

# Is the EU a Failed Imagined Community?

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## Abstract

After World War II, several European countries united, and formed what eventually became the EU as we know it today, consisting of 28 sovereign nation-states. Its main purpose was to promote peace and solidarity between its members, promoted through a common EU-identity, based on shared values. In this project, it is argued how the EU agenda share certain elements with Benedict Anderson's theory on "imagined Communities", concerning the social construction of nationalism, nations and national identity, but in the case of the EU, these ideas are being constructed on a supranational level. Therefore, to further investigate this claim, a critical analysis of Anderson's theory is provided, which is used to operationalize his criteria on how 'nations' are socially constructed. These operationalized concepts are applied towards secondary data consisting of the 2012 Eurobarometer survey, concerning EU citizens' identity as being either European, national or both. This will help verify whether or not the EU has succeeded in vertically construct a strong shared EU-identity, between its members. A discussion of the current emergence of anti-EU nationalist movements across the EU will also be included, with a focus on the current elections for the European Parliament, where the latest exit-polls have predicted a surge in seats for EU-skeptic parties and candidates. To gain a better understanding of how "nation-ness", as Anderson calls it, is socially constructed; elements of moderate nationalism, collective identity, inclusion/exclusion and the EU's official mission statement are included in the analysis and discussion, with the purpose of defining whether or not the EU can be defined as a nationalistic project. This proves to not be a simple yes or no answer, and from the analysis and discussion, it is concluded that the EU does not entirely fulfill all the 'nation' requirements, but enough so, to conclude that it qualifies as a form of weak supranational nation.

## Table of contents

Abstract .....	2
Is the EU a failed Imagined community? .....	5
1. Introduction: .....	5
1.1. Research question: .....	6
1.1.1. Aim .....	6
2. Outline of the project. ....	7
2.1. Limitations:.....	8
2.2. Delimitations: .....	8
3. Method and empirical data: .....	9
3.1 Epistemology .....	9
3.1.1. Term definition: Nation vs. nation-state.....	10
4. Nationalism. ....	12
4.1. Classical nationalism.....	13
4.1.1. Moderate Nationalism.....	14
5. Benedict Anderson .....	14
5.1. Imagined Communities.....	16
5.1.1. Print-capitalism.....	20
5.1.2 Operationalizing Anderson's "nation" .....	21
6. The EU agenda.....	25
6.1. EU Inclusion and exclusion .....	27
7. National collective Identity.....	28
7.1 EU collective identity .....	32
8. Data survey on National identity and EU identity.....	33
8.1. New nationalist movements in the EU .....	36
8.1.2. EU as a failed supranational nation .....	37
9. Summarizing conclusion.....	41

9.1. Final thoughts .....	43
10. Further perspectives.....	44
11. Bibliography .....	45
11.1. Books .....	45
11.2. Journals .....	46
11.3. Data publications.....	46
11.4. Web .....	47

# Is the EU a failed Imagined community?

## 1. Introduction:

When WWII ended, Europe and its citizens had come out on the other side, extremely bruised by the events, but hopeful of being able to raise Europe from the ashes. One thing was clear, that a strong unifying bond between the European nation-states had to be established, so that they could live in peace and prosperity. This unification would serve to prevent war from breaking out between its members, and hinder history from repeating itself. With the Schuman doctrine, laying out the keystones for what eventually became the EU as it is known today, enemies were turned into allies and neighbors, and a sense of a collective EU identity emerged.

After half a century of successful peace between the EU nation-states and a vast expansion of joining members, this socially constructed institution is challenged, such as the increase of nationalistic anti-EU movements within most EU nations-states, especially those effected the hardest by the financial crisis. This emerging of national affiliations and identities, has brought a sense of national unification to the individual nation-states, which in return has given rise to growing EU-skepticism.

The crisis have fueled the debate about the EU, being based on a "either/or" way of thinking, meaning that it becomes an issue of choosing between the EU and the nation-state. This is an important factor, when analyzing the EU citizens' sense of belonging to a collective EU community and identity. Given the ongoing crisis and nationalistic upraise within the EU nation-states, it is interesting to analyze how the EU collective community has been constructed, and why, as some might argue, it has succeeded in its main purpose, which was that of ensuring peace between its nation-states, but failed when it comes to creating a strong sense of collective EU community and identity, shared by its members.

There has been much research and speculations, to what went wrong within the EU, and some go as far as calling it a failed project, while others argue that it has been a success, and that the EU is a young construction that is still growing and getting stronger, despite its setback from the financial crisis. Times of crisis are known to bring people together in unity, but that has not been the case

for the EU a unified supranational community. It seems as though a hierarchy is being established, between the “fortunate” and “less-fortunate” EU nation-states, primarily based on how hard they have been hit by the financial crisis. Especially within these last mentioned less-fortunate EU nation states, a sense of nationalism and anti-EU skepticisms has been growing and gaining substantial support, and now that the European Parliament Elections are just around the corner, exit polls suggest a strong surge for anti-EU parties and candidates. Because of this ongoing nationalistic wave across the EU, it becomes interesting to analyze how nations, nationalism and national identity are constructed, in terms of analyzing and discussing if the EU could possibly qualify as a supranational nation itself. And if so, what are its strengths and weaknesses?

One of the most recognized theories on nationalism, is Benedict Andersons theory of "Imagined communities", published for the first time in 1983, and again in 1991, revised. Despite the fact that the theory is more than 30-years old, and therefore not created to be applied towards the situation of the EU today, I still find it relevant.

Andersons’ theory can be categorized as modern, but also even post-modern, because the ideas of nations and nationalism are viewed as modern social constructs, and are viewed as direct products of print-capitalism.

### **1.1. Research question:**

*How can Benedict Anderson’s theory of Imagined communities be applied towards the EU, and what does this mean in terms of EU-identity and the EU as a nationalistic project?*

#### **1.1.1. Aim**

To answer the research question, of how Anderson’s theory can be applied towards the EU, I will operationalize his definition of a “nation”, which he describes as an Imagined community.

Furthermore, I will analyze and apply elements of moderate nationalism, and principles of inclusion/exclusion towards the EU, with the purpose of further defining if the EU can be viewed as a nationalistic project, with a supra-nationalistic agenda. To answer the part of the research question, which asks what the EU qualifying as a nation or not “nation”, says about EU-identity, I will incorporate elements of collective identity, and apply parts of Anderson’s theory towards

secondary data from the 2012 Eurobarometer survey, on EU- and national identity. Additionally, the most recent exit polls on the European Parliament election will be incorporated, to provide the most up-to-date data on the nationalistic surge in EU nation-states. Combined, these sets of data serve to provide the most accurate account of the phenomena of interest. My hypothesis for this project follows: *The EU is a supranational nation, with a supra-national agenda, which EU-citizens are unable to identify with.*

## 2. Outline of the project.

I start out with my introduction, followed by my research question, aim and hypothesis. This is the outline of the project, leading up to section 2.1 and 2.2 where I describe my limitations and delimitations, which I use to provide self-reflection, in terms of what I can realistically hope to achieve and cover in this project, as well as where my academic skills fall short. In section 3. I describe the quantitative and qualitative secondary data I will be presenting and using in section. This will lead up to section 3.3, where I present the overall epistemology of the project, which will ensure a consistency in arguments. In 3.1.1 I set out to define two main terms that are used throughout the project, which are that of “nation” and “nation-state”. This again is to ensure an overall consistency and accuracy of my analysis. This term definition will be followed by section 4. which is an introduction to “nationalism”, with two attached sections 4.1 on classical nationalism and 4.1.1 on moderate nationalism. This section will lead up to the presentation of 5. Benedict Anderson, and in 5.1 his theory of imagined communities will be presented, followed by section 5.1.1 where the relation between print capitalism and nationalism is portrayed. In section 5.1.2, Anderson’s concept of a “nation” is operationalized and applied towards the EU, to analyze where the EU qualifies as a nation, and where it falls short.

Section 6. provides an outline of the EU agenda, which is analyzed to what degree the EU can be interpreted as a nationalistic project. In section 6.1 nationalistic ideas behind inclusion and exclusion will be presented and applied towards the EU. This leads up to section 7. on national collective identity and section 7.1 on EU- collective identity, which both builds upon the inclusion and exclusion principle. In 8. the secondary data on National- and EU-identity is presented, and Anderson’s operationalized concept of “nation” is applied to it, as well as the previous concepts

and ideas presented. This naturally leads up to 8.1, on nationalistic movements in the EU, where recent exit polls are introduced. This provides an introduction to 8.1.2, which questions whether or not the EU is a failed nationalistic project. In section 9., a summary is made, and a conclusion to the research question and hypothesis is presented. This is followed by 9.1, where my closing remarks are made, and the project is finished off with section 10. where further perspectives are suggested, in terms of continuing research on this project. Sections 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4, are the bibliography, divided into books, journals, data publications and web

## **2.1. Limitations:**

I am not an EU-, political science or economics student, which means that I have not studied any aspects of the EU or the European financial crisis before. Therefore, I have chosen to primarily focus on the social-cultural aspect and applied towards the EU, such as the construction of collective identity, identity-formation, principles of inclusion and exclusion as well as the emerging nationalism within EU nation-states. This might mean, that I am missing out on other relevant aspects of the EU, resulting in my analysis being somewhat compromised and one sided. However, covering all aspects of the EU, such the treaties and policies that have been invoked, would take up too many pages, and move the focus away from the phenomena of interest, which is whether or not the EU can be interpreted as a nationalistic project, based on Anderson's theory of Imagined communities, and how this translates into a collective EU-identity.

## **2.2. Delimitations:**

Economics play an important role in the ongoing challenges the EU is facing, which has had a strong effect on the Nation-states, but as mentioned in my limitations, this will not be part of the focus of this project. Therefore, I will not be including technical economic aspects or solutions models in this project, but that does not mean that I do not think that they are relevant, and are part of both the problem and the solution to the situation the EU is currently in. Furthermore, I will not discuss in details, the institutional design or changes of the EU, even though I am aware that these aspects also play an important role. Even though I introduce data on nationalistic political parties, I will not go into too much detail with any specific party or country, because the focus of this project is to discuss an ongoing tendency, not analyze particular cases. Another



element which I have intentionally left out is the outside worlds' view of the EU, which could be an interesting angle, but would stray too far away from the focus in the project.

### 3. Method and empirical data:

I will provide critical textual analysis of Benedict Andersons' theory of Imagined communities, which will be used to operationalize certain key concepts and terms. Additionally, I will use secondary quantitative data from the 2012 Eurobarometer, which is a survey conducted in 27 EU Nation-states, with 26.622 subjects of European citizenship. This survey measures the European and national identity affiliation among EU citizens. Furthermore, I will be using qualitative secondary sources, such as books, websites, newspaper articles, exit polls and other relevant publications, to gain insight and understanding of the proclaimed phenomenon, in terms of being able to provide a qualified and verifiable analysis and discussion. However, I do want to mention, that I am unsure of the bias and legitimacy of some of my internet sources, because I have to rely on unfamiliar international news-sites, for the most recent updates and exit polls, on the ongoing European commission elections.

#### 3.1 Epistemology

As a researcher, it is important to be conscious of my own assumptions and subjectivity, and constantly reflect upon these, in terms of my choice of method, methodology and the way I collect and interpret my data. In this sense, one might argue that choice of epistemology can be defined as the way one thinks about thinking. This means that epistemology concerns the systems of ideas that people use to make sense of the world. (Hoffman 1981). "All descriptions are based on theories of how to make descriptions. (...) Every description is based upon, or contains implicitly, a theory of how to describe." (Bateson 1977: 84)

This project is based upon social constructionist epistemology, meaning that knowledge is not what the individual believes, but instead what social groups/communities believe e.g. reality is socially constructed, or "imagined", to use Benedict Anderson's phrase.

Anderson categorizes himself as part of the modernist school, when it comes to theory of nationalism, alongside with Gellner and Hobsbawm (Khazaleh 2011: web). However, his descriptions and definitions of an imagined community, I will argue belongs to a post-modernist epistemology, through its correlation to constructivism and social constructionism. The two terms are interrelated, but have slightly different focuses. The social constructionist view “locates meaning in an understanding of how ideas and attitudes are developed over time within a social, community context” (Dickerson & Zimmerman 1996: 80), whereas the constructivist focus is on how reality and meaning is created by the observer – making it an interaction between ideas and experiences. (The University of Sydney (web)).

As mentioned, both social constructionism and constructivism are rooted in Postmodernism, which does not have one a clear-cut definition, but can be seen as “a stance that one takes toward a theory and a way of looking at theory, rather than a theory itself” (Leary, 1994: 435). Postmodernism can be described as a social move towards numerous realities and ways of interpreting the world around us.

Therefore, postmodernists dispute the belief of a universal and objective knowledge (Lynch, cited in Rapmund, 2000). Knowledge, or what we believe, is instead seen as an expression of the language, values and beliefs of the particular communities and contexts in which we exist. (Van Niekerk 2005:59)

This description is very similar to Anderson’s theory of imagined communities, in the sense that people socially construct these “imagined” communities, bases upon common discourses and beliefs. In return, these communities become real, because they are imagined, and not the other way around (see section on “Imagined communities”). This implies that in postmodernism, not one universal truth exists, but that “truth” in itself is relative. This means that individuals have various socially constructed types of “realities”, which may look very different from culture to culture, throughout history and changing contexts. (Gonzalez et al. 1994 in Van Niekerk 2005:59).

### **3.1.1. Term definition: Nation vs. nation-state**

These two terms are widely used in different academic disciplines, and all have different but similar meanings, which are easily confused. There are several definitions for both, which does not always agree on the specifics criteria, that makes up either one. History has played an important role in how these terms have been shaped and how they are interpreted. Because both terms are widely used in this project, a clarification of what they represent must be provided, to gain a better understanding of what they symbolize. According to the Oxford dictionaries, a nation is “A large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.” (Oxforddictionaries.com: web).

Anthony D. Smith provides a more in-dept socio-cultural definition of a nation as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (Smith 1991: 14). Being primarily a primordialist scholar, Smith focuses on the idea that nationalism builds on pre-existing beliefs and kin-ship, and that nations therefore are “natural” entity, unlike Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm who argue that nations are modern phenomena’s, that have been socially constructed since the Enlightenment period, due to the common discourses. This means that these scholars, with emphasis on Anderson, has a different description of what a “nation” is, than the primordialist and essentialists, and it is this modern idea of a nation that will be scrutinized. Anderson’s definition of a ‘nation’ is part of the main interest of this project, which will be operationalized and applied towards the pheromone of interest: the EU.

Anderson provides several criteria’s for the elements constructing a nation, which will all be covered, but for now, his simplified definition of a nation is “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson 1991: 21). This means that a nation is a socio-political construction, with somewhat changeable boundaries. Furthermore, he writes that a nation-state gives political-expression to the nation, which implies that they are two sides of the same coin, or that a nation-state is a subcategory to nation, meaning that both terms are included under the umbrella term “nation” (ibid: 28).

Anderson's definition of a nation, comes very close to the Merriam-webster dictionary's definition of a "nation-state": "a form of political organization under which a relatively homogeneous people inhabits a sovereign state; *especially* : a state containing one as opposed to several nationalities." (Merriam-webster: web). Therefore, there is not much difference between nation and nation-state, when using Anderson's definition, which has to be kept in mind at all times. He suggests that all communities are imagined (social constructs), no matter the size, but he also implies that not all imagined communities are nations, but rather that all nations are imagined communities.

Later in the project, Ulrich Beck's ideas of political cosmopolitanism will be discussed and applied, and here it is important to keep in mind that his definitions of a nation and a nation-state hold separate meanings. For Beck, a nation-state is similar to the Merriam-webster's definition, but does not include Anderson's idea of a nation as imagined. So Anderson used the terms "nation" to describe what Beck refers to as the nation-state. Beck's idea of a nation state is a politically sovereign country, with its own government, which is globally recognized as such. (Beck 2011: 1347). It is important to be able to differentiate between what a nation entails, and what sets a nation apart from a nation-state or states. This will be relevant further along in the project, when applying these definitions towards the EU, in terms of analyzing if it qualifies as a nation/imagined community.

It is traditional, therefore, to distinguish nations from states — whereas a nation often consists of an ethnic or cultural community, a state is a political entity with a high degree of sovereignty. While many states are nations in some sense, there are many nations which are not fully sovereign states. (Miscevic 2010: web).

Therefore, for clarification and homogeneity throughout the project, 'nation' will be interpreted and used accordingly with Anderson's definition, and 'nation-state' will be used and referred to as being a politically sovereign country.

## 4. Nationalism.

According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the term "nationalism", is mostly used to explain and illustrate two main phenomena's. The first one "is the attitude that the members of a

nation have when they care about their national identity.” (ibid. 2010: web). This aspect of nationalism is concerned with conceptualizing nation and national identity. It commonly relates people to one another through shared: history, birthplace, ethnicity, and culture. Furthermore, it questions the concept “nation”, in terms of what it means to belong to a nation, and what emotional investment people have towards their nation and national identity. Nationalist are often regarded as having a high level of emotional investment I their nation. (ibid. 2010: web).

The second one is “the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination.” (ibid. 2010: web). This idea questions the measures taken, by occupants of a nation, in terms of achieving some kind of political sovereignty, when it comes to national and international issues, and if this requires full statehood or something weaker. (Miscevic 2010: web). Both phenomena’s will be analyzed and discussed throughout the project.

#### **4.1. Classical nationalism**

Even though there are these different focuses within nationalism, most scholars today, tend to agree on the most commonly used classical form of nationalism throughout history; which is the one that highlights complete sovereignty as its main political agenda, and focuses on the nation’s superiority in its claims over other claims to individual loyalty and allegiance. Furthermore, territorial self determination and sovereignty, has most often been viewed as essential in terms of nationhood. (Miscevic 2010: web). However, this classical nationalism is not only occupied with state establishment, but it is also concerned with preservation and strengthening of the state and nation. Therefore, as soon as the state is established, nationalism is able to expand within this territory. The nationalists might encourage an expansion of the state, and at other times promote and support isolating policies. The expansion is often justified by the “need” to combine the entire nation under one state (nation-state), which might serve the nation in terms of new asses through obtaining additional territory. (idid. 2010: web).

*Classical nationalism* is the political program that sees the creation and maintenance of a fully sovereign state owned by a given ethno-national group (“people” or “nation”) as a primary duty of each member of the group. Starting from the assumption that the appropriate (or “natural”) unit of culture is an ethno-nation it

claims that a primary duty of each member is to abide in cultural matters by one's recognizably ethno-national culture. (ibid. 2010: web).

#### 4.1.1. Moderate Nationalism

Moderate nationalism, is the more modern interpretation of classical nationalism, and can be seen as nationalism in the wider sense. This type of nationalism, is less harsh and demanding than the classical form, and can be described as a type of universalizing nationalism, often referred to as "patriotism" (with its negative counterpart being Racism) (see Anderson 1991, chapter 8).

*"Universalizing nationalism* is the political program that claims that *every* ethno-nation should have its state which it should rightfully own, and whose interests it should promote" (Miscevic 2010: web). Moderate nationalism has much in common with the central ideas of communitarians, which stresses the importance of the bond between community and individuals, who share a geographical location or have shared ideas, history or culture. (see Avineri & Avner de-Shalit 1992).

Both "types" of nationalism, the classical form and the moderate one, will be used to analyze and categorize Benedict Anderson's concepts of nationalism, nation and national identity, in terms of being able to place his theory of "Imagined Communities" within one of the categories, or maybe in both, or somewhere in between. Furthermore, these definitions will be applied towards the EU, to see if on what aspects it qualifies as an being a nation(state), but also where it falls short, in regards to being an imagined community, according to Anderson's theory.

## 5. Benedict Anderson

Benedict Anderson was born in Kunming China, in 1936. His father was of Irish and Anglo-Irish descend, and had close relatives who had taken part in Irish nationalist movements. In 1941, the Anderson family moved to California, where Benedict spend his high school years (Lo, Elanie, 2000).

Anderson earned a B.A. in Classics from Cambridge University, England, in 1957. While at Cambridge, he developed an interested in Asian politics, which lead him to write his PhD on

Indonesian, and as part of his research, he travelled to Jakarta, Indonesia in 1961. In 1965 there was a communist coup and massacres in Indonesia, which Anderson published a critical paper about, known as the “Cornell Paper”, which led to him to be banned from Indonesian soil. (Hauge, Euan 2011:16). After his deportation, Anderson stayed some years in Asia, but eventually returned to teaching at the department of Government at Cornell University, until his retirement in 2002. In 1983, Anderson published his most famous work on nationalism, called “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism”, where he presents his theory on nations as “Imagined communities” (Ibid). This is the main theory of interest in this project, and it will be analyzed, discussed and applied towards the phenomenon of interest, which is the EU, in terms of the EU-“nation” and EU-identity.

The first couple of chapters, in Anderson’s book, serve as a historical contextualization and outline of nationalism. He argues that nationalism must not be interpreted as a natural phenomenon, but rather as a collectively construct, shaped by historical circumstances. However, the concept of nationalism is not easily defined and does not have a single agreed upon definition, as Anderson notes in the introduction to his book

Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone analyse. In contrast to the immense influence that nationalism has exerted on the modern world, plausible theory about it is conspicuously meagre. (Anderson, 1991: 19)

Anderson points out the significant role nation, nationality and nationalism has played throughout history, and emphasizes the fact, that very little constructive ideas about these concepts, have been proposed, in terms of gaining a better understanding of how they are constructed and why they come to exist in the first place.

My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. To understand them properly we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have

changed over time, and why, today, they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (ibid: 20).

### 5.1. Imagined Communities

As Anderson writes, there are a variety of ways of understandings and defining concepts of "nation", "nationalism" and "nationality" or as he calls it "nation-ness". However, throughout this project the focus will be on Anderson's own interpretation, and therefore, his theory of "imagined Communities" need to be further defined. It should be mentioned though, that, Anderson's original theory does not consider application of the "modern" Western nations, so this paper serves as an attempt to fill in that void, and thereby expand his theoretical ideas beyond colonial and post-colonial times, with the purpose of re-imagining the EU - "nation". The purpose is to analyze how and if Anderson's concept of an imagined community, can take on different forms, and be relevant in the post-modern world in terms of analyzing the EU as a nationalistic imagined community. In other words, I wish to examine to what degree Anderson's theoretical concept of "imagined communities," can be applied towards different times and places, than its original intend.

Anderson describes the nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. This idea is somewhat inspired by Ernest Gellner who declared that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (ibid: 22). Both theorists agree that a nation is socially constructed, however, Anderson sets himself apart from Gellner's somewhat negative black and white definition, which draws parallels between 'invention' to 'falsity', by not agree with this parallel, and further expanding upon the idea, by describes the nation as being imagined, limited and sovereign, rather than a mere 'fabrication', as Gellner implies. (ibid). Anderson writes "I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (ibid: 21). One critic of this notion, is that because Anderson's definition must have borders of some sort, and be sovereign, something like the Jewish "nation", would not qualify as a nation, according to his definition, because it is missing these two key elements, at least prior to WWII. This again implies that Anderson's definition of a nation comes close to the definition of a nation-state.



He goes on to explain the components, which make up a nation, and writes that it “is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (ibid). This implies that members of a nation often feel a connection to their fellow members, without ever meeting, through the sharing of common history, heritage, interests or goals, a bond which is often communicated through print capitalism. With this definition, Anderson suggests that the concept of a “nation” is socially constructed; meaning that nationalism therefore must come before nation, and not the other way around. This is a key aspect of his theory, and what set him apart from many other scholars, who have written about nationalism.

Anderson defines the nation as an imagined *community*, because,

Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (Anderson 1991: 23).

Again, this highlights that nationalism constructs the nation, but it is not just a one-way street, as I read Anderson. The phenomena’s constantly enhance and mirror each other, and that way reinforces the bond between nation, nationalism and national identity. It might be nationalism that imagines the nation, but it is the imagination of a nation that gives birth to national identity, and having a national identity enhances the feeling of nationalism, and so on. This goes along the line with social constructionism, by collectively construction ways of understanding the world, through means of communication, such as a common language and media. (Leeds-Hurwitz, W. 2009: 892-895) Anderson argues that nations are such strong imaginations, that when they are threatened by war, people sharing national identities, will feel obliged to protect it, which also bring people of the same nationality together as equals, in the common fight for their nation’s survival. (Hauge 2011: 17). This also implies that nationalism and national identity thrives in times of crisis, which the EU is a good example of, given the rise of right-winged nationalist parties

within EU-nation states, since the financial crisis of 2007/08. (This data will be presented and analyzed further along in the project.)

Furthermore, Anderson describes the nation as limited because “even the largest of them . . . has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson 1991: 7). This means that for one nation to exist there must be other nations against which the construction of a self-definition can occur. Therefore, Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed as political units with a restricted geographical and demographic reach, instead of being natural, borderless bodies. (Hauge 2011: 17). Because it is possible to imagine these boundaries between people, Anderson implies, that nationalists recognize that socially constructed divides are present, based upon cultures and ethnicities. This means that nationalists do not imagine nor dream of a unified man-kind under a single, all-inclusive “nationalism.” (Lo, Elanie, 2000). The nation is not open for everyone to join, or even interested in becoming a universal community, unlike certain religions. This is an important differentiation to keep in mind, because it means that the nation is not intended to be universal, as in the “nation of mankind”. The “us and them” is an important part of Anderson’s concept of a nation, nationalism and national identity, despite the fact that he does not write this explicitly in his book.

No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet. (Anderson 1991: 23)

This seems to suggest, that the limitation or exclusion of those who are not members of the imagined community, becomes essential for the existence of the nation, nationalism and national identity.

This idea is interesting when applied towards the EU, and will be further elaborated on later in the project. It becomes a case of us and them, which according to Anderson can evolve into a positive direction towards patriotism, or the negative direction, towards racism (ibid: 187). However, I do not agree that patriotism is the positive side of nationalism, but maybe more a less negative side of nationalism.

Lastly, Anderson portrays the nation as sovereign, because the concept came into existence at a time in history, when Enlightenment and Revolution were disproving the authority of the monarchical and religious order. This meant that “(...) a nation was a new way of conceptualizing state sovereignty and rule. This rule would be limited to a defined population and territory over which the state, in the name of nationality, could exercise power (Hauge 2011: 17). Nations dream of freedom, and the sovereign state is the representation of this freedom. Furthermore, the concept of a nation, matured at a stage of human history, when freedom was not a given and often came as the result of great sacrifice. (Anderson 1991: 23). This means that the sovereign state, therefore, “became a symbol of the freedom from traditional religious structure. It provided the sense of organization needed for an organized society, without having to rely on what had become a fading religious hierarchy.” (Lo, Elanie, 2000). Kings were no longer “master of the people”, but a new mentality of “power to the people” rose, and they started to imagine a nation which belonged to them, and they to it, and not just to the royal elite.

Anderson proposes three main inconsistencies or paradoxes about the idea of a nation, which most theorists of nationalism have often encountered with frustration. 1) Historians see the objective modernity of nations, and therefore interpreted them as new constructs, while nationalists see a subjective antiquity of nations. 2) That a common universal socio-cultural concept of nationality exists, much like the idea that everyone has a gender, meaning that everyone must have and does have one, and the same with nationality; contra the unchanging distinctiveness of nations actual manifestation, implying that, by definition, ‘Danish’ nationality, has its own kind of genus, etc. 3) Nationalism has strong ‘political’ power contra its philosophical incoherence and lacking. (Anderson 1991: 20).

This means, that even though, nationalism is a highly talked about –ism, it does not have any grand theoretical writing or publications about it, like liberalism, Marxism, realism etc. This lacking within nationalism has, according to Anderson, made nationalism an easy target for condescending critics, such as cosmopolitan thinkers. Therefore, he suggests a new way of understanding nationalism, by not treating it as an ideology, as it is often the case, but rather place it in the same group as ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’, instead of with the other –ism’s (ibid: 21).

### 5.1.1. Print-capitalism

Furthermore, while on the religion-track, as prior mentioned, Anderson gives much credit to language and print-capitalism (a term he coined), for the raise of nation-ness in Europe. When the Gutenberg bible was translated from Latin, into German, and later other national languages, as common bond between its readers was constructed, and these important readings did no longer, not explicitly belong to European high-intellectuals - it now belonged to the people.

What the eye is to the lover – that particular, ordinary eye he or she is born with – language – whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue – is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed (Anderson 1991: 199).

According to Anderson, "print-capitalism" which created national discourse, is one the most important factors in the construction of nationalism, national identity and nations. Print media, in the form of books and newspapers, provided a common discourse (language), so that people of different dialects' from all parts of the region, could communicate common interests and ideas. Having a common language enhances the nationalistic-bond of fellowship, between people of the same social-cultural background or ethnicity. "Above all, the very idea of 'nation' is now nestled firmly in virtually all print-languages; and nation-ness is virtually inseparable from political consciousness. (ibid: 173).

Furthermore, Anderson implies, that because of "print capitalism", the first nations in Europe constructed around their "national print-languages. (Ibid: 224-225). To Anderson, nations, nationalism, national identity and nationality are indirect products of media history, because without communication, a community cannot be collectively imagined. In order to enhance the distribution of their books and media, capitalist entrepreneurs printed them in local languages, and as a result, writes and readers were now able to understand one and another, and a shared discourse started to emerge.

It is a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them- as emblems of nation-ness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest...

Much of the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities (ibid: 133).

Related to this notion of language and common discourse, Anderson further emphasizes how books and newspapers embodied and amplified the national standardization for clocks, calendars, and language. Through these national publications, a simultaneous discourse was created between people of certain geographical areas, due to their sudden consciousness of national and international affairs going on. (Hauge 2011: 17). Newspapers “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (Anderson 1991: 36).

When analyzing the idea of how media plays an important role in the construction of “nation-ness”, it is noteworthy how the EU does not have its own source of media, such as a TV-channel or a news paper, which is distributed and promoted in the EU nation-states. We have national papers and news channels, who report about the EU, but the EU is missing a clear channel of communication to its citizens, through where it can construct a common discourse. This element is essential to the construction of nations and nationalism, according to Anderson, and probably even more so on a supranational level, where as in the case of the EU, members are spread out over a vast territory.

### **5.1.2 Operationalizing Anderson’s “nation”**

Anderson does not offer a straight forward operational model, for testing and applying his theory towards a given society of interest. Therefore, when applying his ideas towards the EU, the theory must be slightly modernized and simplified, in terms of making clear definitions of imagined communities, in terms of modern nationalism.

Anderson writes that a nation is an imagined community and provides descriptions of what such entails. Building up to his own definition, he uses historian and political-scientist Hugh Seton-Watson’s definition “All I can say is that a nation exists when a considerable number of people in a community consider themselves a nation or behave accordingly.” (Seton-Watson in Anderson 2007: 23). Anderson adds on to this definition, arguing that a nation is based on the idea that all its

members carry an image in mind, of belonging to this nation or community of “strangers” (Anderson 2007: 22-23). “communities need be distinguished not by whether they are true or fake, but by the manner they have been imagined.” (Anderson 2007: 23). But how can this relate to the EU? Can the EU be considered an imagined community – a nation on its own? To test if the EU lives up to Anderson idea of a nation, his definitions of such must be operationalized and applied towards the European Union.

So then, cut down and to the point, what does a nation look like, according to Anderson?

1. A nation is *imagined*, because members of the community might never know one and another, but holds an image in mind of each other. Members of the community have in mind, the boundaries of the nation, even if such does not exist physically.
2. A nation is *limited*, because it has finite but flexible borders, and beyond these borders, other nations exist.
3. A nation is a *community*, because of a profound horizontal comradeship between its members, which enables them to kill and die for their shared ideas.
4. A nation is *sovereign* because the concept came into existence during the Enlightenment, when the authority of divine order, was shattered. Nations dream of freedom, and the sovereign state is the representation of this freedom.

The 1<sup>st</sup> criteria in the construction of a nation, and arguably the most important one in terms of Andersons theory, mentions how members of a community imagines each other, without ever meeting face to face. This idea is arguably inspired by Plato’s “theory of ideas”, where there is a physical representation in the world, and then there is the idea of this phenomenon, which is often more real to the individual, than the actual physical form, because it is perfect and unchanging. (Vlach 2012 web). The same can be said about Anderson’s (social) constructionist theory, where members of a community, imagine each other and the community’s limits, and that way the nation comes into existence, through their imaginings. The idea of the imagined

community comes before the “actual” nation, meaning that nationalism comes before nation, and not the other way around. (Anderson 1991: 21). This contradicts the essentialist/primordialist idea, which claims that nations are ancient and natural phenomena’s, from which nationalism springs. (eg. Smith).

When this 1<sup>st</sup> criteria is applied towards the EU, it seems to fit, given the fact that most EU citizens will never meet each other, but still keep one another’s existence in mind, which of course is reinforced by the media and educational learning. EU citizens also hold in mind, ideas of the borders of the EU, despite the fact that they are ever expanding. It can be argued, that because of the expansion, and inclusion/integration of new member states, the EU citizens’ images of their fellow members and the EU’s territorial borders are weak, by comparison to their sense of belonging to a specific country, with finite boundaries and a common language, cultural and historical background.

When considering the 2<sup>nd</sup> criteria, and applying the idea of finite but changeable borders to the EU, it seems to fulfill this, due to the set geographical borders of its member states – for now. But as earlier mentioned, these borders are not strongly represented in the mind of EU citizens. Furthermore, we live in a modern world that is ever changing, where both political- and military conflicts are present, an example is the enquiring membership of Turkey, and the ongoing territorial crisis in Ukraine, where borders are being reconstructed and re-imagined, and the idea of finite borders, seems a bit outdated, and surely does not apply perfectly to the EU.

Because of its continuous expansion, in terms of admitting new European nation-states into the community, the EU seems to be missing these final, separating borders, which makes up a nation , making it possible to recognize the out-siders, the ‘Others’. However, Anderson also writes that a nation has ‘finite, if elastic borders’, which opens up for an more open interpretation, where EU fulfills this criteria to a larger extend, given its ‘expandable’ borders. However, I do not believe that Anderson was referring to the inclusion of entirely new states on a regular basis, into an already established nation, when he described its borders as “finite, if elastic”. (Anderson 1991:

7). But for the purpose of modernizing his theory, one could argue that this the EU does fulfill this criteria fully.

This brings me to the 3<sup>rd</sup> criteria, which argues that *a nation consists of a profound horizontal comradeship between its members*. As mentioned above, the EU is constantly expanding its borders into new European territories, which makes it difficult for its members, to imagine a strong horizontal comradeship among themselves, because it is constantly changing, and those who belonged to yesterdays 'Them' are today part of 'Us'. As a result, it is not possible to provide a permanent and definite definition, of where the EU starts or ends. This means that it becomes a difficult task for EU citizens, to imagine themselves as part of a collective EU community and having a strong EU identity. (Toplak, 2014: 3 (web)). An interesting example of this is how Germany was divided into a eastern and western parts after WWII, where the eastern part was extremely poor. The western part was among the first European nation-states, who united and constructed the foundation, for what eventually became the EU. Within the next 30 years, a strong sense of us and them, developed between Eastern and Western Germany, and almost overnight, the two halves were joined together again, and yesterdays "Them", was now part of today's "Us". This also meant that Eastern Germany was now part of the EU as equals, which was hard to accept for some people in Western Europe. It is possible to argue, that this overnight inclusion of yesterdays others, has made it difficult to construct a stable collective EU identity.

Ever so often, the EU admits new nation-states to join the union

And many 'old nations,' once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms within their borders – nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day. The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism,' so long prophesied, is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time. (Anderson 1991:3).

Because of this weak bond of comradeship between EU citizens, it is not likely that many EU citizens feel a strong degree of patriotism towards the EU. This further suggests that most EU citizens would not be willing to risk their lives to protect the EU, to ensure its survival, as they might be willing to, in terms of protecting their given nation-state.



The 4th criteria in Anderson's definition of a nation, is a bit trickier to apply towards the EU, because the EU consists of many nation-states, with separate national sovereign governments. This notion does not seem to fulfill Anderson's last criteria of what a nation is, in terms of a nation being sovereign, because the EU does not have complete rule of power in its nation-states. However, it is true that each EU nation-state has independent authority over its own geographical territory, meaning that the EU cannot claim full sovereignty. However, the EU does claim a sort of democratic sovereignty, where as members of the EU, the nation-states also have to abide by EU laws, which in some cases conflict and overrules national laws. An example of this was the anti-abortion laws of Ireland, which violated several provisions of the EU human rights laws, which caused the EU to demand a change of law in Ireland, which was implemented. This implies that the nation-states are not entirely sovereign, but also have to follow EU regulations and laws. (Calt 2010 web). On the contrary, EU nation-states do have a democratic right to veto EU regulations on certain accounts. One example of this is Denmark voting NO to replacing the national currency with the euro, but still remained part of the EU. This was hard blow for the EU, in terms of constructing a more united EU, with a strong collective EU identity. A common currency would strengthen the discourse between the EU and its nation-states. Therefore, the EU can be said to be a weak or "thin" form of sovereignty.

## 6. The EU agenda

To further analyze how the EU can be interpreted as a nationalistic project, an outline of how this supranational entity has been constructed, must first be provided. Furthermore, this is also relevant when arguing that EU identity has been constructed vertically instead of horizontal, which has had a strong influence on how the EU has been and still are being interpreted by EU-citizens.

The EU started out as a cooperation and establishment of trade-agreement (ECSC) in 1952, between six countries: France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Federal Republic of Germany. This cooperation no longer exists, but it formed the basis for what today is the EU, consisting of 28 nation-states.

The purpose of the cooperation was to pave the way for greater European cohesion by making the countries mutually dependent on each other's coal and steel production, thereby preventing hostilities between them and ensuring durable peace in Europe. (EU-oplysningen (web)).

In 1958 the ECSC was replaced by two new "communities", the EEC and Euratom. The EEC became the central Community, with the purpose of establishing a common market of free movement of merchandise, people and capital. The EEC eventually became the EC (from 'the European Economic Community' to 'the European Communities'). The modification of name reflected a steady extension to include areas like "taxes and excise duties, social policy, employment policy, education, culture, health and consumer protection, research, the environment and development aid." (EU-oplysningen (web)). As the EC developed, it started expanding both by members, but also in focus, by incorporating several social agendas, and not just economic based ones. The EU as we know it today was established in 1993, by the Maastricht treaty, and its new mission statement included areas such as: (cited from: EU-oplysningen (web)).

- To guarantee peace, freedom and security in and around Europe.
- To promote and protect democracy and universal rights in Europe and around the world.
- To strengthen Europe's economy and to promote solidarity around Europe by working in partnership with national, regional and local government.
- To make it easy for Europe's citizens to live and work throughout the Union.
- To promote equality and tolerance of diversity in Europe.
- To promote and facilitate cooperation between Europeans, at the individual, local, regional and national level, and in both the public and private sectors.
- To protect Europe's environment and to combat climate change.
- To help Europe benefit economically and socially from globalization.
- To ensure that Europe's voice is heard in the world.
- To listen to its citizens, be accountable to them, and work for them in a transparent and decentralized way.

Of special interest to this project, are the areas such as the promotion of cooperation, solidarity and equality between EU nation-states, emphasizing the EU's interest in constructing a collective EU identity among its members. One might argue, that if EU citizens had a strong sense of belonging to a collective, elements of solidarity, cooperation and equality would come natural. Another area, which is relevant to this project, is the idea of open borders throughout the EU, making it possible for EU citizens to live and work where they want. This concept, combined with the financial crisis of 07/08, has sparked major EU-skepticism, and generated support to far-right nationalistic parties all over Europe. From this point of view, one might argue that the EU as a supra-nationalist project has failed, due to the splitting, rather than unification of its citizens. This phenomenon will be discussed at a later stage in the project, when the data has been presented.

## **6.1. EU Inclusion and exclusion**

Ideas of "Us" and "Them", are a significant aspect in the construction of nations, nationalism and national identity. Anderson highlights this point, when he argues that members of a nation imagine each other's existence, as well as the nations' borders, beyond where other nations lie. (see section on Imagined communities). Therefore, ideas of exclusion and inclusion will be presented, analyzed and discussed, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of nationalism, and how it relates to the EU, as a potential imagined community, more precisely a supranational "nation".

The collective consciousness portrayed through Anderson's idea of a nation, is shaped both by the shared norms and values within that community, but also by the "otherness" outside its boundaries. This means that a nation, as an imagined community, is constructed through exclusion. This is one of the key aspects of nationalism and national identity, which, if amplified or threatened, can turn into racial, ethnic, gender, political and religious discrimination. Those in the in-group, might feel threatened by the out-group under certain circumstances, which will cause the in-group to react with discrimination, in terms of protecting the collective. This racist reaction is the product of an imagined, symbolic or real "assault" from the perceived dangerous "others". (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 15)

“Based on certain ‘codes of distinctions’ (Giesen 1993; Eisenstadt and Giesen 1995: 74), strategies of inclusion and exclusion are used in order to define a border between inside and outside, in-group and out-group, ‘us’ and ‘them’. “. (ibid: 15). During the 70’s, Henri Tajfel, argued that collective identities, includes both an in-group, as well as an out-group. He claimed that collective identities, that are being established, depend as much upon the establishment and recognition of the out-group as the in-group. (ibid).

The inclusion/exclusion aspect also applies to the EU, where the idea of open borders between EU nation-states (the Schengen agreement of 1995) have been implemented, and at the same time borders to outside nations have been strengthened in combination with harsher visa-requirements (European commission (web)). The EU is a closed community, who does not just allow any nation-state to join. An example is the long pending petition for membership by Turkey. Some of the nationalist based objections against Turkey’s membership of the EU, is based on religious and cultural aspects, implying that “they” are not like “us”, suggesting that EU citizens share certain common values and beliefs, which must be fulfilled to gain membership and acceptance. The EU might not be an agreed upon or official nation, but given the aspect of inclusion and exclusion, it arguably behaves like a (supranational) nation.

## 7. National collective Identity.

In terms of being able to discuss the social construction of EU identity, the concept of (national) collective identity must be analyzed and defined. As with the previous definition of “nation”, defining “identity” has proven a challenge to many scholars, and therefore has a variety of definitions within several fields of study. The idea of identity is especially relevant and interesting to the field of social and cultural studies, because having an identity and identity-formation is believed to be both a ‘psychological imperative’ and a ‘sociological constant’. Furthermore, there seem to be a wide agreement among socio-cultural scholars, that the idea of identity is essential to the existence of an ‘other’. (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 12).

Comparing this idea to Anderson’s theory, one might argue that constructing identity, also means constructing and imagining the existence of other identities, both fellow members of a shared identity-community, as well as the “others”. Anderson argues members of a nation are able to

identify themselves as part of a shared community, and holds an image in mind of the other members, without ever meeting them face to face. (See previous section definition of as nation). This implies that there is a form of collective identity or group identity formation within a nation, which reinforces the bond between the members, and provides them with a sense of solidarity. One might argue, that social identity provides the group with purpose and something to commit to, such as a nation. Here it could be argued, that this commitment to ones nation is amplified when we feel outside threats, and less so during times of peace.

There seem to be two key theoretical ways of explaining collective identity formation in communities, such as nations and nation-states, which are that of primordialism/essentialism, versus constructivism /social constructionism. The prior argues political collective identities are products of the particular cultural 'raw material' of a given society. Whereas, the latter, argues the importance of the actions taken by social and political entrepreneurs, who manipulate and use cultural symbols and images, to activate cultural or ethnic communities into imagining nation-based communities. (ibid: 14). In the case of the EU, symbols could refer to the EU flag, but more importantly the Euro, which has been implemented in most EU nation-states, and acts as a shared cultural symbol, constructing a sense of collective identity between EU-citizens.

Following the constructivist and social constructionist way of thinking, Alberto Melucci notes that

(...) collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientation of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place.  
(Melucci 1995:44).

Melucci argues that there are three main elements present when collective identity is constructed: cognitive definition (such as goals); active relationship between the members and the group; and emotional investments between members. (ibid). This means that a collective identity is not something "natural", (unlike the essentialist and primordialist believes) in terms of national identity, because it requires a form of active participation to establish the bonds to other members of an (imagined) community, such as a nation or nation-state. The idea of a community must be imagined and shared with others, before collective identity is established.

According to the most prominent sociological approach, *collective* identity is equivalent to the 'emotional sub-dimension' of *social* identity which, in turn, is part of the individual's self-concept (Esser 2001: 342. 345). Collective identity in this sense describes one's identification with a group one *feels*, attached to. Consequently, most students on collective identity in general and European collective identity in particular consider any kind of collective identity as *feelings of belonging* to certain human groups (e.g. Díez Medrano and Gutiérrez 2001: 754; Westle 2003a :455; Croucher 2004: 40; Bruter 2005:1) (in Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 13).

According to Anthony D. Smith, the individual identity is made up of numerous identities that we have to cope with on a regular basis. This means that individual identity is mostly situational, meaning that it is able to adjust and adapt to daily changing circumstances. (Smith 1992: 58).

Smith further argues that our national identification has "become the cultural and political norm, transcending other loyalties in scope and power" (Smith 1992: 58). Following this thought, he states that national collective identities have a tendency to be very persistent, concentrated and resilient (Smith 1992: 59). Smith suggests that the identity concept has two components, one with an individual base and the other with a collective base, and the two interact with each other. The first mentioned individual form, concerns the individual's way of identifying with a group or community, which the person regards as important. However, to join into this valued community, the other members of it must first acknowledge the individual's existence and membership, either physically or consciously (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 13).

This is somewhat similar to Anderson's notion that " (...) the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson 1991: 21). This suggests that when socially constructing collective identity, the individual dimension vertically constructs the connection/bond from the individual to the community, as the result of the individual experiencing a sense of belonging through acknowledgment by other members of the community. It is a social construction, and not a natural occurrence; and it is strategically constructed thought elements of inclusion and exclusion by differentiation and commonality.

Furthermore, the imagined community's self-image has the purpose of representing itself externally as a community, which makes it possible for "others" to identify it as a collective. This means that collective identity is defined on both an internal as well as external level. (Schleinger 2000: 1875; Herman and Brewer 2004: 6 in Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 13). Therefore, for members to experience a feeling of solidarity in the community, they not only have to imagine the other members, but they also have to imagine those who are *not* included in the community. This creates a sense of "us" and "them", which in return enhances the feeling of comradeship between the members.

This way of constructing identity formation

(...) presupposes not only the common will of belonging together (...) but also the group members' mutual acceptance as associates of one and the same collective (Geller 1983:7) and, in this special sense, the mutual acknowledgement as *equals* (...). (ibid: 13).

Following the social constructionist thought process, collective identities, can be viewed as social constructions of difference. What makes up such social constructions' varies, but includes elements such as symbols, norms and values, as well as more primal aspects like race and gender. (ibid). "As a result of social constructions, frames of assumed or real characteristics provide distinct patterns of interpretation which, in turn, back up intersubjective perceptions (Hettlage 1999: 245)" (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 14).

Following the social constructivist interpretation of collective identity, another significant question must be answered, in terms of being able to apply the ideas towards the EU, as an imagined community. How do imagined ideas of belonging to a community become emotional connections? – meaning, when does a group of people become a community, seen from Anderson's point of view? According to Citrin & Sides "The specific value of communities results from feelings of mutual commitment between the group members" (ibid). This implies, that because these *feelings of commitment* exists, the sense of belonging becomes associated with a sense of mutual bonding/unity. This further motivates the members to show solidarity towards the group in terms of being willing to put the groups "needs" before one's own "needs", to uphold the sense of unity and "brotherhood", as well as the well-being of the collective. (ibid).

One way of interpreting how emotional ties to an imagined community are established (constructed), is the idea that the way feelings of commitment are shaped and developed, is a direct result of the member's conviction about the importance of the community, whose condition has an valuable impact on the lives on its members. It must be found so valuable, that a specific significance is assign to shared ideas and ideologies. (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 14). This means that an oversized imagined community, such as the EU, only becomes meaningful to its members, if they presume that their own strong values, are shared by all members.

To make a connection to Anderson's notion of a nation, as an imagined community, members of the EU therefore must *acknowledge* that they share common values, to be able to strengthen the collective identity of the EU-nation. One such value, could be that of democratic rights, which is arguably a common norms and values shared by all EU nation-states and most of its citizens. However, most EU citizens has grown up only knowing democratic rule, and therefore take it for granted, because they have never had to fight for their democratic rights. This could be a main reason why there do not seem to be a strong collective EU identity between the EU and its citizens, compared to the power of national collective identities, which has amplified within EU lately. (Data on this will be presented and discussed later in the project.)

## **7.1 EU collective identity**

An EU collective identity is not a "natural" given, but a social construct implemented vertically for most parts, meaning that it is not a horizontal social construction, imagined by its members through shared beliefs, but rather a political installation. This is one of the biggest differences from national collective identity and EU collective identity, which is important to keep in mind. Furthermore, this vertical implementation suggest that there is a disagreement between the EU elite and the EU citizens. This is probably one of the main reasons why the 2012 Eurobarometer (see appendix), shows a low number in EU citizens who feel a strong sense of belonging to a collective EU identity.

'Europe' is still far from its citizens. The people's cognitive and emotional detachment from the EC/EU was hardly a severe problem as long as the so-called



*permissive consensus* (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970) allowed the national and European elites to push the European unification on. (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 6).

However, David Easton argued that it is principally achievable “‘to bind a group together before feelings of mutual identification have emerged’. (Easton 1979:325; Westle 1999:92)” (ibid: 5). For example, the belief in the advantages of joining forces, can also serve to hold a crowd of people together. “Thus, we-feelings come as a *result* rather than a precondition of cooperation.” (ibid). This idea, of cooperation constructing a shared identity, is the strategy which the EU seems to follow, but it has not shown entirely successful yet.

As argued in a previous section of this project, the EU fulfills many of the operationalized “nation” requirements, according to Andersons’ theory on imagined communities. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that a collective EU identity exists politically on a nation-state level, and less so on an individual level, meaning that the majority of EU citizens share and support certain democratic values, but not to the emotional degree, where a strong collective EU identity is socially constructed on the base of this. Having a strong sense of comradeship, is one of the key elements in Anderson’s theory of Imagined communities. Therefore, it is possible to argue, that when referring to a collective identity within the EU, it is mostly a political collective identity that EU citizens and member countries are able to identify with.

## 8. Data survey on National identity and EU identity

As the EU has developed as a supranational governmental structure within Europe, it has proven difficult to measure a collective identity between EU citizens in terms of their “sense of belonging” to a shared EU community, as argued in the previous section. The Eurobarometer 2012 survey, is probably the best documented and largest scale fieldwork on “European identity”, carried out within the past decade. Therefore, relevant parts of this survey will be analyzed and discussed, to gain a better understanding of to what degree (measured in percentages) EU citizens identify with their national identity, EU identity, or both. These numbers, are interesting when attempting to measure how strong the collective EU identity is, and how this effects the idea of the EU as a potential supranational nation. The data collection for this Eurobarometer (European Parliament survey), was executed from June 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> 2012, by TNS Opinion. The survey was conducted

in 27 EU countries, in person, face to face with 26.622 subjects of European citizenship. (Eurobarometer 77.4 2012: 3, web).

It is however important, to keep in mind that the answers vary from EU nation-state to nation-state, and that some countries feel a stronger “sense of belonging” to a collective EU identity, than others. This seems in many cases to correlate in a negative way, with those countries who have been most affected by the financial crisis of 07/08, such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland, England, Italy and Bulgaria. (ibid: 6, web) These countries scored lower in terms of identifying with the EU, and higher on identifying with their national identity. “The sense of only a ‘*national identity*’ is growing in 20 Member States, and felt by the majority in nine.” (ibid: 6, web).

This implies that there was (and still is) an overall degree of disappointment and dissatisfaction within these countries, with the way the EU has dealt with the crisis. However, the numbers used from the survey are the average percentages of EU citizens sense of national- and EU identity, which is important to keep in mind. Additionally, these high percentages on national identity within the above mentioned countries, confirms the previous argument on how times of crisis, and feelings of threat, amplifies national feelings and values, resulting in a strong collective identity between people of a given nationality.

This idea of national collective identity, was confirmed when the subjects were questioned about their EU identity in the survey, and the conclusion was that EU citizens

In terms of the sense of identity felt by those questioned, over a one-year period there has been an increase in the number of Europeans who feel rooted in a ‘*national identity only*’ and a decrease in those who see their identity as both ‘*national and European*’. (Eurobarometer 77.4 2012: 4-5, web).

The numbers show that a sense of national identity is felt by the majority of the subjects, where 44% answered that they have ‘*only a sense of national identity*’, versus 43% who reported that they felt *national and European*’, emphasizing the national identity before the European one, and

only 6% felt *'European and national'*. Lastly, 4% identified themselves as *'only European'* (ibid: 6, web).

Because the survey shows an overall tendency for EU citizens to have strong national identities, and weaker EU identities, it seems to imply that the two identities are competing, and are struggling to coexist.

When the subjects were questioned about what ranked highest among the elements of EU identity, 45% placed *'values of democracy and freedom'* at the top of the list, which is a +8 increase from the last time this survey was conducted in 2008. In second place, with 43% and an increase of +3, the *'single currency, the euro'* came in. This is interesting, when considering that not all EU nation-states have voted YES to replacing their national currency with the euro, Denmark being among these.

EU citizens believe that the *'values of democracy and freedom'* and *'the single currency, the euro'* are its main components, far ahead of all the others. This means that the two main components of EU identity, has switched places, in terms of importance between 2008 – 2012. (Eurobarometer 77.4 2012: 7, web).

This is interesting, given the financial crisis' impact, which might have sparked EU citizens' attention to the euro and its importance in terms of the economic consequences it had on their nation-states, and personal lives. "The euro was supposed to bring the people of Europe together; now it threatens to become a symbol of national egotism on all sides, and even threatens to become symbolic of division" (Martin Schulz – president of the European Parliament).

The fact that attitudes have changed towards these two major components of EU identity, could partly be caused by frustration with the way the EU has handled the financial crisis. This can be viewed in terms of the EU enforcing strict regulations and making demands of the nation states most affected by the crisis, which have needed financial aid from the EU, to get back on their feet. Because these nation-states and their citizens have felt threatened by the crisis, they have experienced a loss of self-governing freedom, amplified by the EU's strict demands and

regulations. Furthermore, because the EU has had to help some nation states financially, a sense of divide between wealthy and poor EU nation states have started to emerge, creating inequality and hierarchy within the EU. Applying Anderson's nation-criteria, members of a nation must experience a sense of equality between them, to be able to imagine their comradeship, and at the moment this is not the case within the EU.

### **8.1. New nationalist movements in the EU**

Because of this inequality between the nation-states, the feeling of belonging to a shared EU identity and EU nation, is diminishing. This could have sparked nationalistic feelings within these nation-states, portrayed by a growing interest in stronger national sovereignty, with less EU interference. One example of this growing trend, is the popular Danish right-winged party "Dansk Folkeparti", whose slogan is ""Mindre EU – mere Danmark", translated into English "Less EU – more Denmark". This nationalistic attitude is evident throughout Europe, with right winged parties gaining foothold within the past 5-6 years, some more successfully than others. One example of this is the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in Greece, which has existed for many years, but only recently gained enough support to join congress. (Margaronis, 2012 (web)). In Ireland, there is the extreme nationalist party Sinn Fein ("we ourselves"), which have been associated with the IRA, and who will use violence, in their quest to obtain a united Ireland. The latest exit poll shows Sinn Fein getting 22% of the Irish votes, going up 6 points. (BelfastTelegraph.co.uk 2014 (web)).

Holland is another example of a nation-state going from being one of the strongest EU supporters, to developing a hostile Euroskeptic attitude from both the far-left and far-right wings. Due to the success of the far-right parties, such as the Dutch Party for Freedom, lead by Geert Wilders, the more main-stream parties are being pulled towards more Euroskepticism. (The Wall Street Journal 2014 (web)).

Mr. Wilders is set to become a pivotal figure in the May 22 elections because of his ambition to build an alliance of anti-EU parties, led by Marine Le Pen's Front National in France and his own Party for Freedom. So far, only a handful of parties in other

countries, including Belgium, Austria and Italy, have signaled willingness to participate in such a coalition. (The Wall Street Journal 2014 (web)).

However, it should be mentioned that one of the last exit polls from May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014, by Ipsos published by broadcaster NOS, predicts Wilders' Party for Freedom, slipping from 17% of the vote five years ago, to 12.2% for the 2014 European Parliament election in Holland. (USnews 2014 (web)). Wilder's own explanations for these dropping numbers, is that the Dutch people have lost interest in the EU, and therefore do not bother to vote. (ibid).

Another interesting case is Britain, where dissatisfaction with the EU has raised to the height of leaving the EU, with an YouGov poll for the Sun, from December 2013 showing that 32% of the population, would vote to stay, versus 45% voting to leave." (BBC news 2014 (web)). In Britain the nationalistic party BNP is gaining many supporters, but most significantly the Eurosceptic party UKIP surged forward on a wave of anti-EU and anti-immigration, "growing faster than any contender to Britain's three mainstream parties since WW2." (Deutsche Welle 2014 (web)). Its leader, Nigel Farage, has one main agenda, which is to get Britain out of the EU, to stop migration to Britain. With the European Parliament election just around the corner, the stakes seem significantly high this year, because for the first time in many EU nation states, far-right, anti-EU parties are likely to pose a real challenge to traditional main-stream parties. (Mauro 2014 (web)).

#### **8.1.2. EU as a failed supranational nation**

The EU is often referred to as a supranational union or institution, given its geographical area, which at the moment, covers 28 nation-states within Europe. In 1951, the founding fathers of what eventually turned into the EU, as it is today, stated that

By the signature of this Treaty, the participating Parties give proof of their determination to create the first supranational institution and that thus they are laying the true foundation of an organised Europe. This Europe remains open to all European countries that have freedom of choice. We profoundly hope that other

countries will join us in our common endeavour. (International Democratic Watch 2012: web).

By operationalizing Anderson's concept of 'nation', I argued that the EU qualifies as a weak supranational nation, implying that it does not fully fulfil all the 'nation' requirements. However, it does fulfil them enough so, to qualify as a modern type of nation, when implementing ideas of moderate nationalism, stressing the importance of the bond between community and individuals (see Avineri & Avner de-Shalit 1992). The Eurobarometer survey showed that EU citizens have a weak sense of EU identity, but it is represented a certain level.

As mentioned prior in this project, moderate nationalism is less harsh and demanding than the classical form, and can be described as a type of universalizing nationalism, often referred to as "patriotism", based on ideas of ethnic nationalism. Following this line of thought, EU citizens can be said to share a common European ethnicity, which could promote a sense of pan-Europeanism among EU citizens. This is the type of pan- or macro nationalism, which can be used to describe the EU, in terms of its inclusion and exclusion agenda, through the attempt of constructing a collective EU identity.

Therefore, when the ideas behind moderate nationalism are applied towards the EU, one might argue that EU citizens share a common European ethnicity and history (since WWII), which can be expressed as a type of EU pan-nationalism. This argument is based upon the founding ideas behind the EU, and its political agenda of creating a united solidarity EU. The following quote is from a transcription of a debate in the European Parliament, on "the Future of EU" from 2012, regarding how the EU was purposely constructed to create a strong unified Europe, and to create a sense of solidarity between its members. The debate stresses that if the EU is to survive, this sense of solidarity feeling must be amplified within all EU nation-states.

This *de facto* solidarity was based on the realisation that if we want to survive – in the truest sense of the word – then we absolutely have to live together and act jointly. The realisation that our interests can no longer be separated from those of

our neighbours, the realisation that alone we are weak, but together we are strong – this realisation created a model that is unique in human history (...) let us not retreat to behind national borders. Let us instead act together with solidarity to improve protection at the external borders of the EU and protection of the common governance of the Schengen Area at EU level (...) (Martin Schulz – president of the European Parliament).

When scrutinizing this statement for nationalistic elements, it is possible to argue that elements of supranational collective identity, socio-political inclusion/exclusion and pan-Europeanism are all present. Schulz emphasizes aspects of supranational collective identity, by arguing how a collective consciousness between the EU nation-states was created, on the background of common interests and goals, which is also one of Anderson's main requirements for the social construction of a nation. Schulz also argues for inclusion by removing the separations between European neighbors and embracing common governance, but at the same time he implies the importance of exclusion, because the countries that do not board up to Europe are not invited to join. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of improving protection at the external borders of the EU. And lastly, he argues that "alone we are weak, but together we are strong", which promotes a sense of pan-Europeanism and even pan-nationalism, by emphasizing the importance and elitarian element of a strong unified EU. This signifies that the EU has many similarities with a nation, and that a degree of EU-nationalism exists, at least within the political elite leading the European Union.

In Anderson's concept of nationalism and what makes up an "imagined community", common values and a shared discourse are essential in terms of being able to socially construct (imagine) a nation and its members. Schulz seems to amplify this aspect of pan-European-identity, when stating that "We want to remind ourselves that we are a community of values. Our values are at the core of our identity. As Europeans, we should embrace our responsibility for the world – and we want to do so." (European Parliament debate) So what are these core values of the EU, to which he is referring? Freedom?, democracy?, Human rights?, equality? (EUROPA.eu: web). These cosmopolitan elements all sound beautiful, and the majority of EU citizens would probably agree

that they share these values with their fellow EU-citizens. However, one might argue that these core values could be fulfilled on a national level, and does not need to be enforced on a supranational level, by the EU. So does that mean that the EU has failed as a supranational nation?

Europe still suffers from misconstruing itself as a nation-state. In public debates, Europe is still mostly conceived of as an 'incomplete nation', an 'incomplete federal state', and in consequence it is treated as if it should (and could) become both nation and state. (Beck & Grande 2007: 69)

As concluded previously in the project, the EU is missing the key elements of complete sovereignty, combined with the weak EU identity experienced among its members, as portrayed by the Eurobarometer survey. This, I will partly argue, is due to the lacking of a common discourse within the EU. Anderson emphasized the impotence of media, when constructing nationalism, nations and national identity. The EU does not have clear communication channel, through where it can construct a horizontal bond between its members. The Euro is an example of the EU attempting to create a common supranational symbol, shared by all members. But given the current situation of nationalistic upraise across Europe, it does not seem to have constructed the degree of solidarity which was expected.

Therefore, if the EU is to become a strong and unified supranational nation, some scholars argue that it must re-invent itself in cosmopolitan terms (Beck 2013: 74). This is to ensure its own survival, now that many of its nation-states seem to be turning against it, and returning to national traditions, ideas and values. "Our argument is that we need not less Europe but more – but we need a different, more cosmopolitan Europe." (Beck & Grande 2007: 70). Beck expresses a discontent with ideas of nationalism and national identities, which he, unlike Anderson, does not believe have a positive side to them, and should not be encouraged within the post-modern world, or the EU. However, it can be argued that Becks 'cosmopolitan' vision for the EU, also has a nationalistic side to it, in terms of making a unified 'supranational EU-nation', as he suggests in other words. Beck further argues that media plays a very important role in the EU survival, and potential to become a strong supranational nation, which correlates to Anderson's emphasis on



print-capitalism in the construction of nations. The media makes people conscious of what is going on, and the decisions that have to be made.

Beck also argues that the EU is afflicted with a nationalist deformity, causing the EU institution to endorse policies that are lacking in every sense. This is because the EU grants too much leverage to the institutional structures of the EU, and systematically promote less than optimal policies because of, what Beck refers to as national egoisms. This factor plays a key role in EU-politics whenever new actions are proposed, which much be agreed upon in accordance with the principle of unanimity. As a result of all this bureaucracy, the EU, and here under the European commission, suffers from what Beck calls a “deformity”, held down by its own parts, in the form of its nation-states. (Beck & Grande, 2007:151, 152).

As prior mentioned, EU citizens share certain key elements used in the construction of nations and national identity, such as democratic values, history and European-ethnicity. Therefore, seen from a pan-European perspective, it becomes possible to argue that the EU is not a “failed” nation, but instead qualifies as a new type of supranational nation, which has just been “born” recently, and therefore must overcome a few “child diseases”, before it can grow up and become strong. “Scholars on European integration widely agree (...) that the European Union is taking roots as a new type of governance.” (Kaina & Karolewski 2009: 7). This is an interesting idea, which only time knows the answer for.

## 9. Summarizing conclusion

In the beginning of this project, I asked *How can Benedict Anderson’s theory of Imagined communities be applied towards the EU, and what does this mean in terms of EU-identity and the EU as a nationalistic project?*

Based on this research question, and before I started my research and analysis, I proposed a hypothesis about what I expected to find: *The EU is a supranational nation, with a supra-national agenda, which EU-citizens are unable to identify with.*

This hypothesis portrayed a strong critical attitude towards the EU, which should be emphasis that I do not have, however I am skeptical of nationalistic agendas, especially when they are not

obvious, but hiding behind a cosmopolitan façade, which, as mentioned, was my primary accusation of the EU. That is why I wanted to take closer look at the EU as a social construction, and analyze whether or not it could qualify as a concealed nationalistic project, promoting implicit nationalistic values. At least this was my initial hypothesis, which I wanted to test on the base of Andersons' theory of imagined communities. To do so, I had to operationalize his definition of a 'nation', to make it into a simplified analytic instrument, which could be applied towards the phenomena of interest.

As the project progressed, I realized that whether the EU qualifies as supranational nation or not, was not a simple yes or no answer, but entailed several elements, which had to be included into the calculation. These elements included, among others, the EU's history of establishment, moderate nationalism, vertical and horizontal implementation, elements of inclusion and exclusion, identity formation, social construction of discourses, pan-europeanism and lastly elements of cosmopolitanism.

The analysis of the secondary data showed that EU citizens do identify with their EU-identity, but less so than with their national identity, which is not a surprise, given that the EU is still a young construction. 44% answered that they have '*only a sense of national identity*', versus 43% who reported that they felt *national and European*'. Therefore, my hypothesizing on EU-citizens not being able to identify with the EU, did not prove entirely true, given that 43% reported that they felt European, but first and foremost national. My assumption was a bit naïve and based my interpretation of the support nationalistic parties are receiving all over Europe, the last couple of years. However, the survey is two years old, and things have escalated since then, especially so close to the European Parliament Elections. So my guess, based upon then recent exit polls, is that the nationalistic feeling has increased, and the EU-solidarity has decreased the past two years.

I also hypothesized that the EU qualifies as a supranational nation, which according to the operationalization of Anderson's definition of a nation, was confirmed on some areas, but not on others. However, the EU did fulfill all the criteria, on some level, depending on how literal Anderson's criteria is interpreted. Especially the elements of sovereignty was questionable, given

that EU-law does overrule some national laws, but that does not mean that it has the last say in all national political matters. Additionally, the idea that a nation has “finite but elastic borders” is a question of interpretation, given that the EU’s borders are so elastic, that they keep stretching and including entirely new nation-states. Which in my interpretation of Anderson’s theory, was not what he implied.

## **9.1. Final thoughts**

The purpose of this project was to provide a different interpretation of the EU, seen from a pan-nationalistic point of view, instead of the often portrayed cosmopolitan one. Additionally, the purpose was to analyze and discuss to what degree the EU fulfills the criteria of being an imagined community, more precisely a nation, and where it falls short. Furthermore, this project has sought to explain the emerging EU-skepticism, within EU nation-states, from a socio-cultural aspect, instead of the often portrayed economic one. The investigation was based upon Anderson’s theory on nationalism, and how nations are social constructs.

The focus of this project has primarily been on the constructive aspects of nationalism, such as providing people with something to commit to, as well as a sense of belonging to a community of equals. One might argue that these aspects are also found within a cosmopolitan agenda, which could be said to be two sides of the same coin. Therefore, when analyzing whether or not the EU qualifies as a supra-national nation, the focus was on how strongly EU citizens feel a “sense of belonging” to a shared EU-community vs. their national community. The data showed that most EU citizens identify stronger with their national identity than with their EU-identity, and during times of hardship nationalistic identities are amplified, which is likely one of the main reasons why so many nationalistic political parties are gaining support all over Europe these recent years. Because EU identity has been socially constructed and implemented vertically, instead of horizontally like national identity, it is unlikely that EU-citizens will ever develop strong EU-identities or a sense of belonging to a community of shared values. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the EU takes on the form of a weak supranational nation.

## 10. Further perspectives

Recently, there has been a lot of talk about “social-dumping” in the media, and in political debates, where national companies hire foreign workers, and pay them less than what a national worker would be paid. Due to the free movement of goods and people in the EU, many people struggling to find jobs in their own countries, seek better opportunities across their borders. This issue is one the most heated ones at the moment, and also an issue which has brought nationalism to a boil, especially in Britain, as mentioned earlier in the project. Assimilation and integration symbolized freedom and prosperity for some, and loss of job and less welfare to go around, for others. This phenomena is very relevant in terms of this project, but was not included, because it opens up to an entire new project on its own, which could have been very interesting to include. However, it has stirred up racist feelings across Europe, and my intention with writing about nationalism, was not go get into any extreme form of it, but simply analyze and apply its key elements, towards the EU. This is why I chose not to include social-dumping in the project.

Another element which could be further extended upon, and which I briefly mention, is Turkey’s request to join the EU, which has been debated for years now. From a nationalistic perspective this is an interesting case, because one of the main arguments against Turkey joining the EU, is that the culture is too different, implying that because it is an Islamic country, it does not have the same values as secular EU. Another argument against Turkey’s membership is that only a few % of its territory is actually part of the European continent. A last argument against Turkey joining the EU, and also the official one, is that it does not follow the international human rights, in terms of. Amongst others: freedom of press. This could have been a really interesting element to analyze in the project, but again, it would take up an entire new project on its own, and therefore I chose not to include it.

A third element which would have been interesting to include in the project, is the financial crisis, which is mentioned, but not covered in details. There is no doubt that the financial impact on EU nation-states is one of the main causes for the emergence of nationalism around Europe. However, including too many elements of the financial crisis, would have required a thorough knowledge about economics, both national and internationally, which I do not have. Also, by

focusing on the financial aspect, the focus would have been moved away from the socio-cultural one, which would have made this an entirely different project.

A last element which could be used, if the project allowed for more pages, is one that is mentioned shortly towards the end of the project, which is the cosmopolitan vision of EU, by Ulrich Beck. His idea of the "Risk Society", could be interesting to apply, given the current financial crisis. Furthermore, Beck describes the EU as experiencing an identity-crisis, which is an interesting argument, and one I strongly considered including to a higher degree, given the project's focus on identity. However, I decided against this, due to keeping a red thread throughout the project, and not incorporating too many new concepts and theories, which would remove the focus from the main research question, which evolved around theory on nationalism and national identity.

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