

## Chapter 13

### Minorities and Migrant identities in contemporary Europe

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This concluding chapter is rather different from those that have gone before. It focuses less on the nature and position of the Alevi communities in Europe, which have been explored in the earlier chapters, and more on the position of the Alevi as minority communities in contemporary Europe countries and the European Union. The European diaspora of the Alevi community offers a particular lens with which to examine how policies construct conceptions of the migrant and the minority, and their citizenship in terms of identity, rights and status (Joppke 2010). The Alevi are in Turkey an indigenous minority, long established and possessing theoretically full rights as Turkish citizens. However, their existence as a community within Turkey represents – for some Turks - a challenge to the hegemony of a Turkish culture in which Turkish, Sunni Islam and Ottoman identities are seen as completely and necessarily interwoven. Outside Turkey, the Alevi community is similarly made invisible or marginalised: they are often subsumed within the category of ‘Turkish’ by the host community, and granted rights and status in the light of their formal Turkish citizenship. Within the European Union there are competing constructions of what citizenship status means, and how it is acquired; emerging constructions of what kind of rights might be available in the European Union; and competing and changing notions of what terms such as integration, multiculturalism, assimilation mean, in particular varying conceptions of the position of indigenous and non-indigenous populations. The situation of the Alevis in these European Union countries thus offers a particularly illuminating canvas on which to examine these ideas.

This chapter will largely be based on policies and practices within the European Union, Commission documentation and national policy documents and accounts of practice, largely about the position of migrant communities. However, it will also draw on – and begin with - my own conversations with Alevi young people.

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I became aware of the particular situation of the Alevis when I was examining the constructions of identity expressed by young people in the countries that were intending to join, or had recently joined, the European Community (Ross 2015). As part of this, I was meeting 12 to 19 year olds in a variety of

countries, and conducting focus groups with them. In a variety of towns and cities in Turkey, I had talked with sophisticated agnostics, patriotic nationalists, neo-ottomans, those who fiercely conflated Islam with the Turkish state, as well as young people who claimed to construct their personal futures in apolitical terms. In the İstanbul suburbs and *gecekondular* districts (squatter areas of unauthorised self-built housing) I met several groups who talked of their sense of alienation from what they saw as mainstream Turkish society<sup>1</sup>. These were largely young people who had not succeeded in formal Turkish education, drawn from the underclasses of İstanbul society, some of whom identified themselves primarily as Alevi, or Kurdish, or both (see Hanoğlu 2016, Chapter 1, this volume, on the divisions between the two).

For example, Hazal, (female, 20, father a carpenter from Gebze, mother deceased) was ambivalent about her identity, reflecting the ‘reinvigorating descriptions’ noted by Çelik (2016, Chapter 3, this volume). She said that while her father called himself working class and Turkish, ‘he’ll also say that he is Alevi, but not every time - he doesn’t always care about it – but when someone asks, he says he’s Alevi .... and I say I’m a child of an Alevi, but I don’t say that I am Alevi. Because I don’t believe in this, so there’s a difference between us. And the points of similarity? We are living in the same house, that’s all. I’m so different from my father. [He] talks about being Alevi, and not about being Kurdish. I think he’s a bit assimilated . My mother was not like that – she said she was Kurdish and Alevi.’

In another group, Sevda (female 20) and Yasin (male 17) (sister and brother, both parents cleaners) discussed these identities with Aslihan (female, 18, father described as ‘ a worker’, mother as a housewife). Aslihan pronounced herself as neither Sunni or Turkish: ‘at school, I’m Kurdish, and I am not Sunni: I’m Alevi. At school they humiliate us because we speak Kurdish, and we are not Sunni. That’s my complaint.’ Yasin then generalised his position in terms of discrimination against Kurds, and derision of Alevism, a reflection of the earlier oppression described by Şentürk (2016, chapter 5, this volume):

Yasin K     If you are Kurdish they say ‘you want be [a member of] another country, so I can not give you a job’. Because of this it’s not possible to say I’m Kurdish. People sometimes make fun of you, when you’re speaking in Kurdish, or they ask ‘so you’re Alevi - don’t you pray, you idiot?’

Aslihan T    In brief, they are humiliating us.

But again, this was partly generational. Yasin and Sevda’s parents migrated to İstanbul before they were born (see Yidrin 2016, chapter 6, and Şentürk 2016 chapter 5, both this volume on these

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to my facilitator and translators Ahmet, Ceren and Gökçen for their help in accessing and understanding these young people.

transitions), and are seen by them as maintaining a sense of difference and oppression that they see rather differently.

Yasin K My father is so strict about this religious subject. He thinks that Sunni people are very oppressing the Alevi people in this country, because we are fewer than the Sunni ... But I think if it would be the same the opposite way round – if there were fewer of them, then we could act the same way as them. But there are many more of them, so they act like this.

Sevda K ... they are not so religious people, but they are so strict about this Alevi and Sunni issue, for example, when I mention one of my friends the first thing they ask is ‘Is she Alevi or Sunni?’ It’s the first question, and much more important than ‘what’s her name?’, or ‘what kind of a person is she?’ If I say my friend is Alevi, then they say ‘OK, that’s good, there can’t be any harm for you from Alevi people’, but if I say Sunni, they say ‘beware of Sunni people, keep your distance’.

Yasin K When we moved to new flat [they] talked to each other about who might be Alevi in the building, ‘maybe people from upstairs’ and so on.

Aslihan T Actually, I think this conflict is because of the Sunni people, they are creating this difference. I believe it is the Sunni people who provoke us. For example, we have a market, and we hire both Alevi and Sunni people. If we made this difference between Alevi and Sunni people, we wouldn’t hire Sunni people. Don’t we have any men among ourselves to hire?

And in a third part of the city, this discourse of family history, social change and generational shifts and the subsequent complexity of describing their identity was taken up by two other Alevi young men, Vasif (17) and İsmail (20), whose fathers were a labourer and a construction worker.

Vasif G Should I say I am Turk, Kurdish, or should I say I am Alevi, or should I say I am this or that? I think it’s not true to say about myself that I am only one thing. And about my differences? ... I don’t believe that I need to describe myself with only one thing - I can describe myself as someone who is only seventeen, and trying to be something in this world.

İsmail G I describe myself with more than one identity. First of all, I am ‘a worker’ and ‘a revolutionist’, and then I am ‘Alevi’ and ‘Dersimli’<sup>2</sup>. I describe myself as an Alevi because of the troubles my family members had in the past. My family had to migrate two times in the 1930s and the 1960s. They came to İstanbul in the 60s, and in the 90s, after the Gazi civil commotion. I was told by my family that maybe I need to hide my

identity and not to say it, because the police can just take you to prison, or there can be other trouble - I felt under the boots of people. Now I'm taking these identities of mine [and putting them] in front of everything, although I don't have any religious faith or point of view. But because I feel myself repressed, that's why I'm saying I'm from Dersim. And also, I have some anger inside me about the system, so that's why I'm calling myself a revolutionist.

This seems very similar to the emerging 'new collective identity' described by Yıldırım (2016, chapter 6, this volume) as a transition from Alevilik to 'an appropriation of universalist socialist ideology'.

İsmail G continued:

My parents would describe themselves differently. They came to İstanbul in the 60s and they have nothing about being Kurdish, because they have been already assimilated. But they accept what happened to them in Dersim<sup>2</sup>. And even the elders can say the same. And now they are staying in some position which is more Kemalist and voting left wing and reading these kinds of newspaper. I was also like this ... but my opinion changed. So my grandfather in the 60s had relationships with people who were working for revolution – he is not one of them, but he has relationships, they're his friends – so that's why my name<sup>3</sup> and my cousins' and my brothers' names are [names of revolutionaries who were state executed] - but my parents are not about being Kurdish, but they say that they show their Alevi minority more, the top of the list.

Vasif G challenged this, arguing that the principal discrimination was against the Kurds, rather than the Alevi.. İsmail G retorted:

I don't agree. Maybe it seems that there's nothing against the Alevi people because we have started to be assimilated. There is something still – for example, there is a *cem evi* here, and they have started to change the language towards believers – I think they are trying to put being traditional and being Alevi together - and I think this is not the language of the *cem evi*, this is the language of the state, they are trying to be the puppet of the state.

Vasif G I was talking about not just the past ten years, but more than this. Yes, we see on TV and read in newspapers that there is Turkish Islamic synthesis. But in my family, many people now do not admit that they are Kurdish, but they put their Alevi identity on the top. Before it wasn't like that – they remembered their history, of course, but now they are

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<sup>2</sup> See Çelik (2016: Chapter 3, this volume) on Dersimli history and identity)

<sup>3</sup> İsmail here is the pseudonym, and is not a 'revolutionary name'

mostly say that they're Alevi. What am I talking about? For example, my mother said that she wasn't able to say that she was Alevi in school, when she was a kid in school, but now, it's fine, it's not that a big problem. But yes, I have the same opinion as you, that now as a nationality, even about the Kurdish people themselves, it's not as important as being Alevi. Because when you say you are Kurdish, it can be also not just Alevi, but also Şafî, or Şîî or so on. I know this from my own relatives - when someone says that they are Şafî or Şîî they change their faces, acting as though it's something disgusting. This is also about them – but I think that saying out loud that I'm Alevi is not as difficult as saying that I'm Kurdish, right now. In the times we're living in, it's not difficult to say that I'm Alevi. But saying that I'm Kurdish is getting more and more difficult. In saying it this way, you are also accepting that you have other thoughts, you will have to defend these thoughts. That's why I'm saying that many of my relatives are now saying that they're not Kurdish, saying that they are Turkish. And they make everyone to believe it.

Vasef and İsmail are here both describing the estrangements [*yabancılaşma*] caused by migration that Zırh (2016, chapter 10, this volume) has referred to, and on the necessary reformulation of Alevi identities found following the urban migrations of the 1950s and 1980s) described by Çelik (2016, chapter 3, this volume).

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The earlier migrations within Turkey have been followed by Alevi migrations to Europe, and in particular to the countries of the pre-2004 European Union, as described in the various chapters in Part 3 of this volume. Within contemporary Europe there are a range of understandings of what citizenship means at the level of the state, and a relatively new conception of a European citizenship. The very idea of the nation and the nations-state have been thrown into some confusion by the development of discourses of post-nationalism and supra-nationalism. And the response of educational policy-makers and practitioners to all of these has been unclear, if not confused. The arrival of various Alevi communities to these developments adds further level of complexity, and the consequential emergence of 'Euro-Alevism', as Uçar (2016) suggests in chapter 8.

Citizenship can be seen as both a status and as an identity, as well as a form of access to specific rights. This kind of identity was, and for most people remains, one acquired at birth. State citizenship is, for most, involuntary, even though this 'flies in the face of the modern state's own constitutive ideology of contract and consent, articulated in the political philosophy from Hobbes to Rousseau' (Joppke 2010, 34). In the classic nation state a person could belong to only one state at a time: it was a non-negotiable immutable identity that, in Rogers Brubaker's analysis, categorically excludes others from membership: 'by inventing the national citizen and the legally homogenous national citizenry, the [French] Revolution simultaneously invented the foreigner' (Brubaker 1992, 46). The Hague

Convention of 1930 prescribed that ‘every person should have a nationality, and should have one nationality only’ (League of Nations 1930, §2). Citizenship is thus a ‘form of inherited property’ (Shachar and Hirschl 2007, 254), passed on ‘from one generation to another in perpetuity’ (270).

In Europe, we can see two competing constructions of how citizenship as a status is acquired, *jus sanguis* (citizenship by ‘blood: by right of descent, determined by one’s parentage) and *jus solis* (citizenship ‘from the soil’: by virtue of having been born in the country). Brubaker (1992) contrasts the French republican tradition of birthplace, where every person born within the state becomes a French citizen with the German model of descent, where only those who can show German ancestry – even if it is very distant in time – can claim citizenship. Both models are found across Europe, though with various modifications and exceptions, and both the German and French models are no longer as precisely followed as was the case in the twentieth century. Most states now allow both forms, but under fairly carefully defined conditions. The UK, which traditionally allowed either route, almost allowing the individual’s preference, now has a complex set of conditions attaching to either route. These differing models of citizenship must have some impact on the ways in which the nation is constructed through citizenship education. These changes have, in part, been a response to contemporary migration movements, which lack the permanence and uni-directional characteristics of earlier migrations. As Hall suggests, ‘the concept of diaspora disrupts and unsettles our hitherto settled conceptions of culture, place and identity’ (Hall 1996, 207).

This has not been uncontested. Banks notes that ‘the development of citizens with global and cosmopolitan identities and commitments is contested in nation-states throughout the world because nationalism remains strong. Nationalism and globalisation coexist in tension worldwide’ (Banks 2008, 132). While acquisition of citizenship has become somewhat easier in western Europe, citizenship in the new European Union member states of east and south-eastern Europe remains ‘still closely linked to an ethnic interpretation of nationality’ (Bauböck *et al* 200, 12). In the west, citizenship has become post-national: Soysal argues that it now involves rights that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state (Soysal 1994, 137). The development of the European Union, and in particular the introduction of European Union citizenship as complementary to national citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty (European Union 1992) means that the citizens of every European Union state are now also European Citizens, with rights that accrue from this that are supplementary and superior to the rights afforded by the nation state.

The conception of ‘the state’, remains contested in Europe. As noted above, in some of the newer members of eastern Europe, at least initially, states such as Slovakia had constitutional references to the state as the embodiment of ‘the nation’. This conflation of nation and state has in the past caused grave difficulties, when local national minorities (such as Hungarians in Slovakia) protested at this disregard for their sense of identity. While constitutional changes now have accepted alternative

national identities, it remains the case that citizenship is linked to an essentialist understanding of nationality, based on lines of descent. Most scholars now agree that the nation should be understood as a social construct ('an invention' for Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983); 'a forgery' for Colley (1992)). Moreover, most European countries are not nation-states, in its original meaning - Connor (1978) pointed out that just nine per cent of states at that time could properly be described as such, and there would be an even smaller proportion now (Brubaker 1996). In European states, the assumption cannot be made that citizens are all 'nationals' - in most countries a variety of nationalities and minorities exist. European Union citizenship itself compromises the near-exclusive national identities that existed. These changes impact on the way in which young people - including young Alevis - learn about and construct their identities.

Benedict Anderson strikingly referred to the feeling of nationhood as that of belonging to an *Imagined Communities* (2006), and for some young Europeans this sense of belonging to such a European community is evident. In my research, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I spoke with a twelve year old young woman in Poland in who said that in Europe 'everywhere you go you are surrounded by your friends, people from the same group, natives. ... They don't know you, but they know you - you are like a distant relative. In my opinion, being European means that everywhere you have neighbours' (Ross 2015, 21).

European Union citizenship is not that of a state, but of a supranational body that has a proper legal and political status and a commitment to common human rights and values. This citizenship brings with it an expectation of shared knowledge, experiences and skills (for example, in language learning). This also implies some shared expectations of education, which leads to some conflict with those who would see education as an element of nation-building, and the curriculum as not simply educating *for* the nation but educating *about* the nation, European Union citizenship is directly a consequence of the formal status of being a citizen of a member state. But as has been seen earlier, the conditions for state citizenship are determined at state level, and there have been significant differences between by right of birthplace and by right of parentage.

The European Union is also in a near-permanent state of flux and change. The results of the European parliamentary elections in May 2014, albeit with sometimes low levels of voter turnout, suggest that some Europeans see the supranational nature of the European Union as endangering expressions of national identity. Various European Union institutions and its member states are coming to terms with significant minorities expressing dissatisfaction with the Union, its centralising tendencies, its responses to the series of economic crises since 2008, and the very varying responses to the refugee crisis of 2015 shown by different member states. There are a variety of conceptions of the position of indigenous and non-indigenous populations (in the Netherlands and the middle European states where distinctions are drawn between allochthonous and autochthonous peoples). There are competing and

changing notions of what terms such as integration, multiculturalism, assimilation mean (in, for example, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK: Schiffauer *et al* 2004).

This spectrum of identity discourses might offer some particular opportunities to the various emerging 'Euro-Alevi' communities (Uçar 2016, this volume). The overview of Alevism presented in chapter 10 of this volume by Zırh suggests that the acephalous and almost amorphous nature of the various Alevi communities make them perhaps particularly able to adapt to varied local contingencies of identity: indeed, the very foundations of the Alevi religious identity, as described by Hanoğlu in chapter 1, seem to display a syncretism that would indicate a high level of flexibility towards adaptation to local conditions: Uçar (chapter 8) points to the rapidly emerging differences between the European-based Alevi and those remaining in Turkey. Şentürk (chapter 5) also indicated that new young Alevi institutional practices are materialising, and Issa and Atbaş (chapter 12) identify generational shifts within the UK-based Alevi community.

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This range of European positions on citizenship and civic identity, coupled with the flexibility and apparent adaptability of the Alevi position, perhaps suggest particular avenues for civic education and civic participation for these particular newcomers to Europe. They are joining not just a state that is new to them, but also a supra-national institution that professes particular values and procedures that transcend the powers of the individual states.

In terms of civic education, for example, there are specific issues within and between the member states: while citizenship education in each of them has broadly reflected European-wide policies, they nevertheless maintain local specificities about their own civic education programmes. These differences partially relate to the norms and values of contemporary western societies, which in most countries have coalesced around a set of democratic processes such as the rule of law, human rights and values (such as respect for minorities, and the abolition of the death penalty), a commitment to global development (not perhaps enough, but significantly greater than is found in the US and Japan), and a sense of responsibility for environmental change. It is sometimes hard to define what is specific about the national identity of any particular European state, other than aspects of its culture and sometimes language (Joppke 2010). Citizenship education may be supported by various European Union programmes, but it is operationalised in each country in ways that reflect both governmental priorities and the specifics of culture and recent history.

But the particular values and rights that the European Union espouses – even though in practice some of these may be qualified or overlooked – may resonate with some of the positions of secular and laicised Alevi. Uçar (2016, in chapter 8) refers to the particular philosophies that are associated with contemporary Alevism, including distinctive moves towards gender equality, democratic beliefs, and



able to engage in dialogue with others. Akdemir (2016, in chapter 11 on the Alevis in Britain) refer to humanistic beliefs that match many European values. How does citizenship education in Europe deal with plural communities, and how might it accommodate an Alevi presence?

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The original treaty of the then European Economic Community referred to the objective of ‘ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’, where decisions were made ‘as closely as possible to the citizen’ (European Economic Community 1957 308). European Citizenship was established by the Maastricht Treaty (European Union 1992) in order to ‘strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its Member States through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union’ (European Union 1992, Article B) and was extended by the Treaty of Amsterdam (European Union 1997):

Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship. (Art 20, 1)

In 2005 the European Commission produced a policy document *Citizens for Europe*, which set out the intention of the European Union as: ‘involving citizens in the construction of a more united Europe and by fostering mutual understanding among European citizens’ (European Commission 2005, 8).

There are three stages in the development of the European Union’s conception of European citizenship. Initially, before the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 - the European Union was principally concerned with market harmonisation and establishing common understandings of values and rights. The establishment of common citizenship at Maastricht opened a second phase (1992-2004), particularly for education and the understanding of the new and complementary citizenship established in the Treaty. Education policies within the European Union had been to this point patchy and intermittent. The principle of subsidiarity meant that policy decisions were devolved to the most local level possible, and education was an area where policy was determined at the country/state level (or even more locally), rather than the European Union. Education was also seen as having important implications for a country’s culture, another reason that it should be kept at the state level. However, this was not easily reconciled with the overall objectives of the Union: how could a common conception of citizenship, democracy and human rights and respect for minorities be reconciled with individual state autonomy over curriculum policies? How would inter-cultural understanding be fostered at the European level without effective common coordination? How could effective labour mobility be achieved when each country had its own system of recording educational attainment and

professional and vocational qualifications? McCann and Finn (2006) analyse the various perceptions in this period:

For the Commission it was quite clear that citizenship and economic integration were inexorably linked, that the prosperity of the people of the European Union needed to be marked by a shared civic identity. From the member states' governments' point of view the question of national sovereignty was still a prominent reason for hesitating at the proposed progressive development of topics such as citizenship, and indeed the European dimension in education - viewing education as still primarily a national preserve. Attitudes did seem to soften however at national level throughout the 1990s and citizenship education in particular was to benefit from this attitudinal shift. (on line, np)

The issues of cohesion and diversity were particularly significant. There had been flows of labour around Europe since 1946 – from Italy, Spain and Portugal to the more northern countries, and from the various former overseas empires to the former colonial powers. This compounded issues around the multi-national composition of most populations, which would be further accentuated with the inclusion of the new states in the 2000s, which had borders that were even less respectful of national identities. Banks (2006) noted how 'multicultural societies are faced with the problem of creating nation-states that recognise and incorporate the diversity of their citizens and embrace an overarching set of shared values, ideals, and goals to which all citizens are committed'.

The European Union concerned to unify the citizens of the Union around these values: this was 'the key reason why the European dimension to education has taken such an indirect path to the curricula, yet has been given such prominence by the Commission' (McCann and Finn 2006, 55). The educational objectives developed in preparation for Maastricht included promoting Europe as multicultural, with a distinctive European citizenship identity that included culture, and also the promotion of educational mobility at all levels through the Erasmus programme, encouraging training, life-long learning (European Commission 1989, 236). The division of responsibilities for this between member states and the Commission remained opaque: a decentred, post-national conception of what citizenship education consisted of emerged from both the intergovernmental structures and the supranational structures of the Union over the 1990s. A consensus developed – not without some tensions from within some countries - that citizenship education was not national, nor European, but was concerned with rights, participation and engagement, civic principles and the individual – and not historical processes and cultures. The report *Accomplishing Europe through Education and Training* (European Commission 1997a) defines European citizenship as

based on a shared political culture of democracy ... the route towards a 'postnational' model to which Europeans will feel that they belong as citizens, not because they subscribe to a common culture ... or because of their specific origins, but because this sense of European

citizenship will emerge from the new social relations that the Europeans establish between themselves (European Commission 1997a, 21)

But by 2004 a third phase had been moved into, with many new member states with wide differences in levels of economic development and different degrees to which civic values and cultural practices were embedded in the various states. Common citizenship of the European Union focussed in this phase on 'Unity in Diversity' as a rallying slogan. Citizenship became more concerned with civic values and practices - as expressed through the European Union's programmes and policies - and less on a sense of cultural unity. As Keating observes (2014), this was critical in the Commission's responses in education to the new member states from 2004, where democracy was seen as less deep. Young people in those countries, it was thought, needed to understand pluralism and democracy. Citizenship education, in a particularly European sense, has become a means of understanding the relationship between the individual and society, understanding diversity, and general active civic engagement.

In 2006 the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union defined eight key competences for life-long learning, one of which was social and civil competence:

Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence ... Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation. (European Parliament/Council of the European Union 2006, 16)

The concepts of civic and political engagement had become increasingly foregrounded in this decade: the term 'active citizenship' had been frequently used as an educational transversal theme (European Commission 1997b; for a discussion on various interpretations of 'active' citizenship see Ross 2008). But there was a continuing interest in the idea of some kind of cultural unity. Citizenship became a deterritorialised post-national concept of practice; secondly, that such practise was centred on 'common values of European civilisation' that were at least potentially more universalistic than European:

human rights/human dignity; fundamental freedoms; democratic legitimacy; peace and the rejection of violence as a means to an end; respect for others; a spirit of solidarity (both within Europe and vis a vis the world as a whole); equitable development; equal opportunities; the principles of rational thought; the ethics of evidence and proof; personal responsibility (European Commission 1997b, 25).

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How did the young people who were introduced at the beginning of this chapter construct the nature of Europe and the European Union? Through the discussions I had with them, a number of competing discourses emerged.

One group placed the Turkish membership accession talks at the centre of their debate. Joining the European Union was variously constructed as a device of Erdoğan (at the time Prime Minister; now President) to suppress them, as a neo-colonial attempt to extend European cultural and economic hegemony over Turkey, and as unnecessary.

Dilek T Oh, its Erdoğan who wants it, and we don't even know why, or what politics they want ... for many people, being European and being a member of Europe is just about being able to speak two words in English, and dressing up nicely, fancy. ... I think this question shouldn't be asked – people think that it's the highest point we can reach, European identity. As I said before, people believe that their dress style, their life style, is most important – and this is European! So what! People are talking about the European Union, and being there. So if we're not a member of the European Union - what will be changed? What are we missing? Do we need something else from them? Do we have to look like them, or have to be similar to them? If we have to take them as a role model about science, technology, and so on - but they cannot teach us civilisation, it's not up to them.

Hazal D Really, what is being European? And why, as Dilek T said, do we have to take them as a role model? Let's take their science and technology, but I think that humanity is about us – we have humanity as much as anyone else. We don't need to be European to live the same life style.

The second group debated the possibilities of migrating to Europe: Aslıhan identified both advantages and disadvantages:

There are both some advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages are that you will miss your country if you are in Europe. The advantages, the education, the health system ... there's an advantage for everything in Europe, if you're in Turkey.

There was some knowledge based on family experience to be shared, both negative and positive.

Sevda K We have some relatives abroad. They are migrants there, and others may humiliate them because of this. But my cousins are going to college, and they are learning three foreign languages. They are able to do any sport. They are free to dress as they want. How can we compare them with us?

Aslıhan T There is no social life in Turkey, I think. You just go to school and come home. Don't do anything, just stay at home. Without seeing or hearing anything...

But Sinan took a more radical position: for him. Europe was exclusionary, divisive, and capitalist.

If you go to the back streets of Paris, you can see chaos there, conflict - - there is social conflict because there is inequality, a very big gap between rich and poor people. I think we are deceived by what we see: we think Europe is a heaven, but this is not [so] because there's social conflict and social classes exist in Europe too. I don't think it's very advantageous to live in Europe - they want us to see Europe in this way, but in Europe there is an abyss between rich and poor.

This was not accepted by all the group. Sevda and Aslıhan both countered with examples of those who had migrated who appeared to see advantages to life in Europe.

Aslıhan T One of my friends is living in Europe, but she is not a stuck-up person. She is friendly, nothing is so different about her when you compare.

Sevda K Many of my relatives are now living in Europe, but as I see it they have carried their culture there, and I see that they could not get adapted to a European life style.

Aslıhan T I don't think there is a difference between the European and Turkish people there. They are not differentiating people according to their nationality. For example, my cousins went to Europe, and they are benefitting from the same health system, the same education system, they are migrants, but I don't think they are being oppressed there.

Sevda raised the issue of European human rights (although in the context of social provision):

But I think the Human Rights are more important in Europe. They have a better education system, a better health system. It's for free! In Germany for example, anyone can go to university.

This was raised in a broader way in the third group by Furkan:

When you say 'Europe', it reminds me first of human rights, and of great possibilities for freedom. I believe that if I could be in Europe, I could say that - everywhere and every

time and to every person – that I am Kurdish. If I was in Europe, I could say in school that I am Kurdish, and there would not be that oppression from the public.

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The range of views on Europe expressed by these young people are as diverse as the range expressed across the chapters of this book. To this writer – an outsider, neither Alevi, Turkish or Kurd – it seems that the Alevi communities in Europe might be particularly well-placed to take advantage of the various European Union and member state policies and practices to accommodate themselves within parts of the Union – not to assimilate, but to find common points of reference in shared values and expressions of rights.