinctions is a hermeneutical and epistemological precondition for understanding the world. The claim is predicated on several assumptions: that distinctions can be made, that there is an Other, that the Self possesses the ability to recognize it, and that eliminating or changing the Other alters the Self. America is identifiable as America in part because of the presence of Europe; removing Europe from the world-historical equation will, according to the theory, modify America's view of itself. Such tropes are familiar. They stand in a long tradition that includes Said's well-known interpretation of the Orient as what the Occident is not, that is, as the Occident's negative Other.⁵ We instinctively sense the plausibility of these tropes.

Identity, then, is based on discursive distinctions between the Self and the Other, leading to their mutual reification (the Self is never the Other) or to their confluence in multiple, hybrid, fluctuating identities (othered Selves and selved Others exist in all kinds of varieties). In cultural studies, theories of identity have been grounded particularly in the conjecture that identities (especially religious, national and other group identities) are constantly mutable, or so multifarious that they are practically impossible to pin down.⁶ Theoretically speaking, this conjecture is not necessarily false. On the other hand, it is difficult to ascertain its practical value. Why differentiate *ad infinitum*? Most theories of identity have been put forward by academics and intellectuals living in a cosmopolitan comfort zone, by theorists who have had little to lose, in terms of status and security, from affirming the transience and changeability of identities, even while they had much to gain by it in terms of knowledge and inspiration. It is this intellectual elite that, since the 1980s, has developed an extensive array of theories and methods that has fostered

the fragmentation of perspectives on the world. The postmodern preoccupation with diversity has nurtured the recognition of difference and the deconstruction of grand narratives in a period of extreme flux, during which both emancipatory movements and the persistent flows of migrants have brought identity politics to the fore.

In political practice, on both the left and the right, the role of identity politics has now become problematic. One of the basic premises of the multicultural society since the 1990s has been the claim that identities are under continuous construction. But even if it were true that individuals, groups of people or even whole societies derive their self-image from the continuous affirmation of distinctions, and that all distinctions vary, it is doubtful whether they would find much existential surety in doing so. Can and do people actually cope with identities in never-ending flux? Developments in the public sphere in today's world, ranging from the rise of populism to the so-called democratic deficit, seem to cast ample doubt on the cogency underlying this form of emancipatory multiculturalism. The opposite assumption, the idea that identities are fixed, is needless to say at least as problematic. The resurgence of nationalism since the 1990s has been predicated on the questionable supposition that identities are stable, offering emotional security on the basis of misinformation. In both cases, identity politics has reached its limits.

This chapter seeks to argue for a revisionist return to a pre-constructivist conception of identity, or rather for a non-constructivist alternative to identity. The question at stake here is whether we can conceive of Selves (such as Europe or America) not as ephemeral constructions that exist by beholding others, but as relatively self-determined, semi-permanent entities that exist by beholding themselves. Whether the belief in ever-changing, multiple identities is warranted or not is not my concern. There is no going back, even if one should want to, and it is not my intention to argue that we should avoid doing justice to diversity. The question is whether there are other and perhaps better ways of affirming group cohesion than by focusing on identities, since this approach has not proved very useful in dealing with today's problems. From a 'progressive' perspective identities are fleeting and end up being impractical constructions; from a 'traditionalist' one they are static and will be discarded as unlikely givens. Both options are as shallow as they are unworkable. More importantly, putting identity theory into practice amounts to drowning in a morass of subjectivities, since there are as many identities as there are subjects, and any subject can claim any identity. Identity has become a never-ending, highly politicized story.

Three or four decades after the cultural turn, identity has run out of steam. We need an alternative. Suppose, therefore, that we look at cultures from the inside out, rather than the outside in. Imagine that we start out from the Self in relation to *itself*, rather than the Self in relation to an Other. What would such an approach mean for larger territorial entities and for the asymmetries they involve?

Collective mentalities

It is clear that the stable entities and imperturbable structures that once helped us to organize the past, such as nations and civilizations, are no longer credible. We know that even the most robust entity of all, the nation state, is unable to control its own political, social, economic and cultural functions, let alone its destiny. It has become porous: substantial parts of its sovereignty and power have been transferred to supranational organs or non-state actors, ranging from international terrorists to multinational companies, while domestic cultures are influenced to a larger extent than ever by lobbyists, religious leaders and politicians abroad. If only for the sake of realist politics, supranational entities have become the main viable alternative to nation states. The irony is, however, that they are extremely fragile and lead a problematic existence. That is not true in all cases. If we regard the United States in the spirit of Frederick Jackson Turner as a federal conglomeration of nations then it, too, can be counted as a supranational entity.⁷ But 'America' appears still to resonate among the vast majority of its population. Europe hardly echoes as strongly among Europeans as America does among Americans. Yet there is a paradox here that seemingly involves the concept of 'identity'. Most citizens of European countries, insofar as they have internalized the culture of the societies they live in, sense that they are European rather than American or African or Asian. Europe really does exist in the minds of people. The Eurobarometer and other surveys of people's opinions about Europe make that clear.⁸ How can we explain this paradox?

We need not have recourse to the notion of identity to understand why Europeans feel European without being overtly emotionally attached to Europe as a cultural or even political entity. In this respect the idea of a 'collective mentality' may be helpful, a concept developed in the twentieth century by the French *Annales* school of historians.⁹ Following the ideas originally developed by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, the founders of that school, I want to posit the existence of nucleate, more or less durable conceptions of reality that characterize large groups of

people over longer periods of time. These collective mentalities resemble an interior monologue of the public mind; they are akin to streams of public consciousness that can best be examined through the dominant data flows in society. Such flows have a constant impact on people, and in the process give rise to a collective mentality as a set of often unconsciously shared ideas. Historically, three such flows have been particularly prominent, at least in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The first is religion, which involves participatory rites and rituals that guide individuals from the cradle to the grave; the second is teaching, which entails a flow of information from educational institutions primarily to the youth; and the third is the media, which constitute a data stream from semi-independent organizations to the public at large.

To clarify this attempt at theorizing historical mentalities as an alternative to mutual othering, I will tweak two concepts that are relatively well known to humanities scholars. The first concept concerns the idea of thick description. It is usually attributed to the anthropologist Clifford Geertz;¹⁰ by analogy, I will use the term 'thin description'. For Geertz a thick description was a meaningful, heavily contextualized depiction of human behaviour. To achieve this, one needed a hermeneutically schooled observer who was closely involved with the empirical material. Just as an anthropologist monitored a ritual, a historian studied old newspapers. But whereas Geertz viewed a thin description mostly negatively as a dry enumeration of facts, I regard a thin description as a depiction of the primary characteristics and fundamental contours of a cultural pattern – such as a mentality.

A second concept that ties into a revised theory of mentalities is that of the 'imagined community'. In his much-cited book *Imagined Communities* (1983), the anthropologist Benedict Anderson offered an explanation for the emergence of nationalism in the nineteenth century.¹¹ He argued that thanks to the large-scale ascent of printed media in the vernacular (rather than Latin), people no longer needed to know each other, let alone physically meet each other, to share a sense of mutual belonging. According to Anderson, national communities arose in the decades around 1800 as a collective consciousness synchronized in particular by periodical media such as newspapers. Because people read similar things at the same time, they imagined themselves to be part of the same national community.

Anderson's imagined community is easy to compare to a collective mentality. In both cases the multiplication of texts and images serves as the source of a sense of community. While an imagined community is based on synchronic reproduction, a collective mentality is grounded in diachronic

repetition. Whereas the first emerges from ahistorical simultaneity, the second arises from historical iteration. Because people in the past continuously read similar things, they began to be part of the same linguistic, cultural matrix spanning time and space. I call this matrix a mentality; from the point of view of Geertz, such a mentality can be grasped as a thick description. Changes in mentalities occur very slowly; the pace may at times be excruciatingly protracted. That makes mentalities a source of cultural stability, but also one of cultural conservatism. We should therefore be cautious not to 'reify' mentalities, to avoid fixing them in space and time. We could perhaps say that the moral worth of a mentality, and therefore its chances for survival, is determined by the degree to which it is capable of adapting to influences from outside. Healthy and robust mentalities, in other words, are relatively dynamic and subject to gradual change.

This raises the question of how mentalities are related to identities. They are similar in several respects. Both mentalities and identities are embedded in, or derive from, culture, and therefore involve difference. Both evolve over time. At the same time, a mentality is not an identity. As noted above, an identity exists by the grace of the Other. In principle, however, a mentality does not need the Other. A mentality simply is; it is self-sufficient; it is a Self rather than an Other. Yet the fact that mentalities and identities are different things does not mean that there is no relation between them. An important aspect of any robust mentality is the tendency to look beyond itself, not for the sake of 'constructing' its own identity, but to reaffirm itself, or to reaffirm its own understanding of itself. The example mentioned at the beginning of this chapter may suggest that Americans have a distinctive mindset, possibly but not necessarily different from that of Europeans. Part of American identity may lie in the fact that Americans are consciously not European, and in this way their identity is influenced by an Other. But this influence is at best indirect and, *pace* Said, not necessarily very strong. Presumably Americans would still be distinctively American even if Europe were further outside their purview than it already is. On the other hand, a concerted effort in terms of identity politics, if reiterated over time through the dominant media, would be able to influence an existing mentality. Like identities, mentalities change, but they change much less rapidly. If the message that racism is inherently un-American were repeated often enough over a longer period of time, that message could well become part of an American mentality. There is a link, then, between mentalities and identities, but it is in many cases tenuous.

This indirect influence is apparent in the way mentalities – defined as cultural matrices spanning time and space – mutually influence each

other. They can act as each other's 'reference cultures'. Samantha Bee's racist Europe is an example of a culture ('Europe') acting as a reference to another culture ('America'). A reference culture is a cultural model that for decade after decade, if not century after century, has been imitated, adapted or resisted by other cultures. Reference cultures have been defined as 'mental constructs or "cognitive maps" that do not necessarily represent geopolitical realities with the internal hierarchies and recognizable borders that usually accompany them'.¹² They are typically established and negotiated in public discourse over many generations, and thus depend, like mentalities, on iteration. Clearly, a culture will only have the ability to act as a reference culture if it is historically, politically, economically and/or militarily (and in some very rare cases, also morally) powerful. It must be a model that other cultures for some reason look up to. For a culture to be accepted as a reference culture, it must be recognized as part of public discourse, a status which it will only be able to gain if it is iteratively present in the public domain. In this sense, the acknowledgement of a culture as a reference culture can become part and parcel of a mentality. Americans may acknowledge Europe as a negative reference culture (for instance as a 'racist' model) because it has been integrated into their mentality.

To recapitulate the concepts I have discussed thus far: an identity is a temporally and spatially transient construction that depends on an Other (or on Others); a mentality is a semi-permanent cultural matrix spanning time and space; and a reference culture is a cultural model that may become part of the mentality it is referenced by. Reference cultures are to be found on any level of cultural aggregation but their impact is especially striking on the level of national and supranational entities. Nations and super-nations are based on power structures – political, economic, military or otherwise – which differ in size and strength, so that cultural referencing is likely to involve asymmetries. Hence the most evident form of reference culture derives from the power and status of such formidable nations as the United States and China, or supranational entities like the Soviet Union and Europe.

A digital view of Europe

As we saw, both the idea of a collective mentality as an imagined community – a sort of Anderson 2.0 – and the process of asymmetrical cultural referencing that influences a mentality, are based on repetition. Mentalities emerge through repetitive broadcasting. This brings me to the use of computers in historical research. The sometimes bombastic language

used by 'big data' enthusiasts may not be entirely convincing, but no practitioner of the humanities will deny that we live in a digital age and that this world will not be going away any time soon. Actual practice is of course more complicated than pretentious expectations. On the one hand we need to beware of reducing reality to the handling of data by a mere algorithm. Computers are capable of modelling data in extremely sophisticated ways, but at this point in time they cannot in any sense be a replacement for people. On the other hand we cannot help but note that 'big data' is hardly a novelty. Historians have been seeking for patterns in the past since Herodotus, so the call to engage with them is not particularly revolutionary. At the very least, computer-assisted research can serve to look anew for larger patterns (such as mentalities) in larger amounts of data (such as newspaper articles).¹³

I have argued above that mentalities arise from the iteration in public discourse of ideas, points of view, arguments, conceptions, opinions, beliefs, and so on and so forth, that occur and reoccur as part of the dominant data flows in society. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, newspapers comprised a very significant, if not the dominant, data flow in society, thereby influencing mentalities on a national level. In other words, digitized newspapers likely allow us to examine the content and development of those mentalities. In the final instance a computer is not much more than a glorified counting machine, and the one thing a computer is able to cope with is repetition. It would be logical, therefore, to exploit such frequency generators to map mentalities.

I will offer a simple example of the way computers allow us to chart mentalities, based on the periodicity of newspapers. The example concerns a particular conception of Europe as an aspect of the Dutch national mentality: the idea of rivalry as a common European bond. The historical foundation of European power has frequently been attributed to the fact that since at least the medieval period but more obviously since the sixteenth century, the European continent has functioned as a complex of mutually competitive territories. The idea that not just Europe's rise to global economic and military dominance but its very unity and coherence are to be found in the fact that it is so fragmented may sound a little bizarre, yet it has always been a serious point of view for both intellectuals and politicians wrestling with Europe's 'identity'.¹⁴ The cycle of war and peace between Habsburg and Hitler, the economic struggles in Europe's history from the Dutch East India Company to the scramble for Africa, and the cultural variety among the European nation states has often been summarized in the dictum, 'unity in diversity'. The dictum was even chosen as the official rallying cry of the European Union

in 2000, with the intention, obviously, of stressing union over disunion. Be that as it may, we need not look far for a thin description of Europe: the official website of the European Union offers a version of the motto 'united in diversity' in no less than twenty-four languages, ranging from the Dutch *in verscheidenheid verenigd* to the German *in Vielfalt geeint*.

Almost two decades later the motto sounds a little like an admission of weakness. It is doubtful, one suspects, whether diversity can function as the basis of a strong polity. But that is not the point. The metaphor of Europe as a family of troublesome and often dysfunctional relatives has frequently appealed to the European imagination. And despite the cynicism it may prompt, there is something to the motto. Friendly competitiveness as a modern, sublimated version of traditional violence was strongly encouraged in the twentieth century, when the various nations got together under European colours in a joint effort to win palms of honour. Some of the earliest examples stem from the period between the two World Wars. In the Interbellum, for example, a rather innocuous and once popular competition between the most beautiful women of Europe began to be organized: the Miss Europe pageant. Newspapers had a field day. The public loved stories about European girls who, thanks to their election as Miss Europe, were actually invited to America, the high point of all pageants. The press lapped up the scandals about winners who ended penniless and friendless and ultimately committed suicide.¹⁵

The Miss Europe elections were resumed after the Second World War, when they often took place in the former European colonies. In 1952 even Turkey was allowed to supply the loveliest Miss of all. In this respect the Miss Europe Competition resembles the Eurovision Song Contest, which today includes not just Turkey, but also Russia and even Australia. Political and cultural definitions of Europe overlap but they do not coincide: it seems that competitive European culture was more inclusive than the regulated market of coal and steel. It is the sheer extent of this competitive culture across the western edge of Eurasia that makes it constitutive of a twentieth-century thin description. When and how were European competitions covered in Dutch newspapers? How popular were they? Can we assess the impact on the Dutch mentality of the idea of Europe as a unity based on amicable rivalry?

Of the many contests held during the twentieth century, sports competitions stand out in terms of the amount of news coverage they attracted. Newspaper articles frequently mention the word 'Europe' in combination with specific sports, and they do so in a very clear pattern. It is evident from Figure 4.1 that sporting activities did not manifest themselves as a peaceful version of the traditional European melee prior to the Second

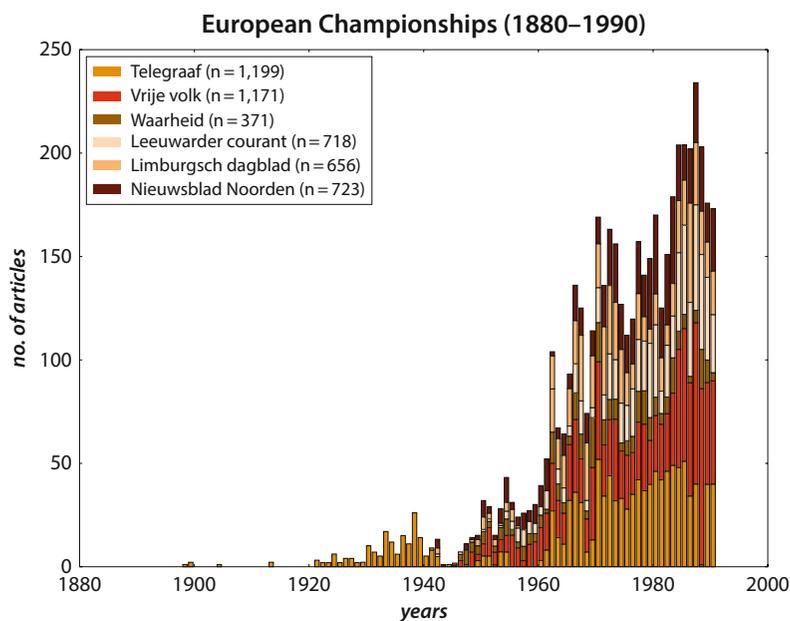


Figure 4.1 Stacked bar chart of absolute occurrences per year for the term ‘Europe(e)s(ch)e kampioenschap(pen)’ in newspaper articles in *De Telegraaf*, *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Waarheid*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Limburgsch Dagblad* and *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (1898–1990). Made in Python Matplotlib.

World War. This histogram represents the absolute number of hits for the term ‘European Championships’ over the twentieth century for six Dutch newspapers. Evidently, Europe became recognizable as a sporting continent only after 1950. The same pattern manifests itself for all articles that mention ‘Europe’ in combination with major or minor sports, whether we look at athletics, billiards, skating or football (see [Figure 4.2](#)).

For Europeans, of course, the prime sporting activity is football, while the key Dutch newspaper is *De Telegraaf*, a popular tabloid-style daily famous for its sports journalism.¹⁶ Interestingly, in light of the European Union’s official motto, newspaper accounts had little to offer in the way of the Europeanness of football competitions. For example, little if nothing was said about a ‘typically European’ football style. In the one single instance (out of some 10 million digitized newspaper pages) that Dutch journalists used the exact phrase ‘typically European’ in relation to football, they quoted a foreigner. The article appeared, rather coincidentally, in *De Telegraaf* at the very end of what for Dutch football fans would prove to be the most memorable year of the century: 1978, the year in

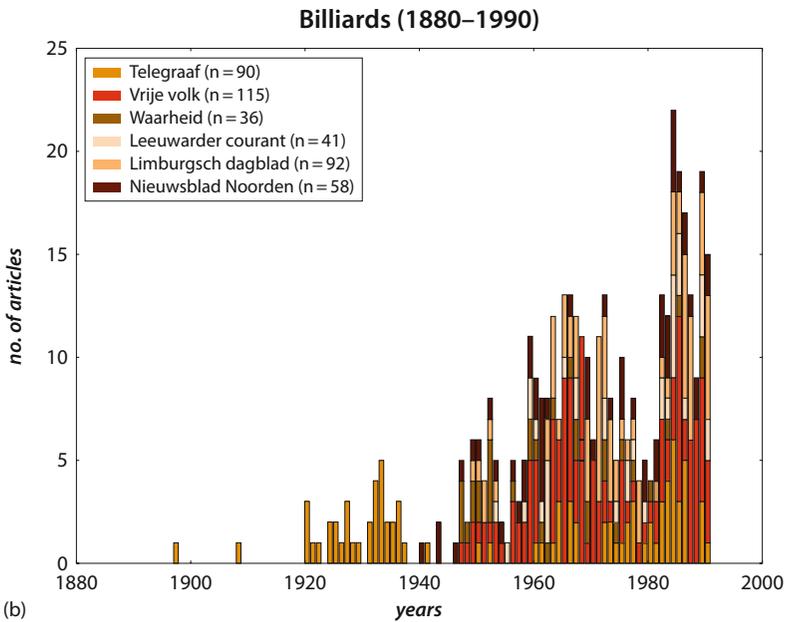
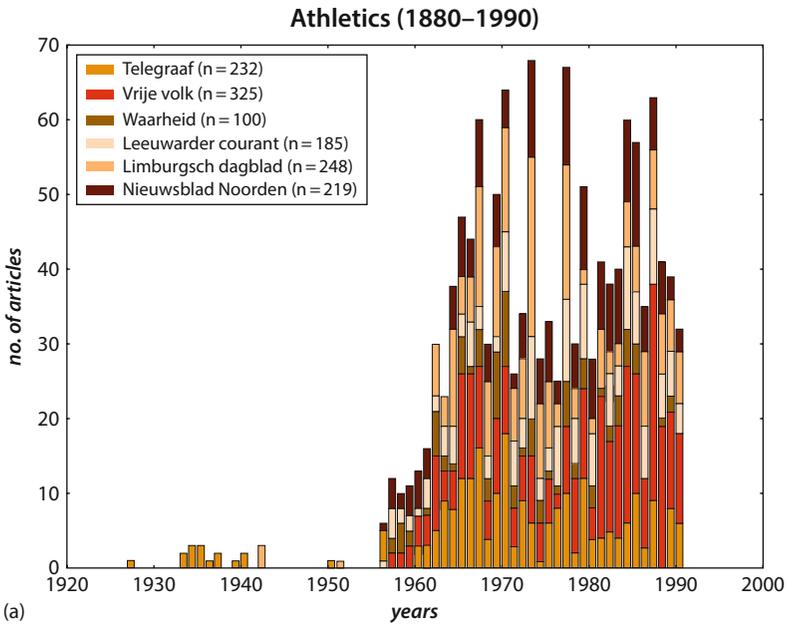
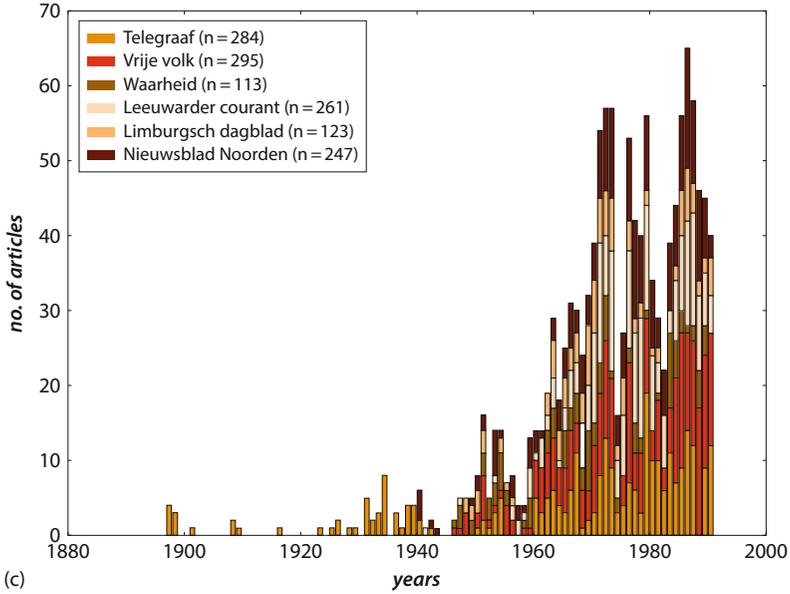


Figure 4.2 (a–d). Stacked bar charts of absolute occurrences per year for ‘Europa’ in combination with ‘atletiek’, ‘biljart’, ‘schaatsen’ and ‘voetbal’ in newspaper articles in *De Telegraaf*, *Het Vrije Volk*, *De Waarheid*, *Leeuwarder Courant*, *Limburgsch Dagblad* and *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* (1898–1990). Made in Python Matplotlib.

Skating (1880–1990)



Football (1880–1990)

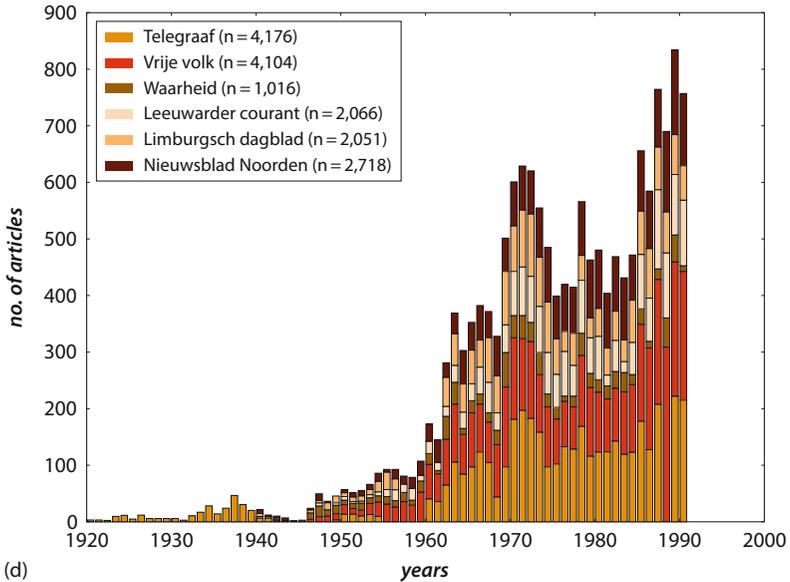


Figure 4.2 (Continued)

which the Netherlands lost the World Cup to Argentina. In an interview, the Argentinian forward Mario Kempes said:

Dutch football deserves a big compliment. The Dutch play typically European football, but by fits and starts they bring a South American 'touch' to their game. That makes them so unpredictable. Football needs to be well organized on your side. Otherwise you'll never get that far.¹⁷

Kempes seems to have meant that playing in a well-organized fashion is typical for European football, but the fact that a South American said so brings us back to the kind of argument made by Samantha Bee in repudiating racism as a non-American habit. It is not certain whether the Dutch recognized the attribution: the Self does not necessarily recognize the things ascribed to it by an Other. Presumably the Dutch felt as little called upon to regard their football style as typically European in 1978 as they are inclined to see racism as part of the European identity today. More important, however, is the fact that the notion of a typically European football style did not resonate among the Dutch themselves.

Clearly, no European frame of reference emerges from the newspapers. The question then arises whether newspapers dealt with post-war competitive Europe in relation to its constitutive nations. We could ask whether (and if so, how) the various European countries mentioned in newspapers functioned as reference cultures for the Dutch. How well did the English, the Italians or the Spanish play football? Were their talents – solid English stamina, defensive Italian *catenaccio* or even the Spanish penchant for making sneaky fouls – appreciated as something the Dutch should follow? As I have argued, whether or not the presence of such 'Others' led to the construction of a 'Dutch identity' is not the interesting point. Such contentions tend to lead to never-ending and therefore meaningless discussions about 'whose identity?' and 'which identity?' The more significant question is whether the mutual bonding of European nations through competitive activities led to a sense of Europeanness in the Dutch collective mentality. Surprisingly, however, newspaper accounts had little to offer in the way of this kind of Europeanness. I have not been able to find any significant iterations over a longer period of time of specific national attributes. Applying the phrase 'typically Italian' to football gives us three hits in the complete, ten million-plus data set. One hit refers to a 'typically Italian dish such as macaroni or spaghetti' (served while watching a football game on television in 1990); a second mentions 'the typically Italian exuberance' of the Italian president, who apparently kissed everyone on board the plane that

was flying him back to Rome after Pisa defeated Ascoli in 1988; only the third condemns the 'typically Italian', unsportsmanlike style of AC Napoli, whose unwilling and uninspiring defensive play 'killed' the match against Ajax Amsterdam in 1970.¹⁸

The lack of cultural references either to Europe or its constitutive nations leaves us with the mere mention of those nations. Were some sporting countries mentioned more often than others, so that they were eventually lodged in the minds of Dutch readers through constant repetition? The relative frequency with which nationalities occurred over time in football news offers an image of the geographical rather than cultural formation of Europe as an aspect of the Dutch twentieth-century mentality. To ascertain this, we need to chart European football games and plot the historical variants of twentieth-century nationalities mentioned in newspaper articles. Was the Icelandic football team on the Dutch radar at all? How popular were the English? Did sports journalists connect Europe to Russians or Turks or even Egyptians, as their colleagues did with respect to the Miss Europe Pageant or the Eurovision Song Contest? What did this mean for Europe as a geographical framework in the Dutch collective mentality?

Directly after the First World War *De Telegraaf* established an image of soccer-playing Europe that would hold its ground until the end of the twentieth century. Despite the inevitable variations in charting European football competitions, one thing is abundantly clear: from the outset a central role was reserved for Germany. Moreover, the image of competitive Europe during the 1920s was no different from the image that emerged during the 1970s. The five years from 1970 to 1974 offer a division of football-playing nationalities that is representative of the whole post-war period (see [Figure 4.3](#)). The Germans are way up in the charts. Next come the English and Scots, the Italians, the French and the Spanish. The remainder includes substantial parts of Eastern Europe, even during the Cold War, especially Poles, Russians and Yugoslavs. However, although Eastern Europe and Scandinavia may have been present, from a statistical perspective they were quite irrelevant, as were Iceland and Greece.

The result of constant repetition in sports news was an image of Europe represented by a Saint Andrew's Cross of nationalities that had its pivot somewhere in the neighbourhood of Luxembourg, connecting Real Madrid and the Hamburger Football Association with SSC Napoli and the Glasgow Rangers. This Saint Andrew's Cross was established in the minds of Dutch readers as a qualitative, geographical frame of reference. As such it was a significant aspect of twentieth-century reality, internalized in a collective mentality over several decades.

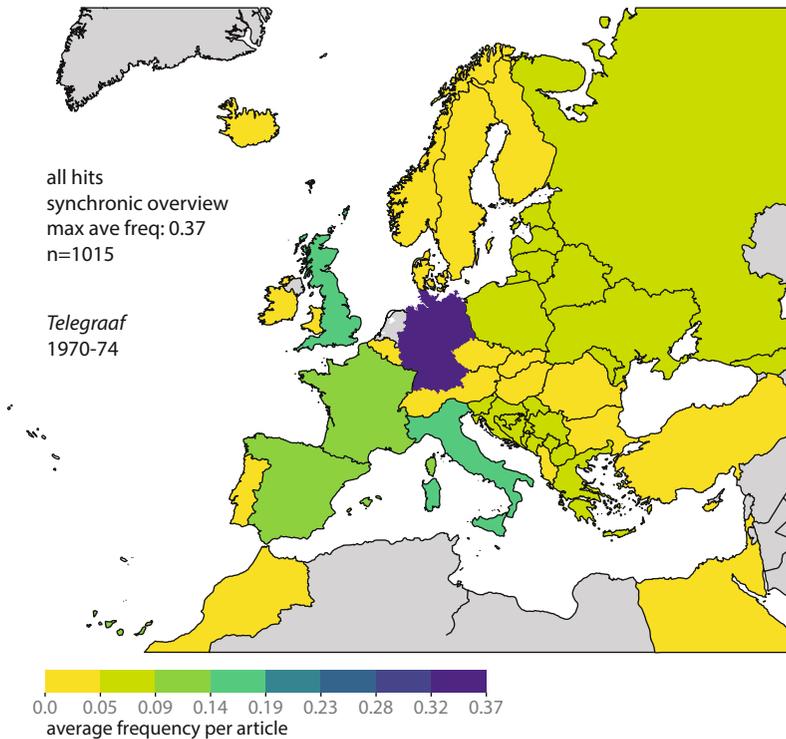


Figure 4.3 Nationalities in football: Map of Europe displaying average relative frequency of articles in *De Telegraaf* (1970–4) mentioning ‘Europe’ in combination with nationalities. Most historical countries like the USSR and Yugoslavia have been reconstructed (although twenty-first-century boundaries show through). Germany has been taken as a whole; the United Kingdom has been broken down into its constituent parts. Frequencies refer to all (rather than unique) hits per article and they are compared across space within the given period (i.e. synchronically rather than diachronically). Made in Python Basemap and Matplotlib.

Conclusion

I have claimed that a Self, such as a national Self, can be examined as a structured entity, a cultural matrix or collective mentality that endures over a longer period of time. Using a digital humanities approach allows for a more objective determination of the content of mentalities by reproducibly counting iterations in the media, thus avoiding the notion of

'identity'. This notion hinges, first, on the selective choice of subjective appraisals made by particular historical actors and, second, on the no less selective choice of theories that tend to privilege fragmentation and temporality over stability and (semi-)permanence. Looking at the Self as a mentality in its own right is a more productive approach to the history of subjectivities than examining the Self as a fleeting construction based on the serial stereotyping of Others.

It is as striking as it is telling that a systematic analysis of tens of thousands of sports articles mentioning both 'Europe' and 'football' does not, in fact, reveal much about Europe. The competitive Europe that manifested itself in twentieth-century Dutch newspapers was very much a thin description, based mostly on the iterative mention of football-playing nationalities. From the point of view of the European theme 'united in diversity', the most significant thing to become part of the twentieth-century Dutch collective mentality was a spatial frame of reference that excluded substantial parts of the European Union as it would become with expansion in 2004. The geographical reach of the continent was quite severely circumscribed; Europe as part of the Dutch mentality turned out to be mostly Western, with a clear accent on the northern part of the continent. At the same time, the conception of Europe showed evident asymmetries: the cartographical status of Germany is a case in point. It is this relatively limited, asymmetrical vision of Europe that was integrated into the collective mentality of the Dutch. Such a mentality is structural; it is, therefore, not malleable or easily pliable, certainly not in the hands of intellectuals and politicians, however well-meaning their intentions are. 'Europe' as part of a tough, robust mentality rather than an identity has more purchase in explanations of recent events, ranging from Grexit to Brexit, than narratives that naively emphasize the enduring nature of a European civilization, or just as naively assume that Europe is a transient, constructed subjectivity that is as easily made as it is unmade.

Notes

1. 'Full Frontal with Samantha Bee' (Season 1, episode 17, broadcast 27 June 2016: 'Oh Shit, Brexit'). See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r5P1z4OWWo> [accessed 4 April 2017].
2. Patrick Chamorel, 'Anti-Europeanism and Euroskepticism in the United States', in Thomas L. Ilgen, ed., *Hard Power, Soft Power and the Future of Transatlantic Relations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, 163–92.
3. For cultural-historical theory, see Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006, 131–55; Anna Green, *Cultural History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Achim Landwehr and Stefanie Stockhorst, *Einführung in die Europäische Kulturgeschichte*. Paderborn: Boehlau, 2004, 193–214.

4. Hans-Georg Gadamer, cited in K. Mueller-Vollmer, ed., *The Hermeneutic Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*. New York: Continuum, 272. See Albrecht Classen, 'European Views of the Other', in Maryanne Cline Horowitz, ed., *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas IV*. New York: Scribner, 2005, 1691–8 (esp. 1692).
5. Valerie Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000; Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007.
6. See David Oswell, *Culture and Society: An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. London: Sage, 2000, especially chapter 5: 'Identity: Between Subject and Object', 102–30.
7. Turner, of course, used the term 'sectionalism': see Frederick J. Turner, *The Significance of the Sections in American History*. New York: Henry Holt, 1932.
8. <http://ec.europa.eu/COMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm>.
9. A. Burguière, *The Annales School: An Intellectual History*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009; Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929–2014*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.
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11. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
12. J. van Eijnatten, 'Beyond Diversity: The Steady State of Reference Cultures', in *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 3 (2015): 1–8. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.18352/hcm.495>.
13. Introductions to digital humanities include Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan and Edward Vanhoutte, eds, *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013; Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens and John Unsworth, eds, *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
14. Anthony Pagden, *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Heikki Mikkeli, *Europe as an Idea and an Identity*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.
15. Joris van Eijnatten, 'The Beauties of a Continent: Historical Images of Europe in Smaller and Bigger Data', in Marjet Derks, Martijn Eickhoff, Remco Ensel and Floris Meens, eds, *What's Left Behind: The Lieux de Mémoire of Europe Beyond Europe*. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2015, 190–8.
16. Mariëtte Wolf, *Het geheim van De Telegraaf: Geschiedenis van een krant*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2009.
17. *De Telegraaf*, 23 December 1978: 'Het Hollands voetbal verdient een groot compliment. Hollanders voetballen typisch Europees, maar ze brengen bij vlagen een Zuidamerikaanse 'touch' in hun spel. Dat maakt ze zo onberekenbaar. Het voetbal bij jullie moet goed georganiseerd zijn. Anders kom je nooit zo ver'.
18. *Nederlands dagblad: gereformeerd gezinsblad* (21 June 1990); *Het vrije volk: democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* (3 December 1988); *De tijd: dagblad voor Nederland* (22 January 1970).