

National identities in the age of globalisation.

The case of Western Europe^{*}

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Abstract

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In an age of increasing globalisation and political fragmentation, does the nation have the relevance it once had? Is the re-scaling of political and economic processes associated with a similar re-scaling of national identities? The aim of the present paper is to offer an answer to these two questions on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative data recently collected for Western Europe. Cross-country trends for both national pride and national attachment are analyzed through Eurobarometer Standard surveys. Furthermore, the notion of national attachment is discussed in relation to qualitative data collected in four regional case-studies in Western Europe. On the basis of this analysis I argue that, when viewed ‘from below’, i.e. from the eyes of ordinary citizens, national identity continues to shape the predominant ways in which people make sense of themselves and others.

Key words: nation, identity, globalisation, Western Europe

1. Introduction: the nation in the age of globalisation

The fascination with scenarios beyond the nation has been particularly high among intellectuals during the last fifteen years or so. Issues of multiculturalism, trans-nationalism, cosmopolitanism, or ethno-nationalism have pushed intellectuals to envision new socio-political settings which transcend the traditional structure of the nation-state. In relation to both processes of capital accumulation/production and forms of political governance, scholars have shown that the monopoly of the nation-state in structuring societies is today under challenge. According to Brenner (1999), for instance, the new post-Fordist mode of production has brought about, particularly in Europe, the 'de-nationalisation of territories'. By this concept, Brenner implies that capital accumulation does not take place any more at the national scale, but it has been re-scaled to both supra- (e.g. EU) and sub-national (e.g. regions and cities) scales. Relying on the same argument that in the age of globalisation the nation-state is no longer the sole container of socio-economic processes, the literature on European governance has shown the rising importance of scales other than the one of the nation-state. More precisely, a conspicuous number of studies have dealt with cities and regions as emerging units on which the European space of governance is based (Keating, 1998; Le Galès and Lequesne, 1998; MacLeod, 2001; Le Galès, 2002; Brenner, 2004; Jones and MacLeod, 2004).

Whether the national scale is substituted or complemented by other scales, the question which awaits to be answered is whether this re-scaling of the nation-state, both in economic and politico-institutional terms, is accompanied also by a rescaling of national identity. In other words, what can be said of the national identity of people who live in territories whose economic and political forms of organisation have

undergone a significant re-structuring process? Will these identities also experience a process of re-scaling similar to the one undergone by the state both at the sub- and supra-national scale?

In the present paper I will first answer this question by looking at Eurobarometer Standard surveys (Eb), which, since the 1980s, have periodically collected information about the national pride and attachment of people living in Western Europe.¹ Then, as a way to investigate further the notion of national attachment, which seems somehow to be taken for granted by the surveys' questionnaires, I will analyze qualitative data (focus groups and individual interviews), which I personally collected in four regional case-studies (Lombardia, Italy; Pirkanmaa, Finland; North East of England, United Kingdom; and Languedoc-Roussillon, France), during the period May 2005-January 2006. On the basis of this analysis, I will argue that, when viewed 'from below', i.e. from the eyes of ordinary citizens, globalisation does not spell out the end of 'the nation', as this retains among people the relevance it once had.

2. National identity in the age of globalisation

¹ By 'Western Europe' I mean the 15 member states of the European Union before the two last enlargements of 2004 and 2007.

The end or the crisis of the nation-state has been widely announced at least since the early 1990s (Ohmae, 1993; Badie, 1995; Guéhenno, 1995). The internationalisation of markets, the rise of global capital, the devolution of powers to sub- (regions and cities) and supra-national (e.g. EU) actors, and the emergence of a 'risk society', associated with global environmental and population threats have been listed as some of the main reasons of this crisis (Miller, 1995; Mann, 1997; Guibernau, 2001). Some authors have stressed the importance of the passage from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of production, which, in turn, has led to the 'hollowing out' of the state (Jessop, 1994; Rhodes, 1994). Regions and cities emerge as the new engines of the global economy and although the state still remains the major actor of the global economy, it is, however, no longer the only one (Storper, 1997; Sassen, 2000; Taylor, 2000; Scott and Storper, 2003).

This transformation of the modes of capital production and accumulation has been analyzed also in relation to questions of governance and sovereignty. Particularly in and about Europe, a vast amount of literature has been produced on forms of multi-level governance (Marks, 1993; Jachtenfuchs, 1995; Marks et al., 1996; Aalberts, 2004). From this perspective, the state becomes part of a network of sub- and supra-national governing actors, connected in a 'rhizomic' rather than a hierarchical way (Agnew, 1999: 506). This has also been said to mark the passage from a Westphalian to a post-Westphalian or postmodern era, no longer characterised by exclusive territoriality (Ruggie, 1993; Anderson, 1996).

All the above-mentioned studies affirm, more or less explicitly, that in the present epoch the nation-state, if not in crisis, is at least experiencing a transformation. Many of these studies, however, limit the analysis of this transformation to only one of the two dimensions of the

‘nation-state’. The focus is almost exclusively on the transformation of the structure and powers of the *state*. How this transformation affects the *nation* is somewhat passed under silence.

This question finds instead quite a large treatment in those authors who deal with issues of identity politics, multiculturalism, and, more broadly, nationalism. According to Özkirimli (2003), identity politics is indeed one of the twin pressures which scholars traditionally mention in relation to the ‘crisis of the nation-state’ – globalisation being the other pressure. Gender, race, sexual, and youth identities, which are largely disconnected from territory, have been said to shape today the lives of people as much as or even more than national identities (Scholte, 1996). As remarked by Scholte (1996), globalisation has multiplied and intensified experiences of being several selves at once. Amongst these several selves, national identities remain robust, but no longer supreme. This argument echoes the well-known study of Manuel Castells (1997) on identities in the age of the network society. According to Castells, religious fundamentalisms, ethno-nationalisms, regionalist movements, and local communes are today the new identity expressions of the ‘space of places’ which complement the de-territorialised, globalised identity of a technocratic-financial-managerial elite who lives in the ‘space of flows’.²

What is at stake here is the monopoly of national identity as the predominant form of collective identity – a point implicitly put forward also by those geographers who adopt the notion of nested identities as a way to describe the transformation of the nation in the age of globalisation (Herb and Kaplan, 1999). In a world where nation-states are more and more populated by people whose cultural background is different from the

² It should be pointed out that the flourishing of ethno-nationalisms in the present epoch are often considered as a source of fragmentation of the ‘old’ national spaces, rather than a confirmation of the importance of national identity (Mann, 1997, p. 473).

one of the nations where they live, questions of multiculturalism have acquired an increased importance in scholarly debates (Gutmann, 1994; Taylor et al., 1994; Kymlicka, 2001). Diasporic communities of Turks in Germany, Pakistanis in United Kingdom, Serbs in Switzerland, Latinos in the United States, to mention only a few, are clear examples of peoples whose lives are suspended between different national territories, sometimes not belonging to any of them or, most likely, belonging simultaneously to all of them. These identities share elements of post-nationalism, trans-nationalism, hybridism and ‘impurity’ that transcend the principles of both isomorphism between territory and identity (Appadurai, 1996) and of ‘purity of space’ (Sibley, 1988) out of which national identities have been traditionally constructed.

The concern about multiculturalism has surfaced also in studies on nationalism which analyze the future of the nation. The two different positions that come here to the fore – primordialist (or ethno-symbolic) and modernist – can be best exemplified by the works of Anthony D. Smith and Mary Kaldor respectively. According to Smith (2002), while nationalism can certainly be regarded as a modern phenomenon, nations are not. In different forms (clans, tribes, city-states or ethnic communities), ‘nations’ have always existed (Smith, 2002: 14). National identities are somewhat perennial, pervasive, and ‘authentic’; while other types of identity – gender, class, religion, etc. – are situational, i.e. context-dependent (Smith, 2000: 133-134). As nations pre-date the rise of the modern state, it is possible that they will also survive its demise. The opposite view is held by modernists, who maintain that nations are not ‘primordial’, but ‘historical’ products, inextricably linked to the rise of the modern state. According to Kaldor (2004), it is therefore likely to expect that as nations came into existence, one day they will disappear. In

the age of globalisation, ‘more forward-looking ideologies better suited to the structural conditions associated with globalisation’ (Kaldor, 2004, p. 173), like cosmopolitanism, will take over nationalism.

In the present paper, I will examine the relevance and the meanings of the nation in the context outlined above, i.e. in an epoch of restructuring of state’s powers and de-territorialisation and multiplication of collective identities. The point is not to discuss how we should respond to the challenges posed by globalisation to the nation-state (Miller, 1995; Mann, 1997), but to analyze how/if these ‘challenges’ affect the ways people perceive their own nation. This means that rather than espousing a perspective ‘from above’, which treats the nation as a historical, institutional object and which often adopts a normative stance towards the nation and its future, I will adopt a perspective ‘from below’, which, in analytical terms, looks at the nation as a discursive resource which people activate in the process of social communication (Thompson, 2001). This approach is consonant with the works of those authors who have investigated the nation as a discourse reproduced in people’s everyday life (Billig, 1995; Brubaker, 1996; Thompson, 2001). The hypothesis which needs to be tested is whether in the context of the restructuring of state’s powers and emergence of multiple forms of identity politics, national identities are experiencing a decline. Anticipating the rejection of this hypothesis, I will then deal with a second hypothesis, concerning a possible change in the meanings associated with national attachment. In fact, it is legitimate to think that, even if national identities do not experience a decline in quantitative terms, they might experience a qualitative change, which would not be captured by a mere quantitative analysis.

3. Looking at the trends in national pride and attachment

In order to measure the trend of national pride and attachment in Western Europe, I will rely on data coming from Eurobarometer (Eb) surveys. Eurobarometer, or more precisely Standard Eurobarometer, is a program of cross-national and cross-temporal comparative social research conducted periodically by the European Opinion Research Group – a consortium of market and public opinion research agencies - on behalf of the European Commission.³ Eurobarometer surveys cover the population of the member states of the European Union (EU), aged 15 years and over, resident in each member state, regardless of whether they are citizens or not of the state where they reside. For each member state, the sample population used in Eurobarometer surveys is 1,000 people; however, in some cases, this number varies slightly above or below 1,000. The sample populations of Northern Ireland and Luxembourg are respectively equal to about 300 and 600 people. Given the socio-economic and political differences between East Germany and West Germany and between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, these territories are treated as separate in Eurobarometer.⁴

Given both the small sample size (1,000 respondents per country) and the fact that the choice of the respondents is somehow constrained within pre-given categories, Eurobarometer surveys are sometimes criticized as far as their reliability is concerned. Yet, despite these limits, I

³ Eurobarometer data are available online through the CESSDA database: <http://www.nsd.uib.no/cessda/Europe.html>.

⁴ Information about the sample design is available, among others, at the web site of the ICPSR: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>.

would argue that Eurobarometer surveys are still the best available option. As far as the coding of respondents' answers is concerned, Sinnot (2005) has shown, for instance, that compared to other data sets, Eurobarometer surveys adopt one of the most effective ways of coding. Moreover, Eurobarometer surveys offer the best temporal and spatial coverage among alternative data sets. Questions about national identity have indeed been asked in different cross-national survey studies during the last twenty years or so: European Values Study (EVS), World Values Survey (WVS), and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). However, the EVS, in association with the WVS, limits its time-coverage to three years only: 1981, 1990, and 1999. The time coverage is even shorter in the case of the ISSP, as only two surveys have been indeed carried out so far: 1995 (*National Identity I*) and 2003 (*National Identity II*). Moreover, both in the EVS and the ISSP the geographical coverage of Europe is not complete. In the case of the EVS, Greece and Luxembourg are present only in the last survey (1999), whereas Finland, East Germany, Austria, and Portugal were not surveyed in the first wave (1981). As for the ISSP, the countries surveyed in 1995 are not the same as the countries surveyed in 2003. This makes any longitudinal comparison impossible for most of the European countries. Given these limitations, it is clear why Eurobarometer surveys remain the best available option for quantitative studies on national attachment at the European scale.

It is important to note that, given the absence of Eurobarometer survey questions about national identity per se, to focus on data about national pride and national attachment is also a compelled choice. I should point out that the purpose of the following paragraphs is not to

understand the factors that explain national pride or national attachment,⁵ but to simply offer a quantitative framework within which to analyze the question about the crisis of the nation in the age of globalisation.

Methodologically, the data that follow have been recoded in binary categories. Respondents had five possible choices to answer the survey questions about national pride and attachment: 'very' (proud/attached), 'quite/fairly', 'not very', 'not at all', 'don't know'. In order to simplify the analysis, I recoded these answers as follows: proud/attached = 'very' + 'quite/fairly'; not proud/ not attached = 'not very' + 'not at all'. As usual, I have dropped the 'don't know' answers. Despite the loss of information, I believe that this recoding allows for a clearer understanding of the temporal trends in national pride and attachment.

Table 1 shows the trends for national pride associated with Western European countries.⁶

⁵ For a statistical analysis of national pride see, for instance, Rose (1985) and Smith and Jarkko (2001).

⁶ Data come from the following Eurobarometer surveys: Eb 17 (1982), Eb 19 (1983), Eb 24 (1985), Eb 26 (1986), Eb 30 (1988), Eb 42 (1994), Eb 47.1 (1997), Eb 52.0 (1999), Eb 54.1 (2000), Eb 56.2 (2001), Eb 57.1 (2002), Eb 60.1 (2003), Eb (62.0 (2004), Eb 64.2 (2005). Eb 21 (1984) was not used due to problems with the coding of the variable about national pride. The limited number of individuals sampled in Eb Flash 47 (only 500 individuals in each country rather than 1,000, as in all other Eurobarometers) meant that this survey was also dropped.

Table.1 National pride ('very proud' + 'quite proud'). Eb 1982-2005

Country	1982	1983	1985	1986	1988	1994	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	average* 1982-2005	difference* 1982-2005
Ireland	90	89	91	94	94	96	97	99	98	98	98	97	99	98	96	+6
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	-	91	94	93	92	96	97	97	97	95	+6
Greece	91	94	92	91	92	92	92	97	95	95	97	97	97	96	94	+5
Spain	-	-	93	91	88	87	87	92	90	94	93	95	91	93	91	0
Portugal	-	-	88	89	88	90	92	92	92	94	93	93	92	90	91	+2
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	86	88	90	88	92	92	93	92	90	+6
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	81	92	91	90	92	94	90	92	90	+11
Great Britain	89	93	88	89	84	85	88	95	92	94	92	92	92	93	90	+4
Northern Ireland	87	92	93	90	84	91	85	92	92	92	93	94	79	77	89	-10
Luxembourg	87	93	93	95	88	84	83	87	88	84	88	87	94	93	89	+6
Denmark	83	87	85	87	78	88	91	93	90	91	91	91	93	93	88	+10
Italy	77	86	88	88	85	83	79	86	88	91	94	94	92	93	87	+16
EU-15	80	85	85	84	83	88	79	88	88	88	90	90	90	90	86	+10
France	81	80	85	84	80	75	73	87	89	89	89	91	89	92	85	+11
Netherlands	77	83	84	81	84	73	85	87	85	86	87	85	88	88	84	+11
Belgium	63	76	76	66	71	75	46	77	82	82	83	86	84	85	75	+22
West Germany	64	65	63	64	68	56	49	73	74	74	76	72	74	71	67	+7
East Germany	-	-	-	-	-	55	36	67	67	68	75	74	74	76	66	+21

Source: Eurobarometer (1982-2005). Values in percentage.

Question: 'Would you say that you are very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not at all proud to be [nationality]?'

* **Average** is on all values between 1991 (1985 for Spain and Portugal; 1994 for East Germany; 1997 for Finland, Sweden, and Austria) and 2005; **difference** is between 1982 (1985 for Spain and Portugal; 1994 for East Germany; 1997 for Finland, Sweden, and Austria) and 2005.

The survey question about national pride (*‘Would you say that you are very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not at all proud to be [nationality]?’*) was first asked in 1982, but unfortunately it was not included every year in Eurobarometer Standard surveys, with a significant gap between 1989 and 1993. Looking at data at the European level, we notice that overall from 1982 to 2005, national identities among the EU-15 countries have not declined. On the contrary, at the European level, national identity has increased by ten percentage points.⁷ The countries which mainly account for this increase are Belgium, East Germany, and Italy. Northern Ireland is the only territory which has experienced a major downturn.⁸

⁷ A comparison with the EVS data set confirms that national pride is on the rise in Western Europe: the European average was 81 per cent in 1981, 85 per cent in 1990 and 87 per cent in 1999.

⁸ If we look at the time series, we note, however, that this decline started only recently, in 2004, whereas Northern Ireland showed a rather high value in previous years. It is however difficult to explain such a major drop in national pride during a time in which the process for a peaceful settlement of the Northern Irish issue, although slow, has proven steady. According to Smith and Jarkko (2001), in fact, national pride is usually low in areas ridden by ethnic conflicts. It is also true that, in the case of Northern Ireland, it is not particularly clear what should be understood by ‘national’ attachment, i.e. whether the ‘nation’ is Ireland or Great Britain. Unfortunately, the codebooks associated with Eurobarometer surveys do not help answering this question. A possible way to deal with this issue would be to assume that, when asked about their national attachment, Catholic respondents meant Ireland and Protestant respondents meant Great Britain.

When we look at the average across the surveyed years, Ireland scores as the country whose population has the highest sense of national pride.⁹ Finland and Greece score respectively second and third. These three countries have been in the top positions consistently throughout the years. On the contrary, Spain, which scored near the top in the 1980s, has dropped its attachment to national pride in recent years. Among the countries with the lowest attachment we find West Germany, East Germany, and Belgium. As it is well known, German national pride is negatively affected by memories of Nazism and ‘war guilt’ (Topf et al., 1989; Alter, 1993; Hedetoft, 1993), whereas Belgian pride is negatively affected by the existence in Belgium of two different ‘nations’ (Walloon and Flemish). Yet, it is interesting to observe, as mentioned above, that both East Germany and Belgium have shown over the years some of the highest increase in their sentiment of national pride. Despite problems of national integration which still characterise these two territories, the sentiment of national pride seems gradually to gaining ground.

As pointed out by Smith and Jarkko (2001), although there are some individual factors which explain national pride (e.g. national pride usually falls from the pre-World War II cohort to the most recent cohort surveyed), this latter is finally dependent on each country's unique background and circumstances. Moreover, national pride is also dependent on contextual events (e.g. a sporting achievement, a national economic or political crisis, etc.). This seems to be confirmed by the rather high variation over the years calculated as the absolute value of the interval between the minimum and the maximum measured in relation to the mean (see Table 2).

⁹ A similar finding emerges also in the study of Smith and Jarkko (2001), based on the 1995 ISSP data set. However, in this same study values for other European countries do not match the Eurobarometer values analyzed in the present study.

Table 2. National pride ('very proud' + 'quite proud'): Interval limits (minimum and maximum from average) - Eb 1982-2005*

Country	Minimum	Maximum	Sum (absolute values)
Portugal	-3	2	5
Greece	-3	3	6
Finland	-4	2	6
Sweden	-4	3	7
Spain	-4	4	8
Ireland	-7	3	10
Great Britain	-6	5	11
EU-15	-7	4	11
Luxembourg	-6	6	12
Austria	-9	4	13
Netherlands	-11	4	15
Denmark	-10	5	15
Italy	-10	7	17
Northern Ireland	-12	5	17
France	-12	7	19
West Germany	-18	9	27
Belgium	-29	11	40
East Germany	-30	10	40

Source: Eurobarometer (1982-2005). Values in percentage.

Question: 'Would you say that you are very proud, quite proud, not very proud, or not at all proud to be [nationality]?'

* Spain and Portugal: 1985 values; East Germany: 1994 values; Finland, Sweden, and Austria: 1997 values.

The countries with the most stable sentiment of national pride are Portugal and Greece, followed by Spain, Ireland and Great Britain.¹⁰ The most unstable in their own sentiment of national pride are Belgium and East Germany – two countries which have experienced the highest rise in their own national pride – followed by West Germany. When we look more in detail into these trends, we notice that the key years are the mid-1990s. In the transition from 1994 to 1997, seven countries (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, West Germany, East Germany, and Italy) experienced their lowest values for national attachment.¹¹ Given the lack of survey data for the years 1995 and 1996 it is however impossible to determine the factor(s) that had caused such a major decline.

The analysis of the Eurobarometer series regarding national attachment (1991-2005) confirms the results observed for national pride. In other words, when analyzed in terms of ‘attachment’ rather than ‘pride’, national identities in Western Europe are certainly not experiencing a decline (see Table 3).

¹⁰ Finland and Sweden also show a very stable trend, but their data cover a much more limited time period (1997-2005) compared to the rest of the countries.

¹¹ In the case of Italy, the lowest value in national pride was actually experienced back in 1982 (77 per cent), but the one measured in 1997 (79 per cent) was not far away from it.

Table 3. National attachment ('very attached' + 'fairly attached'). Eb 1991-2005

Country	1991	1995	1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	average* 1991-2005	difference* 1991-2005
Ireland	96	98	98	95	94	97	98	97	97	1
Greece	97	97	97	95	98	97	97	97	97	0
Denmark	98	97	97	96	96	97	98	97	97	-1
Finland	-	96	96	94	95	97	97	97	96	1
Portugal	95	97	96	96	97	97	96	97	96	2
Sweden	-	97	89	94	95	95	94	93	94	-4
Austria	-	95	94	91	92	92	94	95	93	0
Italy	90	91	91	91	96	97	95	92	93	2
France	91	92	89	91	93	93	93	93	92	2
Luxembourg	93	90	93	92	90	92	94	92	92	-1
EU-15	90	91	91	91	91	93	91	90	91	0
Great Britain	89	87	92	90	87	89	91	90	90	1
Spain	90	91	90	91	78	93	91	90	89	0
West Germany	88	87	88	87	87	88	88	87	88	-1
East Germany	88	88	83	84	89	87	89	83	86	-5
Northern Ireland	89	89	93	92	94	89	70	71	86	-18
Netherlands	81	79	87	80	85	85	83	84	83	3
Belgium	75	83	77	81	82	87	84	80	81	5

Source: Eurobarometer (1991-2005). Values in percentage.

Question: 'People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country, or to Europe. Please tell me how attached you feel to [country]?'

* **Average** is on all values between 1991 (1995 for Finland, Sweden, and Austria) and 2005; **difference** is between 1991 (1995 for Finland, Sweden, and Austria) and 2005

Starting with 1991, Eurobarometer survey data have been periodically collected regarding the following question: *‘People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country, or to Europe. Please tell me how attached you feel to...?’*¹²

‘National’ shows the highest score among the four types of territorial attachments. On average, across the survey years, about 91 per cent of the people in Western Europe declared to identify themselves with the nation, against 88 per cent who said to feel attached to the region, 87 per cent to the locale and 56 per cent to Europe.¹³ This datum has not significantly changed since 1991. National identity still remains the primary form of territorial identity. In other words, the idea that national identities are in crisis in the age of globalisation does not find quantitative evidence for the case of Western Europe, also when analyzed in terms of ‘attachment’. Greece, Denmark and Ireland show the highest degree (97 per cent) of attachment to the nation, closely followed by Portugal and Finland. It is interesting to observe that all these countries are ‘small’ countries. In the case of Ireland and Finland, long-standing historical factors – e.g. the traditional confrontation with their two ‘big neighbours’,

¹² The following Eurobarometers have been used for the present analysis: Eb 36 (1991), Eb 43.1 bis (1995), Eb 51.0 (1999), Eb 54.1 (2000), Eb 56.3 (2002), Eb 60.1 (2003), Eb 62.0 (2004), Eb 63.4 (2005). It should be noted that for Eb 36 and Eb 43.1 bis, the question was split in two: ‘the European Union’ and ‘Europe [as a whole]’. In both cases, data about ‘Europe [as a whole]’ were used in the present analysis. Although the first time a question about territorial attachment was asked in Eurobarometer surveys was in 1971 (ECS 71), the fact that its formulation (‘To which of these areas do you feel you belong most strongly? And which next? City/locality, department, region, country, Europe, other’) was different than the one used in successive Eurobarometers prevents its use in the present study. A similar consideration applies also to Eb 50.1 (1998), whose question was formulated in the same way as in the 1971 survey and as such it was not used in the present study.

¹³ A more detailed discussion of territorial attachment at the four scales will be analyzed in a following paper.

Great Britain for Ireland and Russia for Finland – might account for their high degree in national attachment.¹⁴ When these results are compared with the results about national pride, both confirmations and exceptions emerge. Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Finland are confirmed as top countries both in terms of national pride and national attachment. The major exceptions are Denmark, whose high degree of national attachment does not find an equivalent in terms of national pride, and Spain, whose high degree of national pride does not find an equivalent in terms of national attachment. In other words, Danes are not particularly proud of their national accomplishments, but feel very attached to their nation – which confirms the hypothesis that small countries usually have a strong sense of national identity.¹⁵ On the contrary, Spanish people have a high consideration of themselves as a nation, but this does not translate into an equal sentiment of national attachment.

At the opposite of the scale, Belgium, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, and East Germany are the countries with the lowest sentiment of national attachment. With the only exception of the Netherlands, these countries share a protracted history of internal division, explaining their low degree of national attachment. Once again, when we compare these results with the ones about national pride, we find both a confirmation

¹⁴ In the case of Finland in particular, the metaphor of ‘small’ country (in relation to the ‘big’ Russian neighbour) is a recurrent theme within Finnish formal, practical and popular geopolitical discourses (Antonsich, 2005). In the case of Greece, the long-standing confrontation with Turkey and the ‘Macedonian question’ should be taken into account among the explanatory reasons (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

¹⁵ Luxembourg is the only clear exception which contradicts this hypothesis. However, if we consider the high concentration of European institutions and agencies which attracts people from other countries and make Luxembourg a cosmopolitan place, we might explain why it is such an exception (van der Veen, 2002).

and an exception. The confirmation is that Belgium, the Netherlands and East Germany also show a low degree of national pride. The exception is that people in Northern Ireland feels very little 'attached' to their nation, but very much 'proud' of their own nation.¹⁶

Looking at the variation between the 1991 and the 2005 values, national attachment proves more stable than national pride. This datum is confirmed also by the small intervals between the minimum and the maximum values in relation to the average (1991-2005) for each country (see Table 4).

¹⁶ This gap is however something which has developed only recently. Before 2002, in fact, Northern Ireland scored also very high in terms of national attachment. Looking carefully at data for national pride, Northern Ireland started declining in the same year. Any interpretation of why this happened would require a specific on-site study, but it is indeed interesting that this decline in national pride/attachment has emerged exactly after the consolidation of the peace process, thus suggesting that the reduction of political tensions has also caused a drop in national pride.

Table 4. National attachment ('very attached' + 'fairly attached'): Interval limits (minimum and maximum from average) – Eb (1991-2005)

Country	Minimum	Maximum	Sum (absolute values)
West Germany	-0.3	0.3	0.6
Denmark	-1	1	2
Portugal	-1	1	2
Greece	-2	1	3
Ireland	-2	1	3
Finland	-2	1	3
EU	-1	2	3
France	-3	1	4
Luxembourg	-2	2	4
Austria	-2	2	4
Great Britain	-3	2	5
East Germany	-3	3	6
Italy	-3	4	7
Netherlands	-4	4	8
Sweden	-5	3	8
Belgium	-6	6	12
Spain	-11	4	15
Northern Ireland	-16	8	24

Source: Eurobarometer (1991-2005). Values in percentage. Data for Finland, Sweden, and Austria since 1995.

As I said before, whereas pride can indeed be more dependent on contextual events, attachment seems to resonate more with the notion of (national) identity, which is less conditioned by contingent events, since it serves to define 'who I am'.

4. Meanings of national attachment

Although from a quantitative perspective there are no signs of decline of national identity, it is possible that the meanings associated with the nation have changed due to globalisation processes. In this section, therefore, I analyze the answers of both focus group participants and individual interviewees which I personally collected during May 2005-January 2006 in four European regions – Lombardia (Italy), Pirkanmaa (Finland), North East of England (United Kingdom), and Languedoc-Roussillon (France). The selection of these four regional case-studies has been based on preliminary statistical findings on Eurobarometer data for territorial attachment (Eb60.1 – 2003). More precisely, the selection has been based on cross-tabulating the results of a cluster analysis (using the significant predictors from a binary logistic model on European attachment) and Eurostat data about regional GDP per capita (in Purchasing Power Parity values) for each region in Western Europe. The inclusion in the model of GDP per capita, based on the assumption that income can orient individual preferences, has served the purpose of strengthening the selection process, by including both compositional factors (i.e. socio-demographic information about the respondents of the survey) and a geographical contextual factor (i.e. the GDP per capita of the regions in which the respondents lived). I believe that the four

selected regional case-studies represent fairly well the different socio-economic (rich/poor, degree of market ‘openness’, etc.), political (left/right and pro-Europe/Euro-sceptic), and geographical (North/South) conditions of Western Europe.

In each region, I administered four focus groups, with 4-5 participants each, male and female, aged 18-26 years old, without foreign background. The composition of the groups used education as a control characteristic (Knodel, 1993; Bedford and Burgess, 2001). As such, in each region two groups were formed by participants with a university degree (or in the process to obtain it) and two groups with participants without a university degree (and not willing to obtain it in the future). I also conducted about 100 individual interviews with local elites.¹⁷ Overall, 185 respondents (108 males, 77 females) took part in this study. Both individual interviews and focus groups used a semi-structured questionnaire, which covered the larger topic of the relationship between territory (at the local, regional, national, and European scale) and identity in Western Europe. In this paper, only answers related to the question about meanings of national attachment are analyzed.

Simply put, what emerges from these ‘voices from below’ is that in the age of globalisation nations are still alive and kicking. Those who are not, like Italy for instance, it is because they were already not in good shape before.¹⁸ In absolute terms, this would not be a relevant finding per se, since it simply confirms that today like yesterday people are deeply attached to their national identities (Miller, 1995, p. 185). Yet, it becomes relevant when contrasted with the argument that in the age of globalisation collective identities have become de-territorialised and de-nationalised (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992; Appadurai, 1996; Mandaville, 1999; Soguk and Whitehall, 1999). To be sure, I do not reject the fact

¹⁷ ‘Local elite’ is here defined as any person with a political, institutional, or social role in the region.

¹⁸ The weak sentiment of national identity of the Italians is something which has been extensively studied. For a review, see, among others, Bedani and Haddock (2000).

that new transnational, hybrid, ‘creole’ forms of identification are an important component of today’s Western townscapes in particular. Yet, these forms of identification are added to a substratum of persistent national identities, which people reproduce in their own discourses, despite their age, gender, education and role in society.

The accounts of the respondents can be categorised by drawing on the distinction made by Robert Sack (1997) on the ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ character of place.¹⁹ According to Sack, in the age of globalisation, place is caught between two tensions: the post-modernist tension, which levels any difference and speaks the language of universalism, and the modernist tension, which heralds diversity and speaks the language of particularism.²⁰ Whereas the latter is associated with the notion of thick place and embodies the needs of the *homo geographicus* to ‘em-place’ her life, the former is associated with a notion of thin place – a place characterised by porous boundaries, interconnectedness, and the absence of a well-defined and local-based culture. This latter is a sort of ‘functional’ space, which is produced by the technological innovation associated with globalisation and the rational drive towards high specialisation. Thin places exist mainly to answer the needs of a *homo æconomicus* (e.g. working, education, leisure, etc.); devoid of deep meanings, they represent the utopian image of a placeless, borderless world (Ohmae, 1993).

Although evidence for a nation narrated in ‘thin’ terms also emerged in the individual interviews and focus groups, due to space constraints this paper will focus only on the ‘thick’ character of the nation, which was the dominant way in which the respondents talked of the nation. In

¹⁹ The treatment of the nation as a ‘place’ is justified by the multi-scalar notion of place which geographers usually adopt (Agnew, 2002).

²⁰ This opposition or dialectic between particularism and universalism characterises also the reflection on the notion of place of other geographical authors (Massey, 1993; Harvey, 1995; Tuan, 1996; Entrikin, 1999).

this latter sense, the nation was narrated as a place demarcated by clear boundaries used to socially categorise themselves and others. These boundaries were mainly drawn in ‘cultural’, rather than in ‘ethnic’ terms (Peters, 2002). The nation was said to have specific cultural (traditions, heritage, language), social (people’s character, attitudes, mentality, etc.), and natural (landscape) features, giving shape to a unique ‘identity of region’ (Paasi, 1991). This thick connotation should be seen as a confirmation of the resilience of the nation as a source of collective identity even in the age of globalisation. Yet, it is important to differentiate. In fact, by borrowing Massey’s (1993) terminology, we can talk of a ‘progressive’, open, self-reflexive sense of place and a ‘regressive’, closed, parochial sense of place. From the analysis of the information collected, the progressive or regressive character of the relationship between identity and national territory was dependent on whether the respondent felt respectively threatened or not by globalisation. When globalisation was welcomed as a source of economic, social or intellectual opportunities, enhancing the welfare of the individual, generally the respondent adopted a ‘progressive’ stance in her thick description of the nation. In other words, the culturally thick conception of the nation was not associated to exclusivist or chauvinist attitudes, but empowered the subject, who therefore felt strong enough in her identity to open herself and her ‘home’ to the Other. As put by an Italian elite interviewee, *‘if I have a home, I can open the door, that is to say I can offer you something. You too, if you have built a home, you can offer me something, but if we don’t have a home, what are we going to offer to each other?’*. In this case, the construction of a close relationship between identity and (national) space is not a source of exclusion, but the condition for welcoming rather than fearing diversity. The same point emerged also in the individual interview with another Italian respondent:

The only possible point of coexistence and secure development it is only when there are two persons who meet and are strong... they are strong in terms of their identity, their values, about the things in which they believe, on those values which derive from the culture who has built them.

It is clear from these two accounts that thickness is not intrinsically regressive, as Sack seems to maintain (Sack, 1997, p. 10). Moreover, a space defined in thick cultural terms should not always be seen as a form of social imprisonment of the individual (Malešević, 2003). In fact, what emerges from the accounts of the respondents is that globalisation, experienced in the form of international mobility of the subject, transforms the sentiment of national identity from a form of ‘social imprisonment’ (i.e. a structure into which the subject is born and from which she cannot escape) into a self-reflexive choice of identification. This point is best exemplified by the following two accounts of Finnish focus group participants: *‘I learned to appreciate Finland in a different way when I was an exchange student – says Anna (Finnish student, aged 23). I was as an exchange student in Prague for one semester and I appreciate things in Finland in a different way now.’ ‘I think the same way about my exchange experiences – adds Kaisa (Finnish student, aged 23). After those I have kind of grabbed more and more to Finnishness and I see Finland as a whole. Earlier, being international was more important than being Finnish.’* From this perspective, national identity becomes the product of agency rather than structure. More than multiplying and intensifying the feeling of being several selves at once (Scholte, 1996),

globalisation in the form of international mobility of people reinforces the national uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Self. Globalisation does not water down the sentiment of national belonging, but fortifies it. The more the society opens to the world, the more its rootedness grows, both locally and nationally (Paasi, 2003). In this sense, to use Castells' (2000) terminology, it is exactly the integration into the global network which strengthens the identity of place. This is a point which seems to confirm Massey's (1993) notion of progressive sense of place, as the thickness of place positively interacts with and is shaped by the web of global flows.

The characterisation of the nation in thick terms took also the form, in the accounts of a few of the respondents, of a 'regressive', closed, inward-looking and reactionary space. The nation as a space thick in meanings was discursively activated as an identity marker aimed at excluding the Other, rather than empowering the interaction of the subject with the Other. The perception of the respondent to feel excluded and threatened by globalisation - understood especially in terms of increased multiculturalism - triggered (and was triggered by) a 'regressive' sense of place:

I knew what the English culture was - remarks an English representative of the Conservative Party, clearly aware of his far right-wing standing - but I no longer, because the English culture represented certain things: white, Protestant ... heterosexual... and you knew what it constituted to be English. I don't know what it means anymore. And when you say multiculturalism, it means a lot of cultures, it just means anything. I mean, what constitutes Englishness?

Multiculturalism in reality – observes another interviewee, a French representative of the right-wing party National Front - *it's the opening to other cultures at the expense of our own. Today, nothing distinguishes [a French] in relation to someone who comes from abroad... a French from a foreigner... neither a special right nor different obligations.*

The nation is no longer the unitary, coherent, organic space that it used to be. This generates a sense of anxiety and enraged reaction towards everything and everyone that is perceived to have put in question the old status quo. 'As a rule – writes Yuval-Davis (2006, p. 202) – the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel'. It is interesting to observe that this view emerged particularly among respondents with far-right political beliefs, who felt someone 'victims' of the globalization process. In this context, the nation transforms itself from a space thick in cultural terms into one thick in ethnic if not even racial terms. In the French case, this transformation is particularly evident. The arrival of foreign immigrants who have become *citoyens*, but who are still discriminated against by social practices in their everyday lives exposes the limits and the contradictions of the republican model of citizenship on which France has built its national identity (Sa'adah, 2003; Cole, 2005; Kiwan, 2006). The contradiction resides on a model of citizenship which pretends to be universal (Kritzman, 2000), as it is based on the democratic and egalitarian principles of the Revolution, but which discovers its exclusivist particularism when confronted with the ethnic Other who claims to be *citoyen*. In this case,

the nation ceases to resonate with a 'civic' notion and assumes an 'ethnic' or racial contour, which does not acknowledge citizenship as a sufficient condition of belonging, but requires also an ethnic or racial commonality (see also Bader, 1997, p. 779).

5. Conclusions

In the age of globalisation, the re-scaling of the nation-state, both in economic and politico-institutional terms, is not accompanied by a rescaling of national identity. When measured in cross-country surveys over the last two decades, the trends for national attachment and national pride in Western Europe do not show any sign of decline. On the contrary, national pride has increased and national attachment has shown a stable trend. The question which then needs to be asked is whether the persistence of national identities is an inertial phenomenon, as collective identities in the future will experience a similar de-nationalisation process, or whether national identities are independent of both the material and political-institutional context within which they are activated. In the first case, this means that the logic of politico-economic integration and the logic of social identification march at a different pace (Poche, 1992). Yet, the former can still influence the latter, thus supporting the argument of those who believe that economic interests, (national) identity and political institutions are closely inter-linked and are the produce social space or territory (Alliès, 1980). In the second case, the link between identity and economic interests comes under challenge, as well as the argument of those Marxists who believe that identity formation is essentially a by-product of the modes of production (Lefebvre, 1991).

Qualitative empirical evidence also shows that globalisation is not associated with the thinning out of national identities. The meanings associated with the nation remain ‘thick’ across a sample of 185 respondents interviewed in four regional case studies. This thickness can take on two different aspects. On the one hand, it can be ‘regressive’, inward-looking and reactionary. In this case, globalisation is perceived by the individual as a threat and these two attitudes reinforce each other. From this perspective, the *state* is seen as a rampart against globalisation and the *nation* is discursively activated, in ethnic or racial terms, as a source of exclusion of the Other. On the other hand, thickness can be ‘progressive’, to borrow Massey’s (1993) term, as cultural rootedness does not prevent, but allows a communication with the Other based not on fear, but on the awareness of ‘who I am’. This attitude is often associated with a positive look on globalisation, perceived as a source of economic, social or intellectual opportunities and, once again, the two attitudes are mutually reinforcing. This confirms that thickness is not regressive per se, as shown by other scholars (Escobar, 2001; Castree, 2004).

It is also important to observe that national attachment does not decrease as the subject becomes more mobile, having for instance an experience of living or travelling abroad. In this case, however, national attachment is said to become the product of a self-reflexive choice rather than a socially imposed structure (Malešević, 2003). Similarly, the positive integration of the national system into the global economy was said by some respondents to enhance the sense of national pride and attachment of the individual. This suggests that the logic of globalisation (‘logic of space of flows’) and the logic of territorial belonging (‘logic of space of places’) are not mutually exclusive or related by

a schizophrenic relation as Castells suggested (Castells, 2000, p. 459). Yet, it is exactly thanks to the integration into a space of global flows ('logic of space of flows') that a sense of (national) rootedness ('logic of space of places') gains momentum, in progressive terms.

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